

THE DIVINE COMEDY  
OF  
DANTE ALIGHIERI

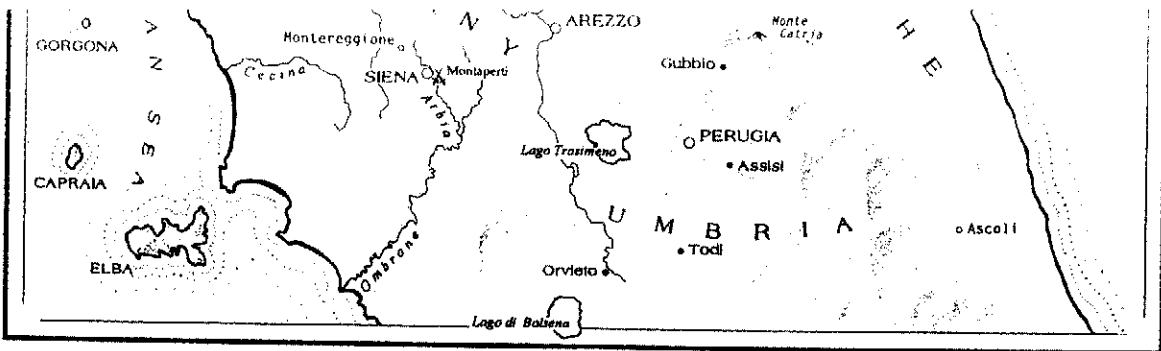
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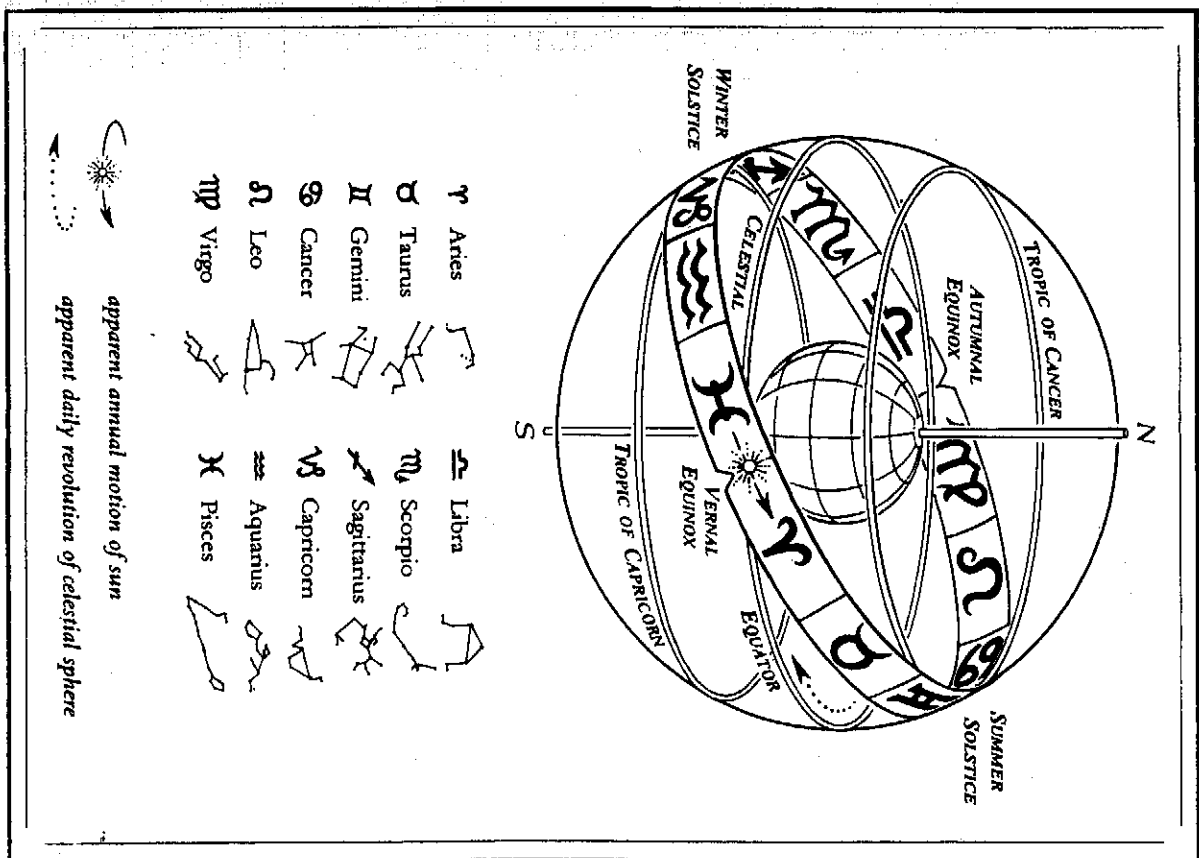
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*Volume 1*  
INFERNO

