

PARADISO

CANTO XVIII

That blessed mirror continued to rejoice
in his own thoughts and I was tasting mine,
tempering the bitter with the sweet, 3
when that lady, who was leading me to God,
said: 'Change your thoughts. Consider that I dwell
with Him who lifts the weight of every wrong.' 6
At the loving sound of my comfort's voice
I turned, and the great love I saw then,
in her holy eyes, I have to leave untold, 9
not just because I cannot trust my speech,
but because memory cannot retrace its path
that far unless Another guide it. 12
This much only of that moment can I tell again,
that, when I fixed my gaze on her,
my affections were released from any other longing 15
as long as the eternal Beauty,
shining its light on Beatrice, made me content
with its reflected glow in her fair eyes. 18
Conquering me with her radiant smile,
she said: 'Turn now and listen:
not in my eyes alone is Paradise.' 21
As, on occasion, here on earth, affection
may be read in someone's face
if it is strong enough to capture all the soul, 24
so, in the flaming of that holy radiance
to which I turned, I recognized his wish
to share some further thoughts with me. 27
And he began: 'On this fifth tier of the branches
of the tree that draws its sustenance from above
and always is in fruit and never sheds its leaves 30
'are blessed spirits who below, on earth,
before they rose to Heaven, were of such renown
that any poet's page would be enriched by them. 33

'Look, therefore, at the two arms of the cross,
and each one whom I name will, flashing, dart
as does swift fire from within a cloud.' 36

I saw a streak of light drawn through the cross
at Joshua's name as soon as it was spoken,
nor could I tell the naming and the deed apart. 39

And, at the name of valorous Maccabaeus,
I saw shoot by another whirling light --
and it was joy that whipped that spinning top. 42

My watchful gaze was fastened
on Charlemagne and Roland there, as well,
just as the eye pursues the falcon in its flight. 45

William, Renouard, and then Duke Godfrey
next drew my eyes along that cross,
and Robert Guiscard also did so. 48

Then, leaving me to mingle with the other lights,
the soul who'd spoken last with me displayed
his artistry among the singers of that heaven. 51

I turned to my right to learn
from Beatrice what I ought to do,
whether signaled by some word or gesture, 54

and I saw her eyes so clear, so joyful,
that her aspect in its radiance outshone
her former glory, even that most recent. 57

And as, from feeling more delight in doing good,
a man becomes aware from day to day
of his increasing virtue, 60

seeing that miracle adorned with greater brightness,
I became aware my wheeling circles
through the heavens had grown wider in their arc. 63

And such a change as passes in a moment
from the blushing face of a fair-skinned lady,
unburdened of the reason for her shame, 66

greeted my eyes once I had turned around,
because of the white radiance of the temperate
sixth star, which had gathered me into itself. 69

In that torch of Jupiter I watched
the sparkling of the love resplendent there
make signs, before my eyes, of our speech. 72

And as birds risen from the river's edge,
 seeming to celebrate their pleasure in their food,
 form now a rounded arc, and now another shape, 75
 so, radiant within their lights, the holy creatures
 sang as they flew and shaped themselves
 in figures, now *D*, now *I*, now *L*. 78
 At first, singing, they danced to their own tune.
 And then, taking on one of these shapes,
 they paused in their movement and were silent. 81
 O divine Pegasean, who bestow glory
 and long life on genius, as, with your help,
 it gives life to towns and kingdoms, 84
 inspire me with your light so that I may set down
 their shapes as I conceived them in my mind.
 May your power appear in these few lines. 87
 They then displayed themselves in five times seven
 consonants and vowels, and I saw these letters
 singly, and in the order they were traced. 90
DILIGITE IUSTITIAM-- these letters,
 placed together, verb and noun, came first,
QUI IUDICATIS TERRAM, last. 93
 Then they came to rest in the fifth word's *M*
 so that this place in Jupiter was shining
 as does silver overlaid with gold. 96
 And I saw other lights descend and settle
 on the *M*'s high crest to sing, I think,
 of that great Good which draws them to Itself. 99
 Then, as when someone strikes a burning log,
 causing innumerable sparks to fly,
 sparks from which the foolish form their divinations, 102
 just so a thousand lights and more appeared
 to rise from there and mount, some more, some less,
 as the Sun that kindles them ordained. 105
 When each had settled in its place
 I saw an eagle's head and neck
 take shape out of that overlay of fire. 108
 He who fashions there has need of none to guide Him
 but Himself. Thus we recognize as His
 the form that every bird takes for its nest. 111

The other blessed spirits, who seemed at first content
 to turn themselves into a lily on the *M*,
 with gentle motion joined, completing the design. 114
 O lovely star, how many and how bright the jewels
 that showed me that our earthly justice
 comes from that heaven, brilliant with your gems! 117
 Therefore, I entreat the Mind, in which your motion
 and your power begin, to look down on the source
 of smoke that dims your radiant beam, 120
 so that your wrath come down once more
 on those who buy and sell within the temple,
 whose walls were built of miracle and martyrdom. 123
 O soldiery of Heaven, whom I contemplate,
 pray for those still on the earth,
 those led astray by bad example! 126
 It was the custom once to go to war with swords.
 Now wars are fought withholding here and there
 the bread our loving Father keeps from none. 129
 But you who write only to cancel,
 remember this: Peter and Paul, who died
 to save the vineyard you lay waste, still live. 132
 Well may you say: 'I have so set my heart
 on him who chose to live in solitude
 and who for a dance was dragged to martyrdom 135
 that I know neither the Fisherman nor Paul.' 136