

PARADISO

CANTO XXII

Overcome by wonder, I turned to my guide,
as does a child who always scurries back
to the one who has his utmost trust. 3

And she, like a mother, quick in comforting
her son when he is pale and out of breath
with a voice that often calmed him in the past, 6

said: 'Don't you understand you are in Heaven?
Don't you understand that all of Heaven is holy,
that all things done here spring from righteous zeal? 9

'It should be clear to you just how their song,
and then my smile, would have confused you,
since you were so startled by their cry. 12

'In it, had you understood their prayers,
you would already recognize
the vengeance you shall see before you die. 15

'The sword of Heaven never cuts in haste
nor in delay, but to the one who waits
in longing or in fear, it well may seem so. 18

'Now turn around and see the others,
for you shall look on many illustrious spirits
if you but set your gaze to where I say.' 21

I turned my eyes as she had urged and saw
one hundred little globes that made each other brighter
in the glittering reflections of one another's rays. 24

I was as one who in himself restrains
the spur of his desire and, fearing to presume,
dares not pose his question. 27

The largest and most lustrous of those pearls
advanced to satisfy my longing
to find out more about him. 30

Then, from deep within, I heard him say: 'Could you see,
as I do, the charity burning in our midst,
you would have shared your thoughts with us. 33

'And that your arrival at the lofty goal
be not delayed by waiting, I shall answer
your guarded thoughts, which you dare not express. 36

'The summit of the mountain on whose slope
Cassino lies was once much frequented
by people both deluded and perverse. 39

'I am he who first brought up the slope
the name of Him who carried down to earth
the truth that so exalts us to the heights. 42

'And such abundant grace shone down on me
I led the neighboring towns away
from impious worship that misled the world. 45

'All these other flames spent their lives in contemplation,
kindled by that warmth which brings
both holy flowers and holy fruits to birth. 48

'Here is Macarius, here is Romualdus,
here are my brothers whose feet never strayed
beyond their cloisters and whose hearts were firm.' 51

And I to him: 'The affection you display
when you speak with me and the signs of kindness
that I see and mark in all your fires 54

'have enhanced my confidence,
as the sun expands the rose
when it opens to its fullest bloom. 57

'Therefore, I pray you, father, reassure me --
if I may hope to gain so great a favor --
that I may see you with your face unveiled.' 60

And he: 'Brother, your lofty wish
shall find fulfillment in the highest sphere,
where all desires are fulfilled, and mine as well. 63

'There only all we long for is perfected,
ripe, and entire. It is there alone
each element remains forever in its place, 66

'for it is not in space and does not turn
on poles. Our ladder mounts right up to it
and thus its top is hidden from your sight. 69

'Jacob the patriarch saw the ladder's highest rungs
attain that height when, teeming with
a throng of angels, it appeared to him. 72

'But no one bothers now to raise his foot up from the earth to climb those rungs, and my Rule is but a waste of paper.	75
'The walls that were constructed for an abbey have been converted into dens for thieves, and sacks, now filled with rotten flour, once served as cowls.	78
'But the highest rates of usury are not exacted against God's will so much as is the harvest that turns the hearts of monks to madness.	81
'For whatever the Church has in its keeping is reserved for those who ask it in God's name, and not for kindred or more vile relations.	84
'The flesh of mortals is so weak and dissolute that good beginnings go astray down there, undone before the newly planted oak can bring forth acorns.	87
'Peter started his community with neither gold nor silver, and I mine with fasting and with prayer, while Francis with humility established his.	90
'If you consider where each started out, and then consider how far it now has strayed, you shall see how dark its white has turned.	93
'Still, the sight of Jordan driven back and of the sea that opened at the will of God were greater wonders to behold than would be His intervention here.'	96
This he said to me, and then withdrew to his companions, who, drawing close together, now swirled up as in a whirlwind.	99
My sweet lady, with but a single gesture, urged me on to follow right behind them up that stairway, so did her power overcome my nature.	102
And never once down here below, where we mount and descend by natural law, was there motion swift enough to match my flight.	105
So may I, reader, once again return there to that holy triumph for whose sake I frequently bewail my sins and beat my breast,	108
you could not have withdrawn and thrust your finger into the fire faster than I saw the sign that follows on the Bull and was within.	111

O glorious stars, O light made pregnant
 with a mighty power, all my talent,
 whatever it may be, has you as source. 114

From you was risen and within you hidden
 he who is the father of all mortal life
 when first I breathed the Tuscan air. 117

And afterwards, when I was granted grace
 to enter the high wheel that keeps you turning,
 it was your zone to which I was assigned. 120

To you now, with devotion, my soul sighs
 that it gain strength for the next daunting task
 that with such power draws it to itself. 123

'You are so near the final blessedness,'
 Beatrice then began,
 'your eyes from now on shall be clear and keen. 126

'Thus, before you become more one with it,
 look down once more and see how many heavens
 I have already set beneath your feet, 129

'so that your heart, filled with joy,
 may greet the triumphant throng that comes
 in gladness to this aethereal sphere.' 132

With my eyes I returned through every one
 of the seven spheres below, and saw this globe of ours
 to be such that I smiled, so mean did it appear. 135

That opinion which judges it as least
 I now approve as best, and he whose thoughts
 are fixed on other things may truly be called just. 138

I saw Latona's daughter shining bright,
 without that shadow for which I once believed
 she was both dense and rare. 141

The visage of your son, Hyperion, I endured
 and saw how Maia and Dione move
 around him in their circling near. 144

Then I saw the tempering of Jove between his father
 and his son, and the changes that they make
 in their positions were now clear. 147

All seven planets there revealed
 their sizes, their velocities,
 and how distant from each other their abodes. 150

The little patch of earth that makes us here so fierce,
from hills to rivermouths, I saw it all
while I was being wheeled with the eternal Twins. 153
Then I turned my eyes once more to those fair eyes. 154