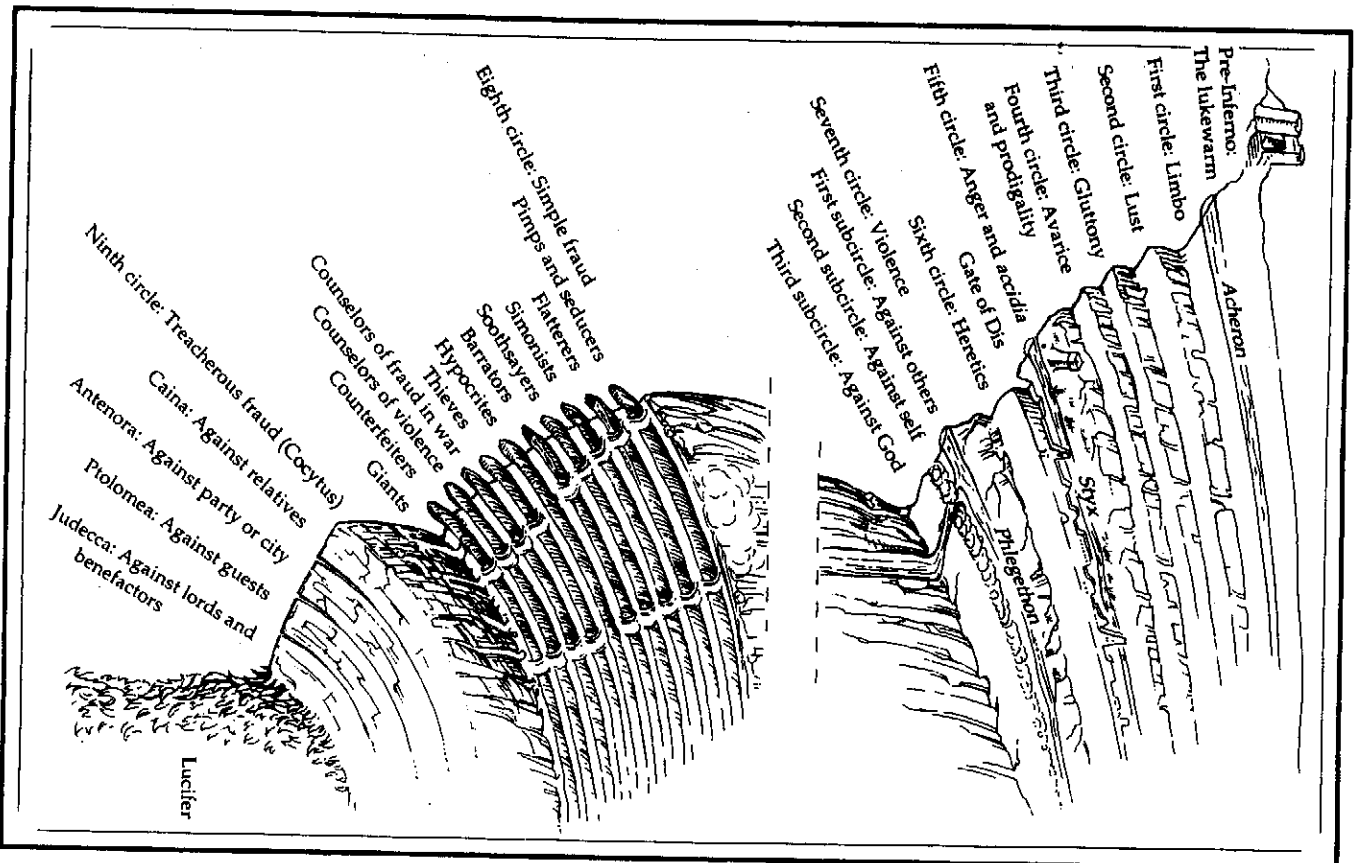
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Romagna and Tuscany, ca. 1300.



