An Ethical and Political Bestiary in the First Canto of Dante’s *Comedy*

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Recent studies on animal imagery in the *Comedy* have shown how the poet draws on the reader’s knowledge of the symbolic values ascribed to animals in medieval tradition, and how he uses similar allegorical techniques in new ways. In the past I have mostly examined the spiritual and religious meanings of these images. In this essay, my intention is instead to study animal imagery from a moral perspective, in order to show how this repertory of images nourishes the ethical dimension of the poem. In particular, I will focus on the animals of the first canto: *lonza*, lion, wolf and hound.

Ed ecco, quasi al cominciar de l’erta,
una lonza leggera e presta molto,
che di pel macolato era coverta;
 e non mi si partia dinanzi al volto,
anzí 'mpediva tanto il mio cammino,
ch’i’ fui per ritornar più volte vòlto.
Temp’ era dal principio del mattino,
e 'l sol montava ’n sù con quelle stelle
ch’eran con lui quando l’amor divino
mosse di prima quelle cose belle;
sì ch’a bene sperar m’era cagione
di quella fiera a la gaetta pelle
  l’ora del tempo e la dolce stagione;
ma non sì che paura non mi desse
la vista che m’apparve d’un leone.
Questi parea che contra me venisse
con la test’alta e con rabbiosa fame,  
sì che parea che l’aere ne tremesse.  

    Ed una lupa, che di tutte brame  
seminiava carca ne la sua magrezza,  
e molte genti fé già viver grame,  
    questa mi porse tanto di gravezza  
con la paura ch’uscia di sua vista,  
ch’io perdei la speranza de l’altezza.

(Inf., I. 31–54)

[And behold, almost at the beginning of the steep, a lonza, light and very swift, covered with spotted fur; | and it did not depart from before my face but rather so impeded my way that I was at several turns turned to go back. | The time was the beginning of the morning, and the sun was mounting up with those stars that were with it when God’s love | first set those lovely things in motion; so that I took reason to have good hope of that beast with its gaily painted hide | from the hour of the morning and the sweet season; but not so that I did not fear the sight of a lion that appeared to me. | He appeared to be coming against me with his head high and with raging hunger, so that the air appeared to tremble at him. | And a she-wolf, that seemed laden with all cravings in her leanness and has caused many peoples to live in wretchedness, | she put on me so much heaviness with the fear that came from the sight of her, that I lost hope of reaching the heights.]

**Identifying the *lonza***

The *lonza* is a feline yet to be clearly identified by Dante scholars. I believe that in the context of medieval zoology it is a *pardus*, not a lynx, leopard or panther. Dante evidently modelled his triad of beasts on the episode in which the prophet Jeremiah warns of three beasts that threaten the populace in its sinful rebellion against the Lord: *pardus*, *leo* and *lupus*:

Idcirco percussit eos leo de silva, lupus ad vesperam vastavit eos,  
pardus vigilans super civitates eorum; omnis qui egressus fuerit ab eis capietur, quia multiplicatae sunt praevaricationes eorum, confortatae sunt aversiones eorum.

(Jeremiah 5. 6)
[Wherefore a lion out of the wood hath slain them, a wolf in the evening, hath spoiled them, a leopard watcheth for their cities: every one that shall go out thence shall be taken, because their transgressions are multiplied, their rebellions are strengthened.]

As the lion and wolf in Jeremiah correspond to the other two beasts in the first canto, the lonza should correspond to the pardus. The pardus also has many other relevant biblical occurrences, most of them in association with the lion or the wolf, sometimes with both.¹

For that matter, the term lonza seems to be an alternative to pardo, which is a very rare term in old Italian.² Dante could have chosen the form lonza so as to begin the names of all three beasts with the letter L, perhaps in a subtle reaffirmation that the evil manifested in the beasts is in fact a parodic reversal of good – for, as Dante recalls, El was God’s name in Hebrew.³ Medieval encyclopaedias describe the pardus as having a spotted pelt, great speed and ferocity, all qualities that Dante ascribes to the lonza. For instance, the influential encyclopaedia of Isidore of Seville says: ‘Pardus […] genus varium ac velocissimum et praeceps ad sanguinem. Saltu enim ad mortem ruit’ [The pard, a beast of many colours, is very swift, likes blood, and kills with a leap].⁴

The spotted coat is also typical of the panther (Latin panthera), but this animal has completely different characteristics in respect to Dante’s lonza. It is a gentle beast, particularly celebrated for the sweet smell of its breath, and it always carries very positive symbolic values, being interpreted usually as an allegory of Christ.⁵ For these reasons, Dante’s lonza cannot be a panther. For other Dante commentators the lonza has to be identified as a leopard (Latin leopardus). But it is necessary to remember that in medieval zoology the leopard is nothing other than the offspring of a mating between a lion and a pardus: for this reason, it shares some properties with the pardus.⁶ The lynx too (Latin lynx), although more similar to a wolf than a lion, has a spotted coat like the pardus. No single bestiary or encyclopaedia attributes to the lynx the swiftness and agility that are two of the main characteristics of Dante’s lonza. Instead the lynx is well known for other properties, especially the fact that its urine changes into a hard, precious stone.⁷ The pardus, on the contrary, is always described as extremely swift (‘velocissimus’ for Isidore, and ‘bestia velocissima’ in Bartholomaeus Anglicus),⁸ just as Dante’s lonza is ‘light and very swift’ (‘leggera e presta molto’).

A close look at the few appearances in old Italian of the term lonza reinforces its identification with the pardus.⁹ Apart from an early, not very clear occurrence in the verse Proverbia quae dicuntur supra natura
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arem, a more interesting presence of the lonza is that found later, in the poem entitled the Detto del gatto lupesco. Here the lonza appears in a list of the beasts gathered to obstruct the protagonist’s way. With the lonza (line 127: ‘e una lonça’), the poem mentions also ‘four leopards’ (line 125: ‘quattro leopardi’) and ‘the panther’ (line 131: ‘la pantera’).

Thanks to this text, we can also definitively exclude the possibility of identifying the lonza with the leopard or the panther. Some very interesting occurrences can be found also in a pair of satirical sonnets by Rustico Filippi, which make evident the lonza’s nature: ferocious and courageous, but also wild and brutal. Likewise, in a sonnet by Folgore da San Gimignano (the introductory sonnet to the ‘Corona’ della settimana), the sentence ‘Leggiero più che lonza o liopardo’ [lighter than a lonza or a leopard] makes it clear that the lonza is not the same creature as a leopard. It also presents the adjective ‘leggero’ [light], used by Dante too, and by the biblical tradition for the pardus (‘levis’).

