

PARADISO

CANTO XIX

Before my eyes, its open wings outstretched, appeared the lovely image of those interwoven souls, reveling in sweet enjoyment.	3
Each one seemed to be a single ruby in which the sun's ray burned with such a flame it felt as though a sunbeam struck my eyes.	6
And what I now must tell no voice has ever uttered, nor ink ever wrote, nor was it ever seen in phantasy.	9
For I saw and heard it was the beak that spoke, sounding with its voice the words for <i>I</i> and <i>my</i> when, in conception, it meant <i>we</i> and <i>our</i> .	12
It said: 'For being just and merciful I here am raised unto that glory which by itself desire cannot attain.	15
'On earth I left behind such vestiges as even wicked people there commend, without, however, hewing to the form.'	18
Just as from many coals we feel a single heat, so from that image there came forth the undivided sound of many loves.	21
And I then answered: 'O everlasting blossoms of eternal bliss, you make all odors blend into what seems a single fragrance,	24
'breathe forth and free me from this endless fast that ever keeps me famished, since I can find no food for it on earth.	27
'It is clear to me that, even though God's Justice has its mirror in another realm of heaven, in yours it also shines without a veil.	30
'You know with what care I prepare myself to listen, and you know the nature of the doubt that now has kept me fasting for so long.'	33

As the falcon, freed from its encumbering hood, raises its head, and flapping, as in winged applause, displays its beauty and its eagerness,	36
just so I witnessed that emblem, made with strands of praise for God's own grace, surge into songs known but to those who live above in bliss.	39
Then it began: 'He who with His compass drew the boundaries of the world and then, within them, created distinctions, both hidden and quite clear,	42
'did not imprint His power so deep throughout the universe that His Word would not with infinite excess surpass His making.	45
'In proof of this, the first and prideful being, who was created highest of all creatures, by not waiting for the light, plummeted unripe.	48
'And thus it is clear that every lesser nature is too small a vessel for that goodness which has no limit, which is measured by itself alone.	51
'Thus your vision, which must be but a single ray of many in the mind of Him of whom all things are full,	54
'by its nature must not have such power that it should not perceive its source as lying far beyond all it can see.	57
'Thus, the vision granted to your world may make its way into eternal justice as deep as eyes may penetrate the sea.	60
'From shore they well may glimpse the bottom, but not once out upon the open sea, and yet it is there, hidden in the depths.	63
'No light is never overcast unless it comes from that clear sky which always shines. All others darken in the shadow or the bane of flesh.	66
'Now the hiding-place has been laid bare that concealed from you the living justice about which you have posed so many questions.	69
'For you have often asked: "A man is born upon the bank along the Indus, with no one there to speak, or read, or write of Christ,	72

"and all that he desires, everything he does, is good.
 As far as human reason can discern,
 he is sinless in his deeds and in his words. 75

"He dies unbaptized, dies outside the faith.
 Wherein lies the justice that condemns him?
 Wherein lies his fault if he does not believe?" 78

'Now, who are you to sit upon the bench,
 judging from a thousand miles away
 with eyesight that is shorter than a span? 81

'To be sure, for one who wanted to debate this,
 had the Scripture not been set above you,
 there might be ample room for question. 84

'Oh, earthly creatures! oh, gross minds!
 The primal Will, good in Itself,
 has never from Itself, the highest good, declined. 87

'Only what accords with It is just: It is not drawn
 to a created good but, sending forth Its rays,
 It is the source of every good.' 90

As a stork will circle above her nest
 after she has fed her young,
 and as the one just fed looks up at her, 93

so, lifting up my brow, I watched
 as over me the blessed image flew on wings
 that took their thrust from such shared counsel. 96

Wheeling, it sang, then spoke:
 'As my notes exceed your understanding,
 such is eternal judgment to all mortals.' 99

When these, the Holy Spirit's fiery lights,
 grew quiet, still shaped into the sign
 that made the world revere the Romans, 102

the eagle once again began: 'To this kingdom
 no one ever rose without belief in Christ,
 whether before or after He was nailed up on the tree. 105

'But observe that many shout out 'Christ, O Christ!'
 who shall be farther off from Him,
 on Judgment Day, than such as know not Christ. 108

'The Ethiopian shall condemn such Christians
 when the two assemblies go their separate ways,
 the one forever rich, the other poor. 111

'What shall the Persians say then to your kings
 when they see that volume lying open
 in which their many infamies are all inscribed? 114

'There they shall see, among the deeds of Albert,
 the deed -- now soon to move the pen --
 through which the realm of Prague shall suffer desolation. 117

'There they shall see the sorrow brought upon the Seine
 by one who falsifies his country's coin
 and who will die assaulted by a boar. 120

'There they shall see the pride that makes men thirst
 and so drives both the Englishman and Scot to fury
 that neither will remain within his borders. 123

'Of him from Spain, and of Bohemia's king,
 the text will show their wanton luxury and lazy ways
 and that they never knew nor searched for valor. 126

'Of the Cripple of Jerusalem the text will show
 an *I* to mark his only generous act,
 while an *M* will mark the other traits in him. 129

'Of him who rules the isle of fire,
 where the long life of Anchises had its end,
 the text will show the greed and cowardice. 132

'Displayed will be his utter worthlessness,
 requiring the use of shorthand
 that will note much in little space. 135

'Displayed for all to see will be the wicked deeds
 by which his uncle and his brother brought disgrace
 to so renowned a line and both their kingdoms. 138

'Displayed will be the kings of Portugal and Norway,
 and he of Rascia, who, to his own hurt,
 laid his eyes upon Venetian coinage. 141

'O happy Hungary, if only she no longer lets
 herself be poorly led! Happy Navarre, if she but takes
 protection from the mountains that surround her! 144

'And, in proof of this, all men should know
 that Nicosia and Famagosta
 lament and complain of their own beast, 147

who takes his place among the others.' 148