The Celestial Sphere and the Zodiac.



The Structure of Dante's Hell.

|                     |                                            |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Acts                | The Acts of the Apostles                   |
| Am.                 | Vergil, <i>Aeneid</i>                      |
| Apoc.               | The Apocalypse                             |
| Commentarii         | Macrobius, <i>Commentarii</i>              |
| Consolation         | Boethius, <i>Philosophy of Consolation</i> |
| Cor.                | Saint Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians   |
| Dan.                | Daniel                                     |
| Deut.               | Deuteronomy                                |
| Eccles.             | Ecclesiastes                               |
| Ecclesiasticus      | Ecclesiasticus                             |
| E. D.               | <i>Encyclopaedia da</i>                    |
| Eph.                | Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians      |
| Ex.                 | Exodus                                     |
| Ezek.               | Ezekiel                                    |
| Gal.                | Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians      |
| Gen.                | Genesis                                    |
| Inf.                | <i>Inferno</i>                             |
| Is.                 | Isaiah                                     |
| Jer.                | Jeremiah                                   |
| John                | The Gospel of John                         |
| Luke                | The Gospel of Luke                         |
| Mark                | The Gospel of Mark                         |
| Matt.               | The Gospel of Matthew                      |
| Met.                | Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>                 |
| Par.                | Paradise                                   |
| Peter               | Saint Peter's Epistle                      |
| P. L.               | <i>Patrologia Latina</i>                   |
| Prov.               | The Book of Proverbs                       |
| Purg.               | <i>Purgatorio</i>                          |
| Romans              | Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans         |
| Servius             | <i>Servii grammata</i>                     |
| <i>Summa theol.</i> | Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa theologiae</i>    |



## TO 1

## CANTO 1

*The dark wood—the three beasts—Virgil—the prophecy of the  
greyhound—the plan of the journey*

min di nostra vita  
elva oscura,  
smarrita.

qual era è cosa dura  
aspra e forte  
ra la paura!  
poco è più morte;  
n ch'i' vi trovai,  
h'i' v'ho scorte.  
r com' i' v'intrai,  
to a quel punto  
andonai.

piè d' un colle giunto,  
tella valle  
il cor compunto,  
vidi le sue spalle  
del pianeta  
si per ogni calle.

in poco queta  
m'era durata  
on tanta pietà.  
con lena affannata,  
o a la riva,  
tigliosa e guata:  
ch' ancor fuggiva,  
irar lo passo  
ai persona viva.

in poco il corpo lasso,  
rgia diserta  
impre era 'l più basso.

In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to  
myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost.  
Ah, how hard a thing it is to say what that wood  
was, so savage and harsh and strong that the  
thought of it renews my fear!

It is so bitter that death is little more so! But to  
treat of the good that I found there, I will tell of  
the other things I saw.

I cannot really say how I entered there, so full of  
sleep was I at the point when I abandoned the true  
way.

But when I had reached the foot of a hill, where  
the valley ended that had pierced my heart with fear,

I looked on high and saw its shoulders clothed  
already with the rays of the planet that leads us  
straight on every path.

Then was the fear a little quieted that in the lake  
of my heart had lasted through the night I passed  
with so much anguish.

And like one with laboring breath, come forth out  
of the deep onto the shore, who turns back to the  
perilous water and stares:

so my spirit, still fleeing, turned back to gaze  
again at the pass that has never yet left anyone alive.

