

Some critics have lamented that the doctrines presented and explained in *Paradiso* are by and large orthodox, pretty much what was taught in the schools, even if presented in often surprising and spectacular ways. We might observe that the goal of the *Paradiso* is not to innovate on doctrine, but to teach and to explain what is known, like any good vernacular exposition; and, moreover, to make its readers enamored of it, which is in the power of poetry. In the end, the daring of *Paradiso* is less in its absolute originality of thought than in its feats of poetic expression, stunning imagery, and integration of threads of divergent traditions. It remains daring perhaps, most of all, in its "pails of milk," that is, in its choice of humble linguistic container: the vernacular. Despite protests of unsayability in the journey "beyond the human," Dante clearly thought big ideas were worth explaining in a language even those unschooled in learned Latin culture could understand. His choice for the idiom of his own time and place, rather than the cosmopolitan one, meant that his poem would eventually have to be translated and explained for new readers in different times and places, especially for those who call his time ancient.

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Translator's Preface

My approach to translating *Paradiso* has been substantially the same as that outlined in the Translator's Preface to my translation of *Inferno*: a close, nearly line-for-line rendering in an American poetic vernacular. I have relied upon Charles Singleton's comprehensive commentary to the *Commedia* as my main guide to the Italian text, especially in resolving the meaning of the many disputed passages. Meaning of course is paramount in translation, but it is matters of style, insofar as style is distinguishable from meaning, that confront the translator with the critical choices that will define his translation as art.

The main stylistic choices I have made in recreating Dante's poem in English may be separated into matters of diction, tone, and verse form. Dante's range of diction and tone in *Inferno*, rising to outraged and sometimes austere dignity at times but equally at home with hellish obscenities, maps well onto the vernacular of contemporary American speech and poetry. (One reviewer has compared the language of my translation of *Inferno* to the edgy dialogue in a typical Martin Scorsese film). Dante's range of diction and rhetorical tone in *Purgatorio*, while still vernacular, is largely contained in a higher register than in *Inferno*—we no longer have the colorful speech of the damned, but diatribes of various sorts continue, and Beatrice's memorable tongue-lashing of Dante on the summit of Mount Purgatory is in a register of its own.

In *Paradiso* the diatribes, perhaps surprisingly, continue, though they are somewhat rarer. Beatrice has replaced Virgil as a meticulous expositor of the poem's philosophical and increasingly theological background, and she is joined in this role by a wide range of other blessed souls (as Alison Cornish points out in her Introduction, everybody in Paradise is a professor). These passages place demands on the translator for accuracy wedded to eloquence. But nothing in the *Commedia* tests the translator's sensitivity to poetic tone as those passages in *Paradiso* where Dante manages to express in his vernacular an experience of ineffable beauty that culminate in his vision of God at the end of the poem. Throughout the range of his registers Dante

himself is a sure guide to the translator who pays close attention to his author's shifts in tone and subtle modulations of style.

The choice of verse form presents its own problems. Dante's signature interlocking triple rhyme scheme throughout the *Commedia*—*ABA BCB CDC* etc.—can and has been replicated in English with some success, but at the cost of frequent unnatural inversions, archaisms, and loose or padded translation. Rhymed translation is always a difficult fit in translation into English; triple rhyme sustained over thousands of lines (the *Commedia* is 14,233 lines long) is extremely compromising. Another consideration is that English rhyme tends to be on the final syllable, calling attention to itself in a way that rhyme in Italian, which tends to be over the last two syllables and as a natural by-product of grammatical inflection and word suffixes, does not. Hearing Dante recited in Italian one is aware of but not overpowered by the rhymes. At the same time it would be a mistake to ignore rhyme entirely in a translation that aims to give some sense of the poetics of the original text. I have opted to use rhyme where I think it counts the most: to provide closure to each of the *Commedia*'s one hundred cantos, segueing into rhyme towards the end of each canto and concluding with interlocked final rhymes.

Just as important as rhyme in the dynamics of Dante's verse is the tercet structure and the rhythmic integrity of each line, both of which I work to preserve in translation. Dante's eleven-syllable line tends to have three accental beats with several relatively unstressed syllables between each beat and one or more word-ending vowels elided—features that I have incorporated into my verse line, although I have allowed the lines to vary in length from nine to twelve syllables. This is very nearly a line-for-line translation, certainly tercet-for-tercet, matching up as closely as possible with the facing Italian text and its rhetorical and verse structure.

In spite of the fact that in the text of his poem he occasionally addresses the reader, Dante's intended audience included listeners. The poem was composed to be heard as well as read. A tradition of solo performers arose and has continued to this day (Roberto Benigni being the latest and perhaps the most famous). I have followed suit, composing my translations of all three canticles of Dante's *Commedia* for performance and, as far as I have been able, revising the translation in the light of live readings for audiences, with attention at this

stage especially to sentence and verse rhythm (a major determinant of tone) and overall poetic force. The translation is addressed to a number of audiences: undergraduate students and their instructors, Dante scholars, the general reader, and the community of American poets. I have tried to take into account the interests of all of these constituents.

I owe a large debt of gratitude to Alison Cornish for the splendid Introduction she has provided to the poem, as well as for the headnotes and illuminating endnotes to each canto. My deep thanks also to Professor Cornish for reading the translation in draft and making numerous corrections and suggestions to improve it. My thanks also to Rebekah Curry for her work in compiling the Index of the Blessed. And my warmest gratitude to Anne Shaw and Dee Johnson for our weekly meetings to read aloud and discuss the Italian text of *Paradiso*, as we had done with *Purgatorio*. Finally, as ever, I am grateful to Brian Rak and the staff at Hackett for seeing this project through.

Note on the Text

The Italian text of *Paradiso* substantially accords with Giorgio Petrocchi's critical edition (*La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, Milan, Mondadori, 1966). New conventions for line indentation and verse paragraphing have been adopted.