Other evidence for the identification of the lonza with the pardus can be found in the use of the French term lonce in Brunetto Latini’s Tresor. Here, in a passage where the Florentine encyclopaedist translates a passage by Isidore, the term that Brunetto translates with lonce is pardus.

Another proof comes from Giovanni Boccaccio, as reported in Benvenuto da Imola’s Dante commentary. After having examined all the other candidates, Benvenuto concludes by arguing for the identification of the lonza with the pardus, partly on the basis of Boccaccio’s testimony.

Lonza as pardus: a symbol of fraud

In medieval culture the pardus always has a negative allegorical value. It is commonly associated with diabolic symbolism or with the image of the sinner. As Eucherius of Lyon said, ‘Pardus diabolus vel peccator moribus varius’ [The pard is the devil or the sinner, fickle in his customs].

The biblical presences of the pardus confirm the negative and primarily diabolical meaning usually attributed to this animal. References to the pardus can be found in several biblical passages in which such negative values are evident, and are widely confirmed by medieval biblical exegesis.

From a moral viewpoint, the pardus is commonly associated with fraud, or with various vices in which fraud is implicated. So, for instance, one of the marginal notes in De proprietatibus rerum interprets the entry on the pardus with a ‘Nota contra dolosos et malitiosos’ [Note against tricksters and malicious people]. The connection with fraud is extremely common in patristic literature and quotations could easily be
multiplied. Patristic and medieval exegesis of the biblical presences of the *pardus* also confirms this value. This is true for the interpretation of Jeremiah 5. 6:

> Wherefore a lion out from the wood hath slain them, a wolf in the evening, hath spoiled them, a leopard [*pardus*] watcheth for their cities: every one that shall go out thence shall be taken, because their transgressions are multiplied; their rebellions are strengthened.

Aquinas, among others, considers the *pardus* in that passage a figure of Nebuchadnezzar, in consideration of his fraudulent nature (‘Quantum ad obsidionem urbis, pardus vigilans, idest Nabuchodonosor propter fraudulentiam’). Aquinas makes the same connection with fraud for the occurrence of *pardus* in Jeremiah 13. 23: ‘difficiliter potestis converti, Aethiops, propter naturalem infectionem peccati, pardus, propter dolositatem, vel diversitatem peccatorum’ [It is difficult for you to be changed, Ethiopian, due to the natural corruption of sin, pard, due to deceitfulness or the diversity of sinners].

Another significant passage is Isaiah 11. 6: ‘Habitabit lupus cum agno, et pardus cum haedo accubabit; vitulus, et leo, et ovis, simul morabuntur’ [The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard [*pardus*] shall lie down with the kid: the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together]. Exegesis of this text, although often more generic, can sometimes be oriented towards fraud, as it is in Isidore of Seville’s *De fide catholica*: ‘In cuius ovili pardus cum haedo accubat permisti scilicet subdoli cum simplicibus’ [The pard lies down with the kid in its sheepfold, namely the deceitful mixed among the innocents]; or in a sermon by Aelredus Rievallensis: ‘Pardus est animal quoddam plenum varietate: tales fuerunt aliqui vestrum, per calliditatem, per deceptionem, per fraudem’ [The pard is a particular animal that is full of changeability: just as some of you were, through cunning, through deceit, through fraud]; or in Aquinas: ‘pardus, astutus, cum haedo, simplice’ [the pard, cunning, with the kid, innocent]. The same can be said of exegesis concerning the passage in Hosea 13. 7, although the evidence in this case is less clear.

There are some quite generic interpretations for the passage from Daniel 7. 6: ‘et ecce alia quasi pardus et alas habebat avis quattuor super se, et quattuor capita erant in bestia; et potestas data est ei’ [After this I beheld, and lo, another like a leopard, and it had upon it four wings as of a fowl, and the beast had four heads, and power was given to it]. But a more precise reading is also common, which attributes the moral symbolism of fraud to the *pardus* – as can be seen in *De eruditione*
by Richard of Saint Victor, where the bear is interpreted as a figure of envy and the *pardus* as a symbol of hypocrisy and fraud. Patristic and medieval exegetes devote considerable attention, of course, to the passage from the Book of Revelation 13.2. In this case too generic interpretations can be found, as well as references to heretics without a precise moral interpretation, but the standard exegesis again connects the beast to fraud.

Among the biblical references to the *pardus*, the most frequently commented in patristic and medieval literature is the strange passage in the Song of Solomon about the ‘montes pardorum’, that is, the mountains of the pards: ‘Veni de Libano, sponsa, veni de Libano, ingredere; respice de capite Amana, de vertice Sanir et Hermon, de cubilibus leonum, de montibus pardorum’ [Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come: thou shalt be crowned from the top of Amana, from the top of Sanir and Hermon, from the dens of the lions, from the mountains of the leopards [*pardorum*]] (4.8). In this case too, besides some readings in a figural-historical sense, some allegorisations as a symbol of the devil or of heretics and some generic moralisations, the *pardus* is very frequently associated with fraud or with sins connected with fraud. On the other hand the lion, with which the *pardus* is paired in this passage, is usually viewed as an image of violence or of pride. Gregory the Great explains it in this way, for instance; as does the Venerable Bede: ‘cubilia etenim leonum ad montes sunt pardorum, hi qui acriore spirituum malignorum furore instigati, ad nocendum Christi gregem, et vi et fraude praevalent’ [For the dens of lions and the mountains of leopards are those incited by the more violent fury of evil spirits to inflict injury on Christ’s flock, who gain the upper hand by force and deceit]. Sometimes the *pardus’s* form of fraud can be specified as hypocrisy, as in the *Allegoriae in universam sacram scripturam* by Rabanus Maurus: ‘Per pardum hypocritae, ut in Cantico’.

Finally, the *pardus’s* speed and ferocity, added to its spotted pelt, made it an emblem of malice and trickery in medieval culture, not only in biblical exegesis, but also in naturalistic literature.