After I had a little rested my weary body, I took  
my way again along that deserted slope, so that my  
halted foot was always the lower.

ninciar de l'erta,  
 sta molto,  
 coverta;  
 anzi al volto,  
 io cammino  
 volte vòlto.  
 io del mattino,  
 in quelle stelle  
 l'amor divino  
 cose belle;  
 a cagione  
 pelle  
 dice stagione.  
 mi desse  
 un leone.  
 ra me venisse  
 biosa fame,  
 trenesse.  
 te brame  
 negrezza,  
 grame,  
 ti gravezza  
 na vista,  
 le l'altezza.  
 tieri acquista,  
 der lo face,  
 iange e s'attista:  
 a pace,  
 a poco a poco  
 tace.  
 basso loco,  
 offerto  
 a fioco.  
 gran diserto,  
 ui,  
 od omo certo!"  
 , omo già fui,  
 bardi,  
 ii.

And behold, almost at the beginning of the steep,  
 a leopard, light and very swift, covered with spotted  
 fur;

and it did not depart from before my face but  
 rather so impeded my way that I was at several  
 turns turned to go back.

The time was the beginning of the morning, and  
 the sun was mounting up with those stars that were  
 with it when God's love

first set those lovely things in motion; so that I  
 took reason to have good hope of that beast with its  
 gaily painted hide

from the hour of the morning and the sweet  
 season, but not so that I did not fear the sight of a  
 lion that appeared to me.

He appeared to be coming against me with his  
 head high and with raging hunger, so that the air  
 appeared to tremble at him.

And a she-wolf, that seemed laden with all  
 cravings in her leanness and has caused many  
 peoples to live in wretchedness,

she put on me so much heaviness with the fear  
 that came from the sight of her, that I lost hope of  
 reaching the heights.

And like one who gladly acquires, and the time  
 arrives that makes him lose, who in all of his  
 thoughts weeps and becomes sad:

so she made me, that restless beast, who, coming  
 against me, little by little was driving me back to  
 where the sun is silent.

While I was falling down into a low place, before  
 my eyes one had offered himself to me who through  
 long silence seemed hoarse.

When I saw him in the great wilderness, "*Miserere*  
 —on me," I cried to him, "whatever you may be,  
 whether shade or true man!"

He replied: "Not a man, I was formerly a man,  
 and my parents were Lombards, Mantuans both by  
 birth.

## Canto I

I was born *sub Iulio*, though it was late, and I lived in Rome under the good Augustus in the time of the false and lying gods.

I was a poet, and I sang of that just son of  
Anchises who came from Troy, when proud Ilion  
was destroyed by fire.

But you, why do you return to so much suffering? why do you not climb the delightful mountain that is origin and cause of all joy?"

"Now are you that Virgil, that fountain which spreads forth so broad a river of speech?" I replied with shamefast brow.

"O honor and light of the other poets, let my long study and great love avail me, that has caused me to search through your volume.

You are my master and my author, you alone are he from whom I have taken the pleasing style that has won me honor.

See the beast for which I have turned back: help me against her, famous sage, for she makes my veins and pulses tremble."

"You must hold to another path," he replied, after he saw me weep, "if you wish to escape from this savage place;

for this beast at which you cry out lets no one pass by her way, but so much impedes him that she kills him;

and she has a nature so evil and cruel that her greedy desire is never satisfied, and after feeding she is hungrier than before.

Many are the animals with whom she mates, and there will be more still, until the greyhound shall come, who will make her die in pain.

He will feed on neither earth nor pelf, but on wisdom, love, and power, and his birth will be between felt and felt.

He will be the salvation of that humble Italy for which the virgin Camilla died of her wounds, and Eurvalus, Turnus, and Nisus.

ne villa,  
 'nferno,  
 rilla.  
 penso e discerno  
 na guida,  
 attemo,  
 rida,  
 enti,  
 un grida;  
 contenti  
 venire,  
 genti.  
 i salire,  
 legna:  
 partire;  
 he là sù regna,  
 sua legge,  
 er me si vegna.  
 iuvi regge;  
 seggio:  
 gel!"  
 richeggio  
 i conoscesti,  
 tale e peggio,  
 or dicesti,  
 an Pietro  
 nesti."  
 ni dietro.

