

PARADISO

CANTO XII

As soon as the blessed flame
had spoken its last word
the holy millstone once again began to wheel, 3
and had not yet come full around
before another circle closed it in,
matching it motion for motion and song for song, 6
song that, heard from such sweet instruments,
as far excels our muses and our sirens
as a first shining its reflected rays. 9

As twin rainbows, parallel in shape and color,
arc in their pathway through translucent clouds
when Juno gives the order to her handmaid -- 12
the outer one born of the inner,
like the voice of that wandering nymph
whom love consumed as the sun does vapors -- 15
and allow the people here on earth to know the future
because of the covenant God made with Noah,
that the world would not again be flooded, 18
so the two wreaths of those eternal roses
circled all around us and, thus reflected,
the outer circle shone in answer to the inner. 21

When the dance and all the other celebration --
the singing and the brilliant blaze of flames,
light with light blent in ardent joy -- 24
came to a stop together and of one accord,
as eyes, when beauty moves them,
must open wide or close as one, 27
from the core of one of these new lights,
as the north star makes a compass needle veer,
rose a voice that made me turn to where it came from. 30

And it began: 'The love that makes me beautiful
bids me, in turn, to laud that other leader
because of whom my own has won such praise. 33

'It is fitting that, in naming one, we name the other
so that, just as they were joined as one in combat
with a single goal, their fame should shine as one. 36

'Rearmed at such high cost, the troops of Christ
moved with halting steps behind the standard,
full of doubt and few in number, 39

'when the Emperor who reigns forever
provided for His soldiers in their peril --
only of His grace, not for their merit -- 42

'and, as was said, gave comfort to His bride
through these two champions, whose deeds and words
brought together the scattered people. 45

'In that place where gentle Zephyr's breath
rises to open the unfolding leaves
in which Europe sees herself reclad, 48

'not far from the pounding waves
beyond which the sun, having finished his long course,
sometimes hides himself from human sight, 51

'favored Calaroga lies
behind the shelter of the noble shield
that shows one lion in defeat and one in triumph. 54

'In that town was born the amorous lover
of the Christian faith, the holy athlete,
gentle to his own and savage to his foes. 57

'His mind, at the moment of its making,
was so full of living power that,
yet in his mother's womb, he made of her a prophet. 60

'After his nuptials with the Faith
were celebrated at the holy font
at which each dowered the other's safety, 63

'the lady who offered her assent for his
saw in a dream the admirable fruit
destined to spring from him and from his heirs. 66

'And, that he might be known as what he was indeed,
a spirit from Heaven came and named him
from the possessive form of Him whose he already was. 69

'He was called Dominic, and I shall speak of him
as that laborer chosen by Christ
to help Him dress and keep His garden. 72

'He seemed indeed a messenger and intimate of Christ,
since the first affection manifest in him
was for the initial precept taught by Christ. 75

'Many a time did his nurse find him
awake and silent on the ground,
as if he said, "It is for this I have come." 78

'O happy father, indeed Felix!
O blessed mother, indeed Giovanna,
if, rightly construed, her name means what they say! 81

'Not for this world, for which men toil today,
following Taddeo and the Ostian,
but for love of the true manna, 84

'he soon became a teacher so renowned
that he began to travel through the vineyard,
which quickly withers if the keeper is corrupt. 87

'And to the papal seat, not now as benevolent
to the upright poor as it was once -- not flawed in itself,
but degenerate in its occupant -- he made appeal, 90

'not to give away just two or three instead of six,
not for his chance at the first vacancy,
not for the *decimas, quae sunt pauperum Dei*, 93

'but for the privilege of fighting
against the errors of the world, thus to preserve the seed
of the twenty-four plants now wreathing you in light. 96

'Then, both with learning and with zeal,
secure in apostolic office, he went forth,
like a torrent gushing from its lofty source, 99

'and fell upon the tangled weeds of heresy,
attacking with his overwhelming force
wherever the resistance was most stubborn. 102

'From him there sprang still other streams
from which the Catholic garden draws its moisture,
so that its saplings grow with greater vigor. 105

'If such was one of the wheels of the chariot
used by Holy Church in self-defense
to overcome the rebels in the field, 108

'surely the excellence of that other,
about whom Thomas spoke so courteously
before I came, must be well known to you. 111

'But the track left by the outer rim
of its circumference is abandoned,
so that where once was crust, there now is mold. 114

'His family, which started out setting their feet
upon his footprints, is now turned backward,
setting their toes where once they placed their heels. 117

'Soon that harvest of bad tillage
shall occur, when the tares complain
that the barn is shut against them. 120

'I readily admit that, should one search our volume
leaf by leaf, one still could find some pages
where one might read, "What once I was, I am." 123

'But these will not come from Casale or Acquasparta,
for those from there come to the Rule
either to flee it or constrict it further. 126

'I am the living soul of Bonaventura
from Bagnoregio, who in great office
ever put last the left-hand care. 129

'Here are Illuminato and Augustine,
among the first brothers barefoot in poverty,
who, with the cord, became God's friends. 132

'Here with them is Hugh of St. Victor,
Peter the Bookworm, and Peter the Spaniard --
who casts light from his twelve books below, 135

'Nathan the prophet, Chrysostom
the Metropolitan, Anselm, and that Donatus
who, to the first art, deigned to set his hand. 138

'Rabanus is here and, shining at my side,
abbot Joachim of Calabria,
who was endowed with prophetic spirit. 141

'To sing the praises of so great a champion
the ardent courtesy and fitting discourse
of Brother Thomas has inspired me 144

and did the same to my companions.' 145