CANTO I

DANTE'S PARADISE BEGINS WITH GLORY, a term used for fame, especially literary fame, elsewhere in the poem, and alluded to in this canto by Dante's prayer to "good Apollo" to make him worthy of the laurel crown. In the first lines of the canticle glory is seen from its point of origin, in "Him who moves all things," as it penetrates and is reflected back by the universe. The third line establishes an important, and somewhat surprising, principle in the Paradiso: that of inequality, or diversity—the more and less—of goodness. This hierarchical understanding of goodness applies even to the always changing position of the sun, where the first point of Aries is described as "a better course and in conjunction / with better stars" (37–42). Ordered diversity, or hierarchy, as Beatrice explains in this inaugural canto, is what "makes the universe an image of God" (103–5), who Himself admits of no such differences, no "less" or "more." Diversity in the universe is thus a solution to a problem of representation: how God makes an image of Himself in what is not Himself—a problem that is foregrounded in the Paradiso because it is the essential problem also of the poet. Dante claims to have had an experience of Paradise, of the ultimate metaphysical heaven that later he will describe as the "mind of God," but he does not claim that he will be able to communicate it to his audience, especially since even his own memory—a storehouse of images—was not able to retain what was an imageless, face-to-face experience of divinity. All he can offer will be whatever trace he "could store as treasure in [his] mind" (11), a "shadow / of the blessed realm that is stamped on [his] brain" (23–24), an "example" that must "suffice / for those granted the experience by grace" (71–72). Dante leaves it somewhat ambiguous whether he ascended

La gloria di colui che tutto move
per l'universo penetra, e risplende
in una parte più e meno altrove.
Nel ciel che più de la sua luce prende
fu' io, e vidi cose che ridire
né sa né può chi di là sù discende;

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through all the planetary spheres and even into the metaphysical realm in the flesh or in some sort of out-of-body experience (73–75), although he claims that one is already more physically capable of vision in the garden of Eden where, copying Beatrice, he is able to stare directly at the sun for longer "than men ever can" (54). He also imagines a quasi-physical mechanism of reflected light and of love's "gravity" in order to account for his swift ascent through the spheres. His unaccustomed ability to stare at the sun emerges from his seeing Beatrice do the same, "as a second ray of light, reflected / from the first, will shoot back up again" (49–50). So too, because of his renewed state after climbing Purgatory, his "rising above these light bodies" (99) is analogous to the physical movement of sublunar elements to their natural place, no more to be wondered at than "a stream descending / down to the plain from a mountain height" (137–38). At the same time, the transgressive risks of this journey are apparent from the start. St Paul had said that he knew a man, "whether in the body or out of the body I know not," who had been rapt to the third heaven, but he also said that he had seen hidden things that were not lawful to be told. Outdoing even Paul, Dante claims to have visited all of the heavens, including the one "that most receives / His light" (4–5), and will attempt to retell all he can remember. Underlining the transgressiveness of such an enterprise is the invocation to Apollo that he might be inspired as was the satyrmusician Marsyas, who was flayed "out of the scabbard of his body" (21) in punishment for competing with the gods.

The glory of Him who moves all things
penetrates the universe, and its splendor
reflects more in one part and in another less.
I was in the heaven that most receives
His light, and I saw things that no one who
comes down from there can know how to tell;

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perché appressando sé al suo disire,
 nostro intelletto si profonda tanto,
 che dietro la memoria non può ire.
 Veramente quant'io del regno santo
 ne la mia mente potei far tesoro,
 sarà ora materia del mio canto.

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O buono Appollo, a l'ultimo lavoro
 fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso,
 come dimandi a dar l'amato alloro.
 Infino a qui l'un giogo di Parnaso
 assai mi fu; ma or con amendue
 m'è uopo intrar ne l'aringo rimaso.
 Entra nel petto mio, e spira tue
 sì come quando Marsia traesti
 de la vagina de le membra sue.
 O divina virtù, se mi ti presti
 tanto che l'ombra del beato regno
 segnata nel mio capo io manifesti,
 vedrà mi al piè del tuo diletto legno
 venire, e coronarmi de le foglie
 che la materia e tu mi farai degno.
 Sì rade volte, padre, se ne coglie
 per triunfare o cesare o poeta,
 colpa e vergogna de l'umane voglie,
 che parturir letizia in su la lieta
 delfica deità dovrìa la fronda
 peneia, quando alcun di sé asseta.
 Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda:
 forse di retro a me con miglior voci
 si pregherà perché Cirra risponda.

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Surge ai mortali per diverse foci
 la lucerna del mondo; ma da quella
 che quattro cerchi giugne con tre croci,
 con miglior corso e con migliore stella
 esce congiunta, e la mondana cera
 più a suo modo tempera e suggella.

For our intellect, as it draws itself close
 to its desire, goes so deep that memory
 is not able to follow it there.
 As much, however, of the holy kingdom
 as I could store as treasure in my mind,
 I will now make the matter of my song.

O good Apollo, for this final labor
 make me as much a vessel of your power
 as you require to bestow your beloved laurel.
 Up until now one peak of Parnassus
 has been enough, but now I need both
 as I enter into the last arena.

Come into my breast, and breathe there
 as you did when you drew Marsyas
 out of the scabbard of his body.
 If you inspire me, O power divine,
 to show even as much as the shadow

of the blessed realm that is stamped on my brain,
 You will see me come to your cherished tree
 and crown myself with those leaves, of which
 my theme and your godhead will make me worthy.

So seldom, Father, does Caesar or poet
 gather those leaves for triumph—and this
 is the fault and shame of human wills—
 That the Peneian bough ought to beget
 gladness in the glad Delphic deity

whenever it makes anyone long for it.
 A great flame follows a little spark.
 Perhaps after me some more eloquent prayer
 will be answered by Cyrrha, your sacred peak.

The lamp of the world rises on mortals
 from different points; but from the point that joins
 four celestial circles, making three crosses,

The sun takes a better course and in conjunction
 with better stars, tempering and stamping
 the wax of the world more in its own fashion.

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Fatto avea di là mane e di qua sera
 tal focè, e quasi tutto era là bianco
 quello emisperio, e l'altra parte nera,
 quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco
 vidi rivolta e riguardar nel sole:
 aguglia sì non li saffisse unquanco.
 E sì come secondo raggio suole
 uscir del primo e risalire in suso,
 pur come pelegrin che tornar vuole,
 così de l'attro suo, per li occhi infuso
 ne l'immagine mia, il mio si fece,
 e fissi li occhi al sole oltre nostr' uso.
 Molto è licito là, che qui non lece
 a le nostre virtù, mercé del loco
 fatto per proprio de l'umana spece.

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Io nol sofferesi molto, né sì poco,
 ch'io nol vedessi sfavillar dintorno,
 com'ferro che bogliente esce del foco;
 e di sùbito parve giorno a giorno
 essere aggiunto, come quei che puote
 avesse il ciel d'un altro sole addorno.
 Beatrice tutta ne l'etterne rote
 fissa con li occhi stava; e io in lei
 le luci fissi, di là sù rimote.
 Nel suo aspetto tal dentro mi fei,
 qual si fé Glauco nel gustar de l'erba
 che 'l fé consorto in mar de li altri dèi.
 Trasumanar significar per verba
 non si poria; però l'esempio basti
 a cui esperienza grazia serba.
 S'i' era sol di me quel che creasti
 novellamente, amor che 'l ciel governi,
 tu 'l sai, che col tuo lume mi levasti.
 Quando la rota che tu sempiterni
 desiderato, a sé mi fece atteso
 con l'armonia che temperi e discerni,

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Its rising near that point had made morning there
 and evening here, and that hemisphere
 was almost all white, while the other was black,
 When I saw Beatrice, who had turned
 around to her left, staring at the sun.
 No eagle has ever fixed his eyes on it so.
 And as a second ray of light, reflected
 from the first, will shoot back up again
 like a pilgrim longing to return to his home,
 So Beatrice's action, infused through my eyes
 into my mind, made me do the same, and I
 stared at the sun more than men ever can.
 Much is granted to our faculties there
 that we do not have here, for that was the place
 created for the human race to possess.

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I had not endured the sun long, but not so briefly
 that I did not see it scintillating
 like molten iron pouring out from a forge,
 When suddenly it seemed that another day
 was added to the day, as if He who is able
 had adorned the sky with a second sun.
 Beatrice stood with her eyes fixed solely
 on the eternal spheres and, withdrawing mine
 from above, I now fixed them on her.
 What I saw in her changed me within,
 As Glauco was when he tasted the herb
 that made him one of the gods of the sea.
 Becoming transhuman cannot be
 put into words; let this example suffice
 for those granted the experience by grace.
 Whether I was then only that part of me
 You created last, You alone know, O Love
 who rule the heavens and drew me up with your light.
 When the wheeling that You make sempiternal
 by being desired, held my attention
 with the harmony that You arrange and temper,

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parvemi tanto allor del cielo acceso
 de la fiamma del sol, che pioggia o fiume
 lago non fece alcun tanto disteso.
 La novità del suono e 'l grande lume
 di lor cagion m'accesero un disio
 mai non sentito di cotanto acume.
 Ond' ella, che vedea me sì com' io,
 a quietarmi l'animo commosso,
 pria ch'io a dimandar, la bocca aprio
 e comincì: "Tu stesso ti fai grosso
 col falso imaginar, sì che non vedi
 ciò che vedresti se l'avessi scosso.
 Tu non se' in terra, sì come tu credi;
 ma folgore, fuggendo il proprio sito,
 non corse come tu ch'ad esso riedi."

S'io fui del primo dubbio disvestito
 per le sorrise parolette brevi,
 dentro ad un nuovo più fu' inretito
 e dissi: "Già contento requievi
 di grande ammirazion; ma ora ammiro
 com'io trascenda questi corpi levi."
 Ond' ella, appresso d'un pio sospiro,
 li occhi drizzò ver' me con quel sembiante
 che madre fa sovra figlio deliro,
 e comincì: "Le cose tutte quante
 hanno ordine tra loro, e questo è forma
 che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante.
 Qui veggion l'alte creature l'orma
 de l'eterno valore, il qual è fine
 al quale è fatta la toccata norma.
 Ne l'ordine ch'io dico sono accline
 tutte nature, per diverse sorti,
 più al principio loro e men vicine;
 onde si muovono a diversi porti
 per lo gran mar de l'essere, e ciascuna
 con istinto a lei dato che la porti.

So much of the sky then seemed on fire
 with the sun's flame that neither rain nor river
 ever made a lake spread out so broad.
 The newness of the sound and of the great light
 kindled a desire in me to know their cause.
 I had never felt desire so keen,
 And she who saw me as I saw myself,
 opened her lips to calm my troubled mind
 before I could open my own to ask.
 She said, "You are making yourself dull
 with false imaginings, and so cannot see
 as you would if you had just cast them aside;
 You are not on earth, as you believe you are.
 Lightning flying from its own place in the sky
 does not run as fast as you return to yours."

If I was freed from my first perplexity
 by the few smiling words she spoke to me,
 I was more entangled in a new one now
 And said, "I was already content, resting
 from a great wonder, but now I wonder
 how I can be rising above these light bodies."
 Then Beatrice, with a sigh of pity,
 turned her eyes on me with the sort of look
 a mother gives her delirious child,
 And began, "All things whatsoever possess
 order among themselves, and this is the form
 that makes the universe an image of God.
 Here the higher creatures see the impress
 of eternal excellence, the end and goal
 of the order that we have touched upon,
 And in this order all beings have
 their own natural bent, according with their lots,
 some nearer and some farther to their Source.
 They move, therefore, to different ports
 over the great sea of being, each of them
 endowed with an instinct that bears it along.

117 Questi ne porta il foco inver' la luna;
 questi né' cor mortali è permotore;
 questi la terra in sé stringe e aduna;
 né pur le creature che son fore
 d'intelligenza quest' arco saetta,
 120 ma quelle c'hanno intelletto e amore.
 La provedenza, che cotanto assetta,
 del suo lume fa 'l ciel sempre quieto
 123 nel qual si volge quel c'ha maggior fretta;
 e ora li, come a sito decreto,
 cen porta la virtù di quella corda
 126 che ciò che scocca drizza in segno lieto.
 Vero è che, come forma non s'accorda
 molte fiata a l'intenzion de l'arte,
 129 perch' a risponder la materia è sorda,
 così da questo corso si diparte
 talor la creatura, c'ha podere
 132 di piègar, così pinta, in altra parte;
 e sì come veder si può cadere
 foco di nube, sì l'impeto primo
 135 l'atterra torto da falso piacere.
 Non dei più ammirar, se bene stimo,
 lo tuo salir, se non come d'un rivo
 138 se d'alto monte scende giuso ad imo.
 Maraviglia sarebbe in te se, privo
 d'impedimento, giù ti fossi assiso,
 141 com' a terra quiete in foco vivo."
 Quinci rivolse inver' lo cielo il viso.

This instinct bears fire up to the moon;
 this is the moving force in mortal hearts;
 117 this holds the earth together and makes it one.
 And this bow shoots not only creatures
 without intelligence, but also those
 120 who are endowed with intellect and love.
 The Providence that keeps all this in place
 quiets with its light the sphere of Heaven
 123 within which turns the one with greatest speed,
 And that is where, as to an appointed place,
 we are being borne by the power of that bow
 that takes aim straight at a joyous mark.
 126 It is true that, just as a shape often
 fails to match the artist's intention
 because the material is not responsive,
 129 So too a creature will sometimes diverge
 from its natural course, if it has the power
 and is impelled to turn in another direction;
 132 And as fire can be seen to fall from a cloud,
 so too the primal impulse, diverted
 by false pleasure, may turn down to the earth.
 135 So you should no more wonder, if I am right,
 at your ascent than at a stream descending
 down to the plain from a mountain height.
 138 If, once your hindrances had come to an end,
 you stayed below, it would cause as much surprise
 as a living flame that failed to ascend."
 141 And then back to the heavens she turned her eyes.

CANTO II

IN THE OPENING ADDRESS TO the reader, Dante is like Ulysses, leading the small group that remains in their "little bark" on a course that "has never been sailed before." Unlike Ulysses, however, the poet warns his followers to look back at the shore and "not put out on the deep." Only a few, those "who have reached out early / for the bread of angels" (10–11), are advised to come along in Dante's wake. The bread of angels is knowledge, an expressed goal of Ulysses' journey, naturally desired but not actively sought by all men. Paradise, or the "realm / that is the form of God" can be defined, precisely, as the only knowledge that can ultimately satisfy this "innate and perpetual thirst" (19–20). Dante compares himself not to his own Ulysses, who did not make it home again, but to Jason, who made the first seafaring journey and brought back the golden fleece, which is the poem we are reading. Dante, perhaps in his own body, is received

3 O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,
 desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti
 dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,
6 tornate a riveder li vostri liti:
 non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,
 perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.
 L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse;
9 Minerva spira, e conducemi Appollo,
 e nove Muse mi dimostran l'Orse.

12 Voi altri pochi che drizzaste il collo
 per tempo al pan de li angeli, del quale
 vivesi qui ma non sen vien satollo,
 metter potete ben per l'alto sale
 vostro navigio, servando mio solco
15 dinanzi a l'acqua che ritorna eguale.

into the shining body of the moon, like a ray of light penetrating water. Yet the pilgrim's first doubt is about the dark spots visible on this "eternal pearl." Beatrice's lengthy lecture on the moonspots, requiring a review of the whole celestial system that brings forth natural processes on the earth, and even suggesting an experiment to try at home, establishes an important principle for these early cantos. The apparent blemishes on this nearest of quintessential bodies are not due to "rarity and density" in the matter of the moon, as if it were lumpy or full of holes; rather they are formal variations as essential to the design of the cosmos as the myriad of different stars turned by the angels, whose diverse "virtues" are constantly bringing forth variety and change in terrestrial things. In this perfect realm of the stars, difference is not a defect, it is by design.

3 O you, who in your desire to listen,
 have followed in your little bark
 my vessel as it sails away in song,
6 Turn around to catch sight of your shores again.
 Do not put out on the deep, for should you
 lose sight of me you might well become lost.
9 The course I set has never been sailed before.
 Minerva's my wind, Appollo my pilot,
 the nine Muses show me the stars of the Bears.

12 You few others who have reached out early
 for the bread of angels, by which men here live
 but never come from wholly satisfied,
15 You may indeed put forth your vessel
 on the salt sea and sail in my wake
 before the water becomes smooth again.

Que' gloriosi che passaro al Colco
 non s'ammiraron come voi farete,
 quando lasón vider fatto bifolco. 18

La concreata e perpetua sete
 del deiforme regno cen portava
 veloci quasi come 'l ciel vedete. 21
 Beatrice in suso, e io in lei guardava;
 e forse in tanto in quanto un quadrel posa
 e vola e da la noce si dischiava,
 giunto mi vidi ove mirabil cosa
 mi torse il viso a sé; e però quella
 cui non potea mia cura essere ascosa,
 volta ver' me, sì lieta come bella,
 "Drizza la mente in Dio grata," mi disse,
 "che n'ha congiunti con la prima stella." 30

Parev' a me che nube ne coprissi
 lucida, spessa, solida e pulita,
 quasi adamantante che lo sol ferisse.
 Per entro sé l'eterna margarita
 ne ricevette, com' acqua recepe
 raggio di luce permanendo unita. 36
 S'io era corpo, e qui non si concepe
 com' una dimensione altra patùo,
 ch'esser convien se corpo in corpo reape,
 accender ne dovria più il disio
 di veder quella essenza in che si vede
 come nostra natura e Dio s'unio. 42
 Lì si vedrà ciò che tenem per fede,
 non dimostrato, ma fia per sé noto
 a guisa del ver primo che l'uom crede. 45

Io rispuosi: "Madonna, sì devoto
 com' esser posso più, ringrazio lui
 lo qual dal mortal mondo m'ha remoto.
 Ma ditemi: che son li segni bui
 di questo corpo, che là giuso in terra
 fan di Cain favoleggiare altrui?" 51

The glorious heroes who sailed to Colchis
 were not as amazed as you shall be
 when they saw Jason plowing the furrowed earth. 18

The innate and perpetual thirst for the realm
 that is the form of God bore us away
 as swiftly as the heavens that you see move. 21
 Beatrice was looking up, and I at her,
 and in the time, perhaps, that it takes a bolt
 to hit its mark, fly, and be shot from a crossbow. 24
 I saw that I had come to a place where
 a marvelous thing attracted my gaze.
 So she, from whom my thought could not be hidden,
 Turned to me, as happy as she was beautiful,
 and said, "Direct your grateful mind to God,
 who has brought us to the first of the stars." 30

It seemed to me that a cloud covered us,
 as shining, dense, solid, and polished
 as a diamond that has been struck by the sun,
 An eternal pearl that took us into itself
 the way water receives a ray of light
 and yet remains whole and inviolate. 36
 If I was a body—and here we cannot conceive
 how one volume admits another,
 which must be if a body enters a body—
 It should kindle more our desire to see
 that essential being in which it is perceived
 how our nature is unified with God. 42
 There will be seen what we now hold as faith,
 not demonstrated but known in itself,
 the way we believe self-evident truth. 45

I replied, "Lady, with all the devotion
 of my heart I give thanks to Him
 who has taken me from the mortal world.
 But tell me, what are the dark spots
 on this body that make men on earth
 tell the story of Cain and his thorns?" 51

Ella sorrisse alquanto, e poi "S'elli erra
 l'oppinion," mi disse, "d'i mortali
 dove chiave di senso non diserra,
 certo non ti dovrien punger li strali
 d'ammirazione omai, poi dietro ai sensi
 vedi che la ragione ha corte l'ali.
 Ma dimmi quel che tu da te ne pensi."
 E io: "Ciò che n'appar qua sù diverso
 credo che fanno i corpi rari e densi."

Ed ella: "Certo assai vedrai sommerso
 nel falso il creder tuo, se bene ascolti
 l'argumentar ch'io li farò avverso.

La spera ottava vi dimostra molti
 lumi, li quali e nel quale e nel quanto
 notar si posson di diversi volti.

Se raro e denso ciò facesser tanto,
 una sola virtù sarebbe in tutti,

più e men distributa e altrettanto.
 Virtù diverse esser convegnon frutti
 di principi formali, e quei, for ch'uno,
 seguirieno a tua ragion distrutti.

Ancor, se raro fosse di quel bruno
 cagion che tu dimandi, o d'oltre in parte
 fora di sua materia sì digiuno

esto pianeta, o, sì come comparte

lo grasso e 'l magro un corpo, così questo
 nel suo volume cangerebbe carte.

Se 'l primo fosse, fora manifesto

ne l'eclissi del sol, per trasparere

lo lume come in altro raro ingesto.

Questo non è: però è da vedere

de l'altro; e s'elli avvien ch'io l'altro cassi,
 falsificato fia lo tuo parere.

S'elli è che questo raro non trapassi,
 esser conviene un termine da onde

lo suo contrario più passar non lassi;

She smiled a little and then said to me,

"If the opinion of mortals goes astray
 where the key of the senses fails to unlock,

Surely the shafts of wonder should no longer
 prick you, since you see that reason

has a short flight when it chases the senses.
 But tell me what you yourself think of this."

I said, "The diversity we see is caused,
 I suppose, by bodies that are thick and thin."

And she: "You will surely see that your belief
 is submerged in error if you listen well
 to the arguments that I make against it.

The eighth sphere shows you many stars
 that can be observed to have different aspects
 both in their qualities and magnitudes.

If difference in density alone caused this,
 one single virtue would be in all of them,
 distributed more and less and equally.

But different virtues must be the result
 of formal principles, and by your reasoning
 all but one would be eliminated.

Further, if thinness were the cause

of the dark spots you ask about, either
 this planet would lack material

Here and there, or else, just as fat and lean
 are layered in a body, so too here

the pages in its volume would alternate.

If the former were true it would be evident

in eclipses of the sun, with light shining through
 just as through any thinner material.

This is not so, and therefore we must look
 at the alternative, and if I destroy that too
 your view on this will be proven false.

If this thinning goes only part way through,
 there must be some limit beyond which

its dense opposite is not allowed to pass,

e indi l'altrui raggio si rifonde
 così come color torna per vetro
 lo qual di retro a sé piombo nasconde.
 Or dirai tu ch'el si dimostra tetro
 ivi lo raggio più che in altre parti,
 per esser li refratto più a retro.
 Da questa istanza può deliberarti
 esperienza, se già mai la provi,
 ch'esser suol fonte ai rivi di vostr' arti.
 Tre specchi prenderai; e i due rimovi
 da te d'un modo, e l'altro, più rimosso,
 tr'ambo li primi li occhi tuoi ritrovi.
 Rivolto ad essi, fa che dopo il dosso
 ti stea un lume che i tre specchi accenda
 e torni a te da tutti ripercosso.
 Ben che nel quanto tanto non si stenda
 la vista più lontana, li vedrai
 come convien ch'igualmente risplenda.
 Or, come ai colpi de li caldi rai
 de la neve riman nudo il soggetto
 e dal colore e dal freddo primai,
 così rimaso te ne l'intelletto
 voglio informar di luce sì vivace,
 che ti tremolerà nel suo aspetto.
 Dentro dal ciel de la divina pace
 si gira un corpo ne la cui virtute
 l'esser di tutto suo contento giace.
 Lo ciel seguente, c'ha tante vedute,
 quell'esser parte per diverse essenze,
 da lui distratte e da lui contenute.
 Li altri giron per varie differenze
 le distinzion che dentro da sé hanno
 dispongono a lor fini e lor semenze.
 Questi organi del mondo così vanno,
 come tu vedi omai, di grado in grado,
 che di sù prendono e di sotto fanno.
 Riguarda bene omai sì com'io vado
 per questo loco al vero che disiri,
 sì che poi sappi sol tener lo guado.

And from that limit a ray of light
 will be reflected back, just as color
 returns through glass that is backed with lead.
 You will now say that the ray looks dimmer
 where it is reflected from farther back
 than it is reflected in other parts.
 You can be disabused of this objection
 by, if you will try it, an experiment,
 the spring that feeds all the streams of your art.
 Take three mirrors; place two of them
 equidistant from yourself, and the third
 between the other two but farther removed;
 Then face them with a lamp behind your back
 that illuminates all three in such a way
 that the light returns from them to your eyes.
 Although the light seen from farther off
 will not be as big as the others, you will see
 that it does in fact shine with equal brightness.
 And now, as the ground beneath snow, when struck
 by the sun's warm rays, is left bare
 of both its former color and its cold,
 So would I instill in your mind, left bare
 in much the same way, a light so living
 that it will shimmer as you gaze upon it.
 Within the heaven of the divine peace
 revolves a body in whose virtue lies
 the being of all that it in turn contains.
 The next heaven, which has so much to see,
 parcels that being among different essences,
 distinct from it but contained within it.
 The other spheres, differing variously,
 dispose the distinctive qualities they have
 to achieve their ends and seed further goals.
 These organs of the universe work like this,
 as you now see, grade by grade; each of them
 receives from above and operates below.
 Observe well now how I move along
 from here to the truth that you desire,
 so that you learn how to take the ford alone.

Lo moto e la virtù d'i santi giri,
 come dal fabbro l'arte del martello,
 da' beati motor convien che spiri;
 e 'l ciel cui tanti lumi fanno bello,
 de la mente profonda che lui volve
 prende l'immagine e fassene suggello.
 E come l'alma dentro a vostra polve
 per differenti membra e conformate
 a diverse potenze si risolve,
 così l'intelligenza sua bontate
 moltiplicata per le stelle spiega,
 girando sé sovra sua unitate.
 Virtù diversa fa diversa lega
 col prezioso corpo ch'ella avviva,
 nel qual, sì come vita in voi, si lega.
 Per la natura lieta onde deriva,
 la virtù mista per lo corpo luce
 come letizia per pupilla viva.
 Da essa vien ciò che da luce a luce
 par differente, non da denso e raro;
 essa è formal principio che produce,
 conforme a sua bontà, lo turbo e 'l chiaro."

129

132

135

138

141

144

147

The motion and virtue of the sacred spheres
 must derive from the blessed, spiritual movers,
 as the craft of the hammer comes from the smith;
 129
 And the heaven that so many stars make beautiful
 takes its stamp from the profound mind that turns it,
 and becomes itself the seal of that stamp.
 132
 And as the soul within your body's dust
 is diffused through different organic members
 that are adapted to various faculties,
 135
 So the Intelligence unfolds its goodness
 that is multiplied then through all its stars
 while it wheels itself on its unity.
 138
 Different virtues make different alloys
 with the precious bodies that they enliven,
 and with which, just as in your life, they are bound.
 141
 By the joyous nature that is its source
 the mingled virtue shines through the body
 as through the living pupil happiness pours.
 144
 It is this, and not thinness or thickness,
 that produces the differences in light;
 this is, in proportion to its goodness,
 147
 The formal principle that causes dark and bright."

CANTO III

THE SOULS IN PARADISE do not have "virtual bodies" as did shades in Hell and Purgatory. Here in the heaven of the Moon they still have a vague human physiognomy, though indistinct, like watery reflections. Whereas in Purgatory the danger was to mistake images for solid things, here the pilgrim mistakes real beings for mere reflected images. The faces ready to speak to Dante appear only as faintly as "a pearl on a white brow" (14). White on white is difficult to discern, precisely because of lack of difference. We remember from the first canto that the diversity among things is what makes God's image visible in His creation. Diversity among happy souls—who are not all alike—is the theme of this canto. These souls are said to be "relegated" to this lowest sphere because of a failure to keep their vows. Piccarda Donati, sister of Forese, whom we met among the gluttons in Purgatory, and of Corso, damnable leader of the Black Guelphs, tells Dante how she joined the order of the Poor Clares as a young girl in order to flee from the world, but that "men more used to evil than to good"—led presumably by her vicious brother—then "snatched [her] away from that sweet cloister" (106–7). Only God knows, she says, what her life then became. Piccarda and Constance, mother of Emperor Frederick II whom Piccarda goes on to introduce, are women who were forced into marriages—marriages which violated their monastic vows—

3
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9
Quel sol che pria d'amor mi scaldò 'l petto,
di bella verità m'avea scoverto,
provando e riprovando, il dolce aspetto;
e io, per confessar corretto e certo
me stesso, tanto quanto si convenne
leva' il capo a proferer più erto;
ma visione apparve che ritenne
a sé me tanto stretto, per vedersi,
che di mia confession non mi sovvenne.

against their will. To be rewarded with an inferior lot in Heaven seems a harsh justice and a defective happiness. Just as the spotty moon seemed defective, so too these saints seem second class. Transferring the astronomical lesson to people: difference does not mean defect. Dante's first question is thus whether their ostensibly low status in Heaven is also against their will, against their deepest desires for a higher place. Piccarda's answer, which has left many a reader unsatisfied, actually exemplifies the principle of ordered difference as an essential good, rather than as something defective. To desire exactly what one has is not so much required by an authoritarian God as it is necessitated by the definition of what it is to be blessed. It is the form, or essence, of that supreme happiness to desire exactly what God desires—"In His will is our peace" (85); in other words, to desire what is. Desires are movements that are quieted by being satisfied. When threatened with violence in life, these women acquiesced to evil. What makes them happy now is that they have acquiesced to the good—"charity / quiets our will" (70–71, my emphasis). In other words, they are completely satisfied with who they are. Exemplifying the "physics" of desire, Piccarda sinks upward, "like a weight through deep water plummeting" (123), just as Dante's own eyes follow her until they revert to Beatrice, "the vision that they desired most" (126).

3
6
9
The sun that first warmed my heart with love
had uncovered for me, by proof and rebuttal,
the sweet beauty of the face of truth;
And I raised my head, although no higher
than was necessary for me to confess
that I stood corrected and was assured,
But as I did so a sight appeared to me
that so strongly compelled my attention then
that I do not remember if I said anything.

Quali per vetri trasparenti e tersi,
 o ver per acque nitide e tranquille,
 non sì profonde che i fondi sien persi,
 tornan d'i nostri visi le postille
 debili sì, che perla in bianca fronte
 non vien men forte a le nostre pupille;
 tali vid' io più facce a parlar pronte;
 per ch'io dentro a l'error contrario corsi
 a quel ch'accese amor tra l'omo e 'l fonte.
 Subito sì com'io di lor m'accorsi,
 quelle stimando specchiateo sembianti,
 per veder di cui fosser, li occhi torsi;
 e nulla vidi, e ritorsili avanti
 dritti nel lume de la dolce guida,
 che, sorridendo, ardea ne li occhi santi.
 "Non ti maravigliar perch'io sorrida,"
 mi disse, "appresso il tuo pueril coto,
 poi sopra 'l vero ancor lo piè non fida,
 ma te rivolve, come suole, a vòto:
 vere sustanze son ciò che tu vedi,
 qui rilegate per manco di voto.
 Però parla con esse e odi e credi;
 ché la verace luce che le appaga
 da sé non lascia lor torcer li piedi."
 E io a l'ombra che pareo più vaga
 di ragionar, drizza mi, e cominciai,
 quasi com' uom cui troppa voglia smaga:
 "O ben creato spirito, che a' rai
 di vita eterna la dolcezza senti
 che, non gustata, non s'intende mai,
 grazioso mi fia se mi contenti
 del nome tuo e de la vostra sorte."
 Ond' ella, pronta e con occhi ridenti:
 "La nostra carità non serra porte
 a giusta voglia, se non come quella
 che vuol simile a sé tutta sua corte."

Just as through smooth, transparent glass,
 or through a pool of still, limpid water
 not so deep that the bottom is lost,
 The outlines of our faces return to us
 so faint that a pearl on a white brow
 does not come less quickly to our eyes.
 I saw many such faces, eager to speak,
 and I ran into the opposite error
 than the one Narcissus made with the spring:
 As soon as I saw them, taking them to be
 reflected semblances, I turned my eyes
 to see whose images they were.
 Seeing nothing there, I turned my eyes back
 straight into the light of my sweet guide,
 whose holy eyes glowed as she smiled.
 "Do not wonder," she said to me, "that I smile
 at your childish mind, for it does not yet
 trust its footing on the truth, but instead
 Turns you back, as usual, into a void.
 These are real beings that you see,
 relegated here for a broken vow.
 Speak with them therefore, and hear and believe,
 for the true light that gives them peace
 does not let them turn their feet away from itself."
 So I addressed myself to the shade that seemed
 most eager to talk, and, like a man confused
 by excessive desire, I began,
 "O spirit created for happiness, who
 in the beams of eternal life feel the sweetness
 that if not tasted is never understood,
 It would be a kindness if you satisfied me
 by telling me both your name and your lot."
 Then she, ready and with smiling eyes, said,
 "Our charity does not shut doors in the face
 of just desire, any more than does His
 who wants all His court to be like Himself."

I' fui nel mondo vergine sorella;
 e se la mente tua ben sé riguarda,
 non mi ti celerà l'esser più bella,
 ma riconoscerai ch' i' son Piccarda,
 che, posta qui con questi altri beati,
 beata sono in la spera più tarda.
 Li nostri affetti, che solo infiammati
 son nel piacer de lo Spirito Santo,
 letizian del suo ordine formati.
 E questa sorte che par giù cotanto,
 però n' è data, perché fuor negletti
 li nostri voti, e vòti in alcun canto."

Ond' io a lei: "Ne' mirabili aspetti
 vostri risplende non so che divino
 che vi trasmuta da' primi concetti:
 però non fui a rimembrar festino;
 ma or m' aiuta ciò che tu mi dici,
 sì che raffigurar m' è più latino.
 Ma dimmi: voi che siete qui felici,
 desiderate voi più alto loco
 per più vedere e per più farvi amici?"

Con quelle altr' ombre pria sorrise un poco;
 da indi mi rispuose tanto lieta,
 ch' arder pareva d' amor nel primo foco:
 "Frate, la nostra volontà quìeta
 virtù di carità, che fa volerne
 sol quel ch' avemo, e d' altro non ci asseta.
 Se diassimo esser più superne,
 foran discordi li nostri disiri
 dal voler di colui che qui ne cerne;
 che vedrai non capere in questi giri,
 s' essere in carità è qui necesse,
 e se la sua natura ben rimiri.
 Anzi è formale ad esto beato esse
 tenersi dentro a la divina voglia,
 per ch' una fansi nostre voglie stesse;

In the world I was a virgin sister,
 and if you search your memory well
 my being more beautiful will not conceal me,
 But you will recognize that I am Piccarda,
 put here with these other blessed ones,
 and blessed am I in the slowest of the spheres.
 Our affections, which are set alight only
 in the pleasure of the Holy Spirit,
 rejoice in being conformed to His order,
 And this lot of ours, which seems so low,
 has been given to us because our vows
 were neglected and in some manner void."

Then I said to her, "There shines forth from you
 in your marvelous appearance something divine
 that is different from my memory of you,
 And that is why I was slow to remember.
 But what you are saying now assists me
 to recall more clearly the lines of your face.
 But tell me, do you who are happy here
 desire a higher place, in order that
 you may see more and be more beloved?"

Along with the other shades she first smiled a little,
 and then she responded to me so gladly
 she seemed to be in the first fire of love.
 "Brother," she said, "the virtue of charity
 quiets our will and causes us to wish for
 only what we have and thirst for nothing more.
 If we desired to be more exalted,
 our desire would be discordant with the will
 of the One who assigns us to this place,
 And you will see that this cannot hold
 in these circles, since love here is guaranteed,
 if you consider well the nature of these spheres.
 It is the essence of the blessed state
 that we keep ourselves within the divine desire
 so that our desires themselves may be unified.

84 sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia
per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace
com' a lo re che 'n suo voler ne 'nvoglia.
E 'n la sua volontade è nostra pace:
ell' è quel mare al qual tutto si move
ciò ch'ella cria o che natura face.”

87 Chiaro mi fu allor come ogne dove
in cielo è paradiso, etsi la grazia
del sommo ben d'un modo non vi piove.
90 Ma sì com' elli avvien, s'un cibo sazia
e d'un altro rimane ancor la gola,
93 che quel si chere e di quel si ringrazia,
così fec' io con atto e con parola,
per apprender da lei qual fu la tela
96 onde non trasse infino a co la spuoia.

99 “Perfetta vita e alto merto inciela
donna più sù,” mi disse, “a la cui norma
nel vostro mondo giù si veste e vela,
perché fino al morir si vegghi e dorma
con quello sposo ch'ogne voto accetta
che caritate a suo piacer conforma.
102 Dal mondo, per seguirla, giovinetta
fuggi'mi, e nel suo abito mi chiusi
e promisi la via de la sua setta.
105 Uomini poi, a mal più ch'a bene usi,
fuor mi rapiron de la dolce chiostra:
108 Iddio si sa qual poi mia vita fusi.
E quest' altro splendor che ti si mostra
da la mia destra parte e che s'accende
di tutto il lume de la spera nostra,
111 ciò ch'io dico di me, di sé intende;
sorella fu, e così le fu tolta
di capo l'ombra de le sacre bende.
114 Ma poi che pur al mondo fu rivolta
contra suo grado e contra buona usanza,
non fu dal vel del cor già mai disciolta.
117

Therefore our rank from tier to tier
within this kingdom pleases the whole,
as it does the King who wills our desires to His.
84 And in His will is our peace. It is the sea
to which all things move, both those things
that it creates and what nature makes.”

87 It became clear to me then that every *where*
in Heaven is Paradise, though the Supreme Good
does not rain grace everywhere equally.
90 But just as when we have enough of one food
but still crave another, and so we give thanks
for one thing as we ask for something else,
93 so too was I, trying with speech and gesture
to learn from her what was the web through which
she had not drawn the shuttle to the end.

99 “Perfect life and high desert,” she said to me.
“enheaven higher a lady by whose rule
they take the robe and veil in your world below,
99 So that until death they wake and sleep
with that Bridegroom who accepts every vow
that love conforms to what pleases Him.
102 As a young girl I fled from the world
to follow her, wrapped myself in her habit,
and avowed the way of her sisterhood.
105 Then men more used to evil than to good
snatched me away from that sweet cloister.
108 Only God knows what my life was then.
This other splendor that shows itself to you
here on my right and that kindles itself
with all of the light that our sphere contains
111 Applies to herself the same story as mine.
She was a sister, and in much the same way
the wimple's holy shade was taken from her head.
114 But even after she was returned to the world
against her will and against proper custom,
the veil was never stripped from her heart.
117

Quest' è la luce de la gran Costanza
 che del secondo vento di Soave
 generò 'l terzo e l'ultima possanza.”

120

Così parlommi, e poi cominciò “*Ave,*
Maria” cantando, e cantando vanio
 come per acqua cupa cosa grave.
 La vista mia, che tanto lei seguio
 quanto possibil fu, poi che la perse,
 volsesi al segno di maggior disio,
 e a Beatrice tutta si converse;
 ma quella folgorò nel mio sguardo
 sì che da prima il viso non sofferse;
 e ciò mi fece a dimandar più tardo.

123

126

129

It is the light of the great Constance,
 who bore to Swabia's second storm
 the third and the last true emperor.”

120

She said this to me and then began to sing
Ave Maria, and as she sang she vanished
 like a weight through deep water plummeting.
 My eyes followed her until she was lost
 to my sight, and then they reverted
 to the vision that they desired most,
 Turning themselves upon Beatrice alone;
 but she flashed on my gaze in such a manner
 that my eyes at first could not bear how she shone,
 And this made me slower to question her.

123

126

129