Canto 1

109 He will drive her from every town until he has  
 put her back in Hell, whence envy first sent her  
 forth.  
 112 Thus for your good I think and judge that you  
 shall follow me, and I shall be your guide, and I will  
 lead you from here through an eternal place,  
 115 where you will hear the desperate shrieks, you  
 will see the ancient suffering spirits, who all cry out  
 at the second death;  
 118 and you will see those who are content in the fire,  
 because they hope to come, whenever it may be, to  
 the blessed people.  
 121 To whom then if you shall wish to rise, there will  
 be a soul more worthy of that than I; with her I shall  
 leave you when I depart;  
 124 for that Emperor who reigns on high, because I  
 was a rebel to his law, wills not that I come into his  
 city.  
 127 In every place he commands, and there he rules;  
 there is his city and high throne: O happy the one he  
 chooses to be there!  
 130 And I to him: "Poet, I beg you by that God whom  
 you did not know, so that I may flee this evil and  
 worse,  
 133 that you lead me where you have just now said,  
 so that I may see the gate of Saint Peter and those  
 whom you call so woebegone."  
 136 Then he moved, and I followed after him.



## NOTES

1. **In the middle of the journey of our life:** Later passages (e.g., 21.112-14) place the action of the poem in April 1300; if, as is probable, Dante was born in May 1265, he would be thirty-five in 1300, midway in the normative biblical lifespan, "threescore years and ten" (Psalm 90.10), mentioned by Dante in *Convivio* 4.23 (cf. Is. 38.10: "In the midst of my days I shall go to the gates of Hell"). The line suggests, with the plural possessive "our," that the pilgrim is a representative human being, an Everyman. Dante omits or postpones the traditional "topics of exordium," such as announcement of subject, dedication, and invocation of the muse; the abruptness of this beginning is highly unconventional in medieval as well as classical narrative.
2. **I came to myself:** The traditional translation of *mi ritrovai* is "I found myself." In our view, the prefix *ri-*, rather than denoting repetition here, serves to intensify the inward nature of the event: Dante is describing a moral awakening. We believe there is also, both here and in line 11, a (very understated) reference to the literary genre of dream-vision, in which the dream regularly begins with an awakening (early illustrations often show a "sleeping" poet-as-author at the beginning); this question is more fully discussed in the note on *Par.* 32.139 (see the note to 2.8).
2. **a dark wood:** The "wood" of error and sin (cf. *Convivio* 4.24.12); there may be a reference to the "ancient forest, deep dwelling of beasts" near the mouth of Hades in *Aen.* 6.179. There is probably a reference to the Platonic idea of matter (*silva* in the Latin translation of the *Timaeus*) and also to the forest of Arthurian romance. Dante is perhaps drawing on the beginning of his teacher Brunetto Latini's allegorical poem the *Tesoretto*, in which the narrator loses his way in a wondrous forest, where the goddess Nature appears to instruct him.
3. **the straight way:** The course of the just man, leading to God (see Psalm 23.3, Prov. 2.13-14, 2 Peter 2.15). If *ché* is taken as *che*, the so-called modal conjunction (the orthography of Dante's time did not distinguish them), the line could mean "where the straight way was lost."
- 4-7. **Ah, how hard . . . death is little more [bitter]:** Note the characteristic stress on an identity between the writing of the poem and the experience it relates: though in terms of the fiction the narrator has seen God, he is still subject to all the terrors of the journey as he narrates them.
8. **to treat of the good that I found there:** *Trattar* [to treat systematically] is a semi-technical term, like *good*; this is an oblique announcement of the subject of the poem, for the "good" he found there would seem to be the undertaking of the journey (cf. 2.126).

11. **so full of sleep:** The sleep of 14), again, we believe, with implication 2).
  13. **a hill:** Like the sea and the daps of a traditional symbolic landscape position of human beings between have in mind the famous instance of 92). For the "Lord's holy mountain 17-18. **the planet that leads us** of the sun as revealer of knowledge cusses the sun as the chief visible derer) like the six others, moving
  20. **lake of my heart:** Medieval but as a reservoir of blood and pun the "lake," leaving the limbs pale canzone "Così nel mio parlar vol Durling and Martinez 1990, pp. 2
  21. **anguish:** Dante's word is *pietings* "pity," "pitiable suffering," e
  22. **like one with laboring breath** phorically escaped shipwreck ("slop does literally at the beginning of the system of parallels with the opening
  27. **the pass that has never yet self** (see Prov. 12.28).
  28. **my weary body:** The present first mention, will be insisted on t
  30. **my halted foot was always** best explanation of this famous cr fixed to support the body while t others, we naturally begin to walk t referred to as the naturally fixed o dragging behind his right one, is al
- The soul was said to walk (i.e., to of its two chief faculties, intellect an for the heart is on the left side) drag the laming wound in man's nature see the goal clearly, but will move

11. **so full of sleep:** The sleep of sin and moral oblivion (as in Romans 13.11-14), again, we believe, with implicit reference to dream-vision (see the note to line 2).