**The *lonza’s* spotted pelt**

The moral values most often imputed to the *lonza* in commentaries on the *Comedy* are lust, envy and fraud. Among these interpretations only the last, as we have seen, has a broad and solid historical basis in medieval culture, both in biblical exegesis and in naturalistic literature.
Let us now turn to evidence found further along in the poem. The participle *maculato* recurs only once in the poem, for the damned souls of the final bolgia, the counterfeiters ‘di schianze macolati’ [spotted with scabs] (*Inf.*, XXIX. 75). This ties the *lonza* to the theme of fraud. Furthermore, the only other animal with a spotted skin is the monstrous Geryon, the ‘sozza imagine di froda’ [filthy image of fraud] (XVII. 7), which serves both as guardian of the eighth circle and as emblem of the sins of fraud punished there. Early in canto XVII the monster is said to have ‘lo dosso e ’l petto e ambidue le coste | dipinti [...] di nodi e di rotelle’ [back and breast and both sides painted with knots and little wheels] (lines 14–15, italics mine). And right at the end of canto XVI the poet had recalled the *lonza* when, at Virgil’s request, Dante handed his master the cord he had ‘intorno cinta, | e con essa pensai alcuna volta | prender la lonza a la pelle dipinta’ [girding me, and with it I had thought at times to capture the *lonza* with the spotted (*dipinta*) hide] (XVI. 106–08, italics mine). So, only a few verses apart, the *lonza* and Geryon are defined with the same adjective, *dipinto*. And Virgil uses the cord to tame a painted-skinned beast, just as Dante had intended: only instead of the *lonza* the beast is Geryon. So we have a marked correlation between the *lonza* and Geryon; it is extremely probable that the *lonza* bears a symbolic meaning of fraud, like Dante’s Geryon and like the *pardus* of the bestiaries.

In light of this correlation, I believe that the three beasts of *Inferno* I may correspond to the three forms of sin punished in Hell: fraud (the *lonza*), violence (the lion) and incontinence (the she-wolf). Here they are presented not in order of objective seriousness (as in the subdivision of Hell itself), but in order of the threats they pose to the subjective disposition of the protagonist – hardly at all inclined to fraud, rather more to violence and most to incontinence. From the first canto alone, however, the reader cannot draw a precise idea of all this. The elements that suggest this interpretation only appear later on in the poem, with the subdivision of Hell in canto XI and the association of the *lonza* with fraud in cantos XVI–XVII.

**Three beasts for three-fold sin**

The three beasts are instead understood, by medieval commentators of Dante’s *Comedy*, as symbols of the three capital vices: the *lonza* representing lust, the lion pride and the she-wolf *avaritia*, in the particular sense of *cupiditas*.

The idea that the *lonza* could be a symbol of lust is already very common in early commentary on the *Comedy*, but it has no foundation
in medieval symbolism associated with the animals. Indeed, there are only faint traces of the *pardus* as a supposed medieval symbol of lust. Nor should conclusions be drawn from the allusion to Virgil proposed along those lines by many commentators: ‘maculosae tegmine lyncis’ [in the pelt of the spotted lynx] (*Aen.*, I. 323). The quotation is irrelevant, because it refers to the lynx, not to the *pardus*. For that matter the lynx’s spotted pelt is part of a trick played by Venus when she pretends to be a Spartan huntress. Rather than an element of iconography associated with Venus, it is a detail meant to characterise a life devoted to the hunt. Sometimes the commentators who sustain the symbolism of lust support their position by reference to the pervasive and undeniable symbolism of fraud; they argue that the beast, with its spotted coat, symbolises the fraudulent and deceitful enticement of lust. This is, obviously, a poor proof that rather confirms the strength and inescapability of the *lonza*’s interpretation as an image of fraud. It must be added that Geryon, the ‘sozza imagine di froda’ to which the *lonza* is in various ways connected, has nothing to do with erotic-lustful fraud of this kind.

Another proof often alleged by scholars in favour of such an interpretation is a passage from the *Bestiario toscano*, published by Milton Stahl Garver and Kenneth McKenzie. Here an animal named *loncia* is said to be a lustful beast – but in this case it is an amplification of a common property usually attributed to the *leopardus*. Here the *leopardus* is indicated with the term *loncia*. If we scrutinise this text more broadly and attentively, we can note that the alternative term *lonça* is here used for the she-*pardus*, or *parda*, who, after mating with a lion, gives birth to a *loncia*, that is a *leopardus*. The term *leopardo* is here used for male *pardo*. As can be seen, it is an extremely confused text from a lexical point of view. In any case such a text, among so much confusion, confirms that Dante’s *lonza* can be a she-*pardus* or a she-*leopardus*, but does not offer any decisive evidence for the interpretation of the *lonza* as a symbol of lust.

The term *pardo* is almost totally absent in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian, but the term *leopardo* is widely attested. By contrast, in the Bible the term *leopardus* is almost absent, but there are several extremely important occurrences of the term *pardus*, which I have discussed above. The same can be said for patristic and medieval literature, especially when connected with biblical exegesis.

If the biblical-exegetical tradition paid great attention to the *pardus* and almost ignored the *leopardus*, it seems extremely implausible that – when taken together with two of the most relevant beasts of the biblical-exegetical tradition, the lion and the wolf – the animal indicated
by Dante with the term lonza could be identified with an animal with an extremely weak literary and biblical tradition, the leopardus, rather than with the extremely important pardus, so pervasively present in the Bible and in the exegetical tradition, where it also regularly accompanies the lion. Moreover, the fact remains that nowhere else in the Comedy is there an echo of the series lust, pride and avarice: this hypothetical series would therefore be totally isolated within the poem.

A similar series does in fact recur in the cantos that tackle Florence, namely pride, avarice and envy. The double repetition of this triad could tempt the reader retrospectively to interpret the three beasts of the first canto in this way; but medieval tradition does not support a reading of the lonza as a symbol of envy. Nor is the pardus ever a symbol of envy, which is instead ascribed to the lynx. But, as we have seen, the lonza is not a lynx.

The nineteenth century introduced a political reading of the three beasts as personifications of political entities: the lonza represents Florence, the lion the royal house of France and the she-wolf Rome’s Papal Curia. Today nobody would propose such an interpretation in an absolute and exclusive way, but some scholars have suggested that a political level may be present, without precluding the existence of a stronger, moral sense. This would also accord with the way in which biblical visions were interpreted in the Middle Ages: that is, with both a moral or allegorical sense and at the same time also a historical or political one.

The lion and the wolf

As for the lion, its many appearances in the Bible imbue it with different meanings. The principle of symbolic ambivalence is fundamental for the interpretation of the biblical and medieval bestiary. The lion is emblematic of this double-edged symbolism, as it can represent both Christ and the devil. Naturally, the lion in the first canto can only be read in a negative sense, as a diabolic adversary, and enemy of humanity’s pursuit of happiness.

Countless medieval texts state explicitly that the lion represents the devil by its force and cruelty. Biblical exegesis insists on its diabolical symbolism also when associated with the pardus. In moral terms, the lion is associated with wrath in the bestiary of vices proposed by Boethius (Cons. Phil., IV. 3). Pride is also at times ascribed to the lion, and the lion’s posture in canto I with its head held high does encourage the reader to think of pride. Nonetheless, the lion’s evident pride does not contradict its possible symbolic value of violence: for the proud in Hell, in particular Farinata and Capaneus, are all punished among the violent.
posture con la testa alta could be indicative of pride, the ‘rabbiosa fame’ [raging hunger] suggests other vices, such as gluttony or avarice, while the adjective rabbiosa calls to mind wrath.

After the lonza and the lion comes a she-wolf. The noun magrezza [leaness] appears at only three points in the poem, first here and then twice in the depiction of the gluttonous in Purgatorio (XXIII. 39 and XXIV. 69). It constitutes an evident link between the wolf and the vice of gluttony. In the Bible the wolf always has a negative value, and in medieval culture it is chiefly a symbol of the devil. In moral terms it is widely linked with avarice, but also with other vices, such as gluttony and lust.

Let us examine the other occurrences of wolf imagery in the poem. The second occurrence, ‘maladetto lupo’ [cursed wolf] (Inf., VII. 8), refers to Pluto, the diabolic monster-guardian of the fourth circle, the place of misers and spendthrifts. Then in Purgatorio the wolf represents the three vices of excessive love for worldly goods, vices which correspond to the sins of incontinence in Hell: ‘Maladetta sie tu, antica lupa, | che più che tutte l’altre bestie hai preda | per la tua fame sanza fine cupa!’ [A curse be on you, ancient she-wolf, that more than any other beast find prey for your endlessly hollow hunger!] (Purg., XX. 10–12). To me, this seems to reinforce the identification of the three beasts with the three types of sin (fraud, violence and incontinence).

In Inferno I, meanwhile, Virgil notes the she-wolf’s ‘bramosa voglia’ [greedy desire], so greedy that ‘dopo ’l pasto ha più fame che pria’ [after feeding she is hungrier than before] (Inf. I. 98–9). The food metaphors and the reference to desire or appetite place the she-wolf within the semantic sphere of incontinence, which overwhelms rational choice with disproportionate desire (e.g. in Inf., V. 38–9).

On another note, recurrences of the lupo (the masculine form of ‘wolf’) throughout the poem are almost all concentrated around two entities: the people of Florence (Purg., XIV. 50–1, Par., XXV. 1–6) and the simoniac popes (Par., IX. 127–36, XXVII. 55) who, in a reversal of the good pastor image, are seen as wolves who rip apart the flocks entrusted to them. Hence wolf imagery also has a strong political valence. And in Paradiso XXV the animal emblem of the wolf is soldered onto the theme of autobiography, when Dante explicitly presents himself as ‘nimico ai lupi’ [enemy of the wolves] (line 6). A scene similar in some aspects to that in the poem’s first canto plays out in the Earthly Paradise, concluding in the prophecy of the ‘cinquecento diece e cinque’ [five hundred ten and five, Purg., XXXIII. 43], which corresponds to the hound that will drive the wolf-beast into Hell. If a political reading of the symbols is undeniable in the
Earthly Paradise, it is hard to imagine that a similar reading should be irrelevant in the first canto of *Inferno*.

Another important aspect of the first canto is that the three beasts are never present on stage at the same time, but each one appears after the other: the *lonza* disappears when the lion appears, just as the lion disappears when the she-wolf appears. Beyond this, Virgil speaks of “questa bestia, per la qual tu gride” ['this beast at which you cry'] (line 94). For these reasons some scholars propose that it is a single diabolical beast – taking the form now of a *lonza*, now a lion and finally a she-wolf, in an everlasting metamorphosis of evil. Guglielmo Gorni has effectively defined this beast as the ‘bestia una e trina’ [one and triune beast]. A correspondence between this diachronic trinity, in which evil presents itself at the beginning of the poem, will be found in a synchronic trinity at the bottom of Hell – that is, in Lucifer, as represented in the last canto of the first canticle (XXXIV. 37–45).

The *veltro*

Coherently with the animal imagery employed thus far, the person who will defeat the she-wolf-beast and everything she represents is, in turn, presented via an animal image: that of the *veltro*, the hound, known for its great speed. If scholars have long disagreed on how to interpret the symbolic value of the three beasts, the interpretation of the hound has been no less contentious; it has possibly been even more so. There are two main theories that read the hound either as an emperor, who will re-establish imperial power over an Italy devastated by corruption and civil wars, or as a saintly pope, who will conduct the Church back to its original purity and rightful, purely spiritual jurisdiction. Some readers have looked for a specific historical personage, be it an emperor or imperial vicar (Henry VII or Cangrande della Scala) or a pope (the Dominican Benedict XI). Another interpretation worth mentioning sees in the hound the Second Coming of Christ on Judgement Day. Finally, some readers consider the hound to be an allusion to Dante himself or, more precisely, to his poem, destined to restore justice to the world. As this variety of interpretations indicates, the open, indeterminate character of this image might indicate an essential polysemy – inviting the reader to interpret the hound via multiple discourses that may include, besides the moral and political, the rich metaliterary vein that runs through the poem.

The first canto of *Inferno* thus employs two typical modes for the use of animal imagery: firstly as moral symbols of vices or sinful dispositions, and secondly as political emblems. The canto also demonstrates
the author’s tendency to construct symbolic systems that combine multiple animals, and to complicate this rhetorical device with the ambiguity of prophetic language and the polysemy of symbols.

Notes

1. The earliest occurrences of pardo in the ‘Tesoro della lingua italiana delle origini–Opera del vocabolario italiano’ (TLIO–OVI) corpus of ancient Italian can be found only in the Tesoro di Brunetto Latini vulgarizzato, V. 41, where it translates the French term parde from Tresor, I. 174. 9, so is provoked by the French term; Fazio degli Uberti, Dittamondo, IV. 11. 68; IV. 12. 77; and Petrarch, Canzoniere, 330. 5.

2. See, for instance, Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, VII. i. 3. Dante, DVE, I. iv. 4; Par., XXVI. 136. See also Guglielmo Gorni, Dante nella selva. Il primo canto della ‘Commedia’ (Florence: Cesati, 1995).

3. For the frequent association with the lion, see Song of Solomon 4. 8; Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 28. 26–7; Daniel 7. 3–7; Book of Revelation 13. 2. For the association with the wolf, Habakkuk 1. 8. Among the other occurrences of the pardus, see Jeremiah 13. 23.


5. For the panther’s spotted pelt see, for instance, Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, XI. ii. 8 or Bartholomaeus Anglicus, De proprietatibus rerum, XVIII. 80. The information about the panther’s sweet smell is extremely common: see for instance Aristotle, Historia animalium, IX. 612a, in the edition Aristote, Histoire des animaux, ed. Pierre Louis (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1964–9); Pliny, Naturalis Historia, XXI. 39, in the edition Gaio Plinio Secondo, Storia naturale, ed. Alessandro Barchiesi, Chiara Frugoni and Giuliano Ranucci (Turin: Einaudi, 1982); Aelian, De Natura Animalium libri XVII, ed. Rudolf Hercher (Leipzig: Teubner, 1864–6), XII. 6; Brunetto Latini, Tresor, ed. Pietro G. Beltrami et al. (Turin: Einaudi, 2007), I. 193. For the Christological interpretation of this information, see Phisiologus Latinus Versio B Is, XXIV, in Bestiari medi evali, ed. Luigina Morini (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 56–60; Phisiologus, Versio Y, XXIX, in Bestiari tardoantichi e medievali, ed. Francesco Zambon (Milan: Bompiani, 2018), 162–4; Philippe de Thaun, Bestiaire, lines 461–580, in Bestiari medi evali, 136–42; Gervaise, Bestiaire, lines 139–238, in Bestiari medi evali, 298–304; Bestiario moralizzato, XV, in Bestiari medi evali, 500. Such a property was also interpreted in an erotic sense, in Richart de Fornival’s Bestiaire d’amours (Bestiari medi evali, 390), and in many lyric poems of the Italian Duecento. Dante alludes to this property of the panther, with notable symbolic freedom, when in De vulgari eloquentia he compares the ‘volgare illustre’ to the panther whose perfume is smelled everywhere but that hunters can find nowhere (DVE, I. xvi. 1). For a synthetic survey, see Maria Pia Ciccarese, Animali simbolici. Alle origini del bestiario cristiano, 2 vols (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 2007), II, 112–17.

6. See Pliny, Naturalis historia, VIII. 42; Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, XII. ii. 11: ‘Leopardus ex adulterio leeanæ et parde nascitur”: Rabanus Maurus, De universo, VIII. 1 (PL, 111. 220); Ps.-Hugh of Saint Victor, De bestiis, III. 2 (PL, 177. 83); Bartholomaeus Anglicus, De proprietatibus rerum, XVIII. 65.
7. See for instance Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XII. ii. 20: ‘Lyncis dictus, quia in luporum genere numeratur; bestia maculis terga distincta ut pardus, sed similis lupo [...]. Huius urinam convertere in duritiam pretiosi lapidis dicunt, qui lyncarius appellatur, quod et ipsa lynces sentiri hoc documento probatur. Nam egestus liquorem harenis, in quantum potuerint, con tegunt, invidia quadam naturae ne talis egoestio transeat in usum humanum’ [The lynx is so called because it is reckoned among the wolves [...] in kind; it is a beast that has spotted markings on its back, like a pard, but it is similar to a wolf; [...] People say that its urine hardens into a precious stone called lyncirus. That the lynxes themselves perceive this is shown by this proof: they bury as much of the excreted liquid in sand as they can, from a sort of natural jealousy lest such excretion should be brought to human use]. See also Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, VIII. 57. 137. Rabanus Maurus, *De universo*, VIII. 1 (PL, 111. 222) repeats the words found in Isidore's text and adds the animal's moralisation as a symbol of envy. Isidore's text is repeated also in the *De bestiis*, III. 3, but without the additional moralisation (PL, 177. 84). Bartholomaeus Anglicus also repeats Isidore (*De proprietatibus rerum*, XVII. 67), and the marginal gloss at this point makes explicit the moralisation of the animal as example of envy: ‘Nota contra invidiam’ (Troyes, Bibliothèque de Troyes, MS 979, f. 192r).
8. See the passages quoted above.
9. Such searches are now possible thanks to the TLIO–OVI database.
11. Quotations from PD, II. 292.
12. Rustico Filippi, *Ne la stia mi par essere col leone*, which brings to the fore the animal's strong and unbearable smell: ‘E’ sente tanto di viverra fiato | o di leonza o d’altro assai fragore, | mai nessun ne trovai si smesurato’ (lines 9–11), in Rustico Filippi, *Sonetti satirici e giocosi*, ed. Silvia Buzzetti Gallarati (Rome: Carocci, 2005). In this passage the lonza cannot be identified, as Contini proposes, with a panther (‘pantera’), for the latter is well known in the bestiaries for its sweet breath. In the sonnet *D'una diversa cosa ch'è aparia*, Rustico ironically defines a very timid and fearful person as ‘fiery and courageus as a lonza’ (‘come una lonza si fiera e ardita’). On these occurrences see also Romano Manescauchi, ‘Osservazioni sulla “lonza” in Rustico Filippi e in Dante’, *Studi danteschi*, 74 (2009): 127–47.
14. See Brunetto Latini, *Tresor*, I. 190. 3: ‘Une autre maniere de loups sont que l'en apele cervie[rs] ou luburne, qui sont pomeles de noires taiches come lonce, mes des autres choses est il semblables au loup’ [There is another type of wolf called a lynx, and others call it a luperne (luberne), and it is spotted with black spots like a lonza, but it is like a wolf]. Here and throughout, English translations follow Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure–Li livres dou tresor*, trans. Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin (New York: Garland, 1993). Compare with Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI. ii. 20: ‘Lyncis dictus, quia in luporum genere numeratur; bestia maculis terga distincta ut pardus, sed similis lupo’ [The lynx is so called because it is reckoned among the wolves [...] in kind; it is a beast that has spotted markings on its back, like a pard, but it is similar to a wolf]. Isidore's words are repeated, almost unvaried, by Rabanus Maurus, *De universo*, VIII. 1 (PL, 111. 222), Ps.-Hugh of Saint Victor, *De bestiis*, III. 3 (PL, 177. 84) and Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, XVII. 67.
15. Benvenuto da Imola, *ad loc.: stut vocabulab Florentinum lonza videtur magis importare pardum, quam aliam feram. Unde, dum semel portaretur quidam pardus per Florentiam, pueri concurrentes clamabant: vide loncia, ut mihi narrabat suavissimus Boccaccio de Certaldo’ [That Florentine word, lonza, seems to mean the pard rather than any other beast. Therefore, when once a certain pard was being carried through Florence, the children came running along together shouting, ‘See the lonza’, as was told to me by that most agreeable Boccaccio from Certaldo].
16. See Cicarese, *Animalis simbolici*, I. 46. See also Rabanus Maurus, *De universo* VIII. 1 (PL, 111. 220): ‘Pardus autem mystice significat diabolum diuersius uirtutis plenissimum uel peccatorem quemlibet maculis scelerum et diuersorum errorum aspersum’ [Symbolically, however, the pard signifies the devil, overflowing with differing vices, or any sinner defiled by the stains of their crimes and various sins], Rabanus Maurus, *Commentaria in Ecclesiasticum* (PL, 109. 972), Antonius, *Vita S. Simeonis*, XIII (PL, 73. 331) and Floidardus Remensis, *De triumphis Christi Antiochiae* (PL, 135. 577).
17. *Song of Solomon* 4. 8: ‘Venne di Libano, sponsa, [...] de cubilibus leonum, de montibus pardorum’ [Come from Libanus, my spouse, [...] from the dens of the lions, from the mountains
of the leopards [pardorum]; Isaiah 11. 6: ‘Habitabit lupus cum agno, et pardus cum haedo acubabit; vitulus, et leo, et ovis, simul morabuntur’ [The wolf shall dwell with the lamb: and the leopard [pardus] shall lie down with the kid: the calf and the lion, and the sheep shall abide together]; Jeremiah 13. 23: ‘Si mutare potest Aethiops pellem suam. Aut pardus varietates suas, et vos poteritis benefacere, cum didiceritis malum’ [If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard [pardus] his spots: you may also do well, when you have learned evil]; Ecclesiasticus 28. 27: ‘quasi leo et quasi pardus laedet illos’ [and it shall be sent upon them as a lion, and as a leopard [pardus] it shall tear them]; Daniel 7. 6: ‘et ecce alia quasi pardus et alas habebat avis quattuor super se, et quattuor capita erant in bestia; et potestas data est ei’ [After this I beheld, and lo, another like a leopard [pardus], and it had upon it four wings as of a fowl, and the beast had four heads, and power was given to it]; Hosea 13. 7: ‘Et ego ero eis quasi leaea, sicut pardus in via Assyrorum’ [And I will be to them as a lioness, as a leopard [pardus] in the way of the Assyrians]; Habakkuk 1. 6–8: ‘Quia ecce ego suscitabo Chaldeos, gentem amaram et velocem, [...] leviores pardis equi eius, et velociores lupis vespertinis’ [For behold, I will raise up the Chaldeans, a bitter and swift nation, [...] Their horses are lighter than leopards [pardis], and swifter than evening wolves]; Revelation 13. 2: ‘Et bestia, quam vidi, similis erat pardo’ [And the beast, which I saw, was like to a leopard [pardo]].

18. See for instance Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, MS 213, f. 335r.
19. See for instance Athanasius, Vita B. Antonii Abbatis (PL, 73. 131): ‘pardus discolor auctoris sui calliditates varias indicabat’ [the many-hued pard showed the fickle cunning of its nature]; Rupertus Tuitiensis, Commentarius in librum Ecclesiastas (PL, 168. 1257); Henricus de Castro Marsiaco, Epistolae, XXIX (PL, 204. 236–7); Rupertus Tuitiensis, De victoria Verbi Dei (PL, 169. 1398): ‘astutum atque versutum secundum pardum varietatem’ [sly and full of wily cunning like the mottled appearance of the pard].
21. Aquinas, In Jeremia, 13. 2. The same reading can be found in Thomas à Becket, Epistolae: ‘pardus varietates suas, sic fallaciam et fraudem exuere nesciunt’ [like the pard its spots, they do not know how to cast off deceitfulness and fraud] (PL, 190. 498); Jacobus de Benevento, De adventu Antichristi, in S. Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia: ‘Assimilatur autem pardo propter varietatem fraudulentiarum suarum fraudulentus valde erit’ [Yet he is comparable to the pard, because of the variety of his deceits, he will be very deceitful].
22. In these generic interpretations, the pardus is connected to the multiplicity of sins. See for instance Rabanus Maurus, Allegorae in universam sacram scripturam (PL, 112. 1022); Peter Damian, Dialogus inter Iudaeum et Christianum, ad Honestum (PL, 145. 62).
23. PL, 83. 466.
24. Sermones de tempore (PL, 195. 215). See also Martinus Legionensis, Sermones: ‘Pardus quia in se colore habet varios, significat subdolos’ [The pard because it has upon it many colours, signifies the treacherous] (PL, 208. 33).
26. See for instance Guibert of Nognet, Tropologiae in prophetas Asee et Amos ac Lamentationes Jeremiae (PL, 156. 407).
27. ‘Quid enim aliud est fraudolentia, quam astuta malitia, ad omnem fraudem tam prona quam prompta? Recte hypocritarum fraudolentia in pardo figuratur qui per totum corpus maculis quibusdam respergitur’ [For what else is deceitfulness than cunning wickedness, as much prone as eager for every fraud. Rightly the deceitfulness of the hypocrites is figured in the pard, which is spattered with certain spots over its whole body] (PL, 196. 1358–9).
28. See for instance Bruno of Asti, Expositio in Apocalypse: ‘Pardus est animal multa macularum varietate depictum; merito ergo haec bestia pardo similis dicitur, quia ut infida, instabiles, versipellis, omnibus mentitur et in omnes deceptionis se vertit figuras’ [The pard is an animal painted with a wide variety of spots; deservedly, therefore, this beast is called similar to a pard, because as it is treacherous, inconstant, double-dealing, it lies to everyone and turns itself to all forms of deception] (PL, 165. 674); Haymo Halberstatisens, Expositio in Apocalypse: ‘In varietate sicutem pardi, [...] ostenditur [...] omnium hypocritarum, atque omnium reproborum fictae actiones’ [Accordingly, in the pard’s changeability is shown the feigned actions of all hypocrites and all reprobatos] (PL, 117. 1093). See also the Uncertain Author’s Expositio in Apocalypse (PL, 17. 883).
See for instance Bede, *Allegorica expositio in Cantica canticorum*: ‘Leones quippe sunt daemonia, propter superbiam; pardi, propter crudelitatem sive varietatem artium malignarum’ [Obviously, the lions are devils because of their pride; the pards, because of their cruelty or the variety of their malign deceits] (PL, 91. 1138); Anselm of Laon, *Enarrationes in Cantica canticorum*: ‘quia distincti sunt varii sectis et haeresibus, sicut pardus varii maculis’ [because they are distinguished by their various sects and heresies, just as the pards by its various spots] (PL, 162. 1208); Onorius of Autun, *Expositio in Cantica canticorum*: ‘Pardi vero sunt haeretici in dogmate erroris variis’ [In truth the pards are the heretics, differing in their doctrine of error] (PL, 172. 418–20).

See also Uncertain Author, *Expositio in Cantica Canticorum* (attributed to Cassiodorus): ‘Coronatur [scl. Ecclesia] et de cubilibus leonum et monibus pardorum, quando superbos et quosque saevos ac dolosos convertit’ [She [i.e. the Church] is crowned by the lions and the mountains of pards, at which time she converts the proud and those who are savages and the treacherous] (PL, 70. 1076); Gregory the Great, *Expositio super Cantica canticorum*: ‘Pardi quippe maculas in cute semper portant, pro quos qui ali quam hypocritae vel discordes significantur?’ [The pards, of course, always wear spots on their skin, by which who other than the hypocrites or the inconsistent could be signified?] (PL, 79. 511–12); Gillebertus de Holilandia, *Sermones in Canticum Salomonis*: ‘Nescio enim quid asperum, quid ferum, quid fraudulentum in vel nominibus, vel naturis datur intelligi’ [For I do not know any rough, any savage, any deceitful thing that is given to be understood in either these names or natures] (PL, 184. 151); Thomas Cisterciensis, *Commentaria in Cantica canticorum*: ‘Quia pardus est animal distinctum varii maculis, designatur duplices et deceptores’ [Because the pard is an animal distinguished by various spots, they are marked out as duplicitous and betrayers] (PL, 206. 291); Martinus Legionensis, *Sermones*: ‘Pardi quippe maculas in cute semper portant, pro quos quam hypocritae vel discordes significantur?’ [The pards, of course, always wear spots on their skin, by which the hypocrites or the inconsistent are signified] (PL, 208. 1208); Alanus de Insulis, *Distinctiones dictionum theologica*: ‘Pardus proprius. Dictur etiam haereticus qui diversis fraudibus decipit’ [The pard, specifically. It is said also [to be] the heretic who deceives by his different frauds] (PL, 210. 891); Peter Damian, *Sermones*: ‘pardi autem, quia hoc animal varii coloris est, propter deceptionis ac fraudis multitudem varietatem’ [pards, however, because this animal is of differing colour, on account of the multiplicitous variety of deception and fraud] (PL, 144. 688; passage repeated by Peter in his Collectanea in Vetus Testamentum, PL, 145. 1147); Wolbero Sancti Pantaleoni, *Commentaria in Cantica canticorum* (PL, 195. 1160); Richard of Saint Victor, *In Cantica canticorum explicatio*: ‘Leones quoque et pardi sunt daemones; quia nunc, aperta iniquitate, saevientes quosdam decipiunt, nunc blandis consiliis et variis fraudibus rectos seducunt’ [Also lions and pards are devils; because now by open iniquity they deceive certain raging men, now by flattering counsel and by various frauds they seduce the upright] (PL, 196. 482); Philip of Harveng, *Commentaria in Cantica canticorum* (PL, 203. 383–4).


This interpretation has been proposed by some commentators, including Carlo Steiner, Isidoro Del Lungo, Carlo Grabber and Luigi Pietrobono, and more recently by Charles S. Singleton, Robert Hollander and Nicola Fosca (for the sake of convenience, commentaries are cited wherever possible following the Dartmouth Dante Project (DDP): https://dante.dartmouth.edu/). Daniele Maria Pegorari brings new arguments and evidence to support the interpretation, in ‘La lonza svelata. Fonti classiche, cristiane e “interne” dell’allegoria della frode’, *Giornale storico della Letteratura italiana*, 192 (2015): 523–41.

This interpretation is maintained by Fernando Salsano and Gaetano Ragonese, ‘Fiera’, in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (ED), 6 vols (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970–8), II (1970), 857–61, which also provides references to the ancient commentary tradition. Other references and arguments supporting this position are offered by Francesco Mazzoni, who considers the three beasts ‘il simbolo concreto di tre impedimenti radicali (cioè connotati all’uomo) propri della natura umana vulnerata dal peccato d’origine (e quindi comuni a tutti gli uomini)’ [the concrete symbol of the three radical (i.e. of second nature to men) impediments [that are] characteristic of human nature wounded by Original Sin (and therefore common to all men)]; Saggio di un nuovo commento alla ‘Divina Commedia’: Inferno canti I–III (Florence: Sansoni, 1967), ad Inf. 1. 21. These three impediments are understood to be the same that St John also speaks of: ‘Omne quod est in mundo, concupiscientia carnis est, et concupiscientia oculorum, et superbia vitae, quae non est ex patre, sed ex mundo est’ [For all that
is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world) (1 John 2. 16). The same position is supported in the commentaries by Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio; Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi; Giorgio Inglese (Rome: Carocci, 2016); Saverio Bellomo (Turin: Einaudi, 2011). Inglese's argumentation is especially clear: after quoting the passage from Jeremiah 5. 6, he appends a reference to Hugh of St Cher, that has become a commonplace in the commentary tradition since the early nineteenth-century essay by Giovanni Busnelli, Il simbolo delle tre fiere dantesche: ricerche e studi intorno al prologo della Commedia (Rome: Civiltà Cattolica, 1909), 35. Inglese's contribution reads: ‘Ugo di San Caro (m. 1263) vede in queste belve il diavolo in tre forme: “mystice leo est diabolus inquantum est superbus, lupus […] inquantum de luxuria [temptat] […] pardus […] inquantum de avaritia” (ed. Colonia 1621, t. IV, c. 190v). In D. le tre fiere, che impediscono l’ascesa al bene, hanno appunto il ruolo di tentazioni diaboliche, più o meno forti: “lussuria, superbia, avarizia” […] Determinante I Io. 2, 16: “omne quod est in mundo concupiscientia carnis [desiderio carnale] et concupiscientia oculorum [brama di possesso] est et superbia vitae”’ [Hugh of St Cher (d.1263) sees in these beasts the devil in three forms: ‘symbolically the lion is the devil in as much as he is proud, the wolf […] in as much as he tempts by lust […], the pard […] in as much as by avarice’ (ed. Colonia 1621, vol. IV, fol. 190v). In D. the three beasts, which block the ascent to righteousness, have exactly the role of the devil’s temptations, whether stronger or weaker: ‘lust, pride, avarice’ […]. As I John 2. 16 avers: ‘For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh (carnal desire), and the concupiscence of the eyes (desire for worldly goods), and the pride of life’. This exegetical tradition suggests a connection between Hugh of St Cher’s gloss to Jeremiah and the passage from St John’s epistle. But no trace of such a connection can be found in Hugh’s text. The two traditions are entirely separate, connected only in Dantesque exegesis. Nor could the complete passage of Hugh of St Cher on Jeremiah be used as proof for the interpretation of the three beasts as symbols of lust, pride and avarice: ‘Mystice. Leo est diabolus, in quantum est superbus, et in quantum de superbia tentat. Lupus, ipse idem de luxuria, quia lupus gaudet de effusione sanguinis. Pardus in quantum de avaritia, quia variat, et turbat cor, et in quantum de dolositate, et fallacia’ [Symbolically: the lion is the devil, in as much as he is proud, and in as much as he tempts by pride; the wolf, [the devil] as he tempts by lust, because the wolf rejoices in the spilling of blood; the pard, in as much as [he tempts] by avarice, because he fluctuates and disturbs the heart, and in as much as [he tempts] by trickery and by deception]: Hugonis Cardinalis, Opera Omnia in Universum Vetus, et Novum Testamentum, 8 vols (Venice: apud Nicolaum Pezzana, 1703), IV, 190. As can be seen, while in Hugh there are the three vices of pride, lust and avarice, the correspondence between animals and vices is different from that proposed by Dante commentators. Only the meaning of the lion is the same. The she-wolf, instead, is interpreted as a symbol of lust, not of avarice, and the pardus as a symbol of avarice, not of lust. Moreover, a connection with fraud is also suggested for the pardus: ‘Pardus […] et in quantum de dolositate, et fallacia’ [The pard […] in as much as [he tempts] both by trickery and by deception]. So Hugh’s passage cannot be used as a proof for the traditional interpretation of the three beasts as symbols of lust, pride and avarice. On the contrary, it adds another proof in favour of the interpretation of the lonza/pardus as a symbol of fraud.


36. See for instance, Pietro Alighieri’s commentary, third redaction.


38. This section of the Bestiario toscano is present only in appendices to the text witnessed in just two manuscripts out of a total of 16. See Bestiari medievali, 426–30, where this section is excluded.

39. The only property of the loncia here connected to lust is taken from Bartholomaeus Anglicus’s chapter on the pardus, an animal for which the symbolism of fraud is absolutely prevalent. The leopardus too, on the other hand, is presented by Bartholomaeus and by the Bestiario toscano as a cunning, astute and fraudulent animal.

40. See Inf., VI. 74–5: ‘superbia, invidia e avarizia sono | le tre faville ch’anno i cuori accesi’ [pride, envy, and greed are the three sparks that have set hearts ablaze]; XV. 68: ‘gent’è avara, invidiosa e superba’ [they are people avaricious, envious, and proud]. The entry ‘Lonza’ in
41. The medieval bestiary tradition that the lynx’s urine changes into a hard, precious stone, sometimes concealed by the animal to impede its pursuers, can make it a symbol of envy: see the sources in note 7 above, plus Ps.-Hugh of St Victor, De bestiis, III. 3 (PL 177. 64).

42. For bibliographical references, see ‘Lonza’, in ED.

43. See for instance the commentaries of Mazzoni and Chiavacci Leonardi.

44. See Gregory the Great, Moralia in Iob, V. 21. 41, ed. Marcus Adriaen (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979–85), in Corpus Christianorum Latinorum, 143: ‘Habet quippe leo virtutem, habet et saevitiam. Virtute ergo Dominum, saevitia diabolum signat’ [Of course the lion has strength, and has ferocity. By its strength, therefore, it represents the Lord, and by its ferocity it represents the devil]. See also Ciccarese, Animali simbolici, II, 13–19.

45. The diabolical symbolism of the lion is frequently underlined by Augustine, who associates the lion and the dragon. See, for instance, Enarratio in Psalmum, LXIX. 2 (PL, 36. 867): ‘Diabolus ille biformis est. Leo est in impetu, draco in insidiis’ [The devil himself is two-formed. He is the lion in his attack, the dragon in his ambushes]; Enarratio in Psalmum, XC. 9 (PL, 37. 1168): ‘Leo apere saevit; draco occulte insidiatur: utramque vim et potestatem habet diabolum’ [The lion rages openly; the dragon lies in ambush secretly: just as the devil has both force and power]. See also Rabanus Maurus, De universo: ‘Leo, Diabolus ob fortitudinem et crudelitatem’ [The lion, the devil on account of his strength and cruelty] (PL, 111, 219).

46. See the numerous texts quoted above.

47. See Augustine, Tractatus in Johannis Evangelium, XLVI. 7: ‘Quis est lupus nisi diabolus?’ (PL 35, 1731) [What is the wolf if not the devil?]; Ps.-Hugh of St Victor, De bestiis, III. 20 (PL, 177. 67): ‘eius figuram diabolus portat’ [the devil bears the figure (of the wolf)]. The encyclopaedic tradition underlines the proprieties of ferocity, anger and rapacity. See Isidore of Seville, Etym., XII. ii. 24: ‘Rapax autem bestia et cruorix appetens’ [It is a violent beast, eager for gore].

48. See Boethius, De consolatione philosophiae, ed. Karl Büchner (Heidelberg: Editiones Heidelbergenses, 1960), IV. iii. 17: ‘Avvaritiam fervet alienarum opum violentum ereptor: lupi similem dixeris’ [The violent despoiler of other men’s goods, enflamed with covetousness, surely resembles a wolf].

49. Morton W. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State College Press, 1952), 244; Mireille Vincent-Cassy, ‘Les animaux et les péchés capitaux: de la symbolique a l’emblématique’, in Le monde animal et ses représentations au Moyen Âge, ed. Francis Cervan (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1985), 121–32 (126–9). Bartholomaeus Anglicus: ‘Rapax autem bestia et cruorix appetens, qui rabie rapacitatis quemcumque invenerit trucidat’ [It is a violent beast, eager for gore, which by the madness of rapacity slays whomever it comes across]. Glosses such as: ‘Nota contra luxuriosos’ [Note against the lustful], and ‘Nota contra gulosos’ [Note against the gluttonous] appear in the manuscript tradition. In the third book of the De bestiis can be found an interesting reference to the she-wolf: ‘Unde et meretriices lupas vocitamus, quia amatorum bona devastant’ [Whence we also call prostitutes she-wolves, because they lay waste to the possessions of their lovers], Ps.-Hugh of St Victor, De bestiis, III. 20 (PL, 177. 67). On the lustful nature of the she-wolf see also Brunetto Latini, Tresor, I. 190: ‘Et quant li tens de sa luxure vient, plusors loups ensivent par route une lieue; mes a la fin ele resgarde entre touz et eslit le plus laide qui gise o li’ [When it is time to mate, several males follow a female, and they all go around her, and finally the she-wolf looks them all over and selects the puniest and the ugliest and lies with him].

50. The mention of the she-wolf in Purg, XX is usually interpreted as referring to avarice. Yet in this passage it does not seem possible to distinguish the image of the she-wolf – given its radical negativity – from that of the ‘femmina balba’ of the protagonist’s dream in the previous canto (Purg. XIX, 10–60) who, as Virgil explicitly indicates, represents the three vices punished on the three last terraces of Purgatory; avarice, gluttony and lust. These vices are interpreted in Hell as sins of incontinence, therefore this reference is not incompatible with the interpretation of the three beasts as fraud, violence and incontinence.

51. Though the male wolf bears a different value in Ugolino’s dream, Inf., XXXII. 29.

52. See Gorni.