13. **a hill:** Like the sea and the dark wood, the hill, later called a mountain, is part of a traditional symbolic landscape we intuitively understand as representing the position of human beings between the depths and the heights (Dante may well have in mind the famous instance in the Old French *Queste del saint Graal*, pp. 91-92). For the "Lord's holy mountain," see Psalms 24.3, 43.3, 121.1 and Is. 2.2-5.

17-18. **the planet that leads us straight:** The expression emphasizes the role of the sun as revealer of knowledge and wisdom. In *Convivio* 3.12, Dante discusses the sun as the chief visible analogue of God. The sun is a "planet" (wanderer) like the six others, moving against the background of the fixed stars.

20. **lake of my heart:** Medieval physiology thought of the heart not as a pump, but as a reservoir of blood and pneuma ("spirit"); fear would rush them back to the "lake," leaving the limbs pale and weak. Compare *Vita nuova* 2.4 and the canzone "Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro," lines 45-47 (translated in Durling and Martinez 1990, pp. 286-90).

21. **anguish:** Dante's word is *pietà*, a form of *pietà*, which includes the meanings "pity," "pitiable suffering," even "piety."

22. **like one with laboring breath:** The first formal simile: the pilgrim has metaphorically escaped shipwreck ("slope" at line 29 can also mean "shore"), as Aeneas does literally at the beginning of the *Aeneid*. Hollander (1969) explores an elaborate system of parallels with the opening of the *Aeneid* in the first cantos of the *Inferno*.

27. **the pass that has never yet left anyone alive:** Probably damnation itself (see Prov. 12.28).

28. **my weary body:** The presence of the pilgrim's body, of which this is the first mention, will be insisted on throughout *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*.

30. **my halted foot was always the lower:** Freccero (1959) has given the best explanation of this famous crux. In the act of walking, one foot must be fixed to support the body while the other moves; according to Aristotle and others, we naturally begin to walk by lifting the right foot, so that the left can be referred to as the naturally fixed or halted foot. Thus the pilgrim's left foot is dragging behind his right one, is always "the lower."

The soul was said to walk (i.e., to move toward its objects) on the two "feet" of its two chief faculties, intellect and will (desire); the left foot of the soul (will, for the heart is on the left side) drags behind the right foot (intellect) because of the laming wound in man's nature inflicted by Adam's Fall: intellect is able to see the goal clearly, but will moves toward it only haltingly.

life: Later passages (e.g., 21.112-1300; if, as is probable, Dante was in 1300, midway in the normative Psalm 90.10), mentioned by Dante of my days I shall go to the gates of successive "our," that the pilgrim is a Dante omits or postpones the tradition of subject, dedication, and his beginning is highly unconventional.

translation of *mi ritrovai* is "I found in denoting repetition here, serves it is describing a moral awakening. 11, a (very understated) reference to the dream regularly begins with a "sleeping" poet-as-author at the end in the note on *Par.* 32.139 (see

I sin (cf. *Convivio* 4.24.12); there dwelling of beasts" near the mouth reference to the Platonic idea of *Timaeus*) and also to the forest of 3 on the beginning of his teacher 10, in which the narrator loses his Nature appears to instruct him.

man, leading to God (see Psalm taken as *die*, the so-called modal did not distinguish them), the line

[bitter]: Note the characteristic poem and the experience it relates: seen God, he is still subject to all

: *Trattato* [to treat systematically] the announcement of the subject could seem to be the undertaking

32. a **leopard**: Commentators do not agree on the significance of this and the other beasts—lion and she-wolf—that drive back the pilgrim, which Dante's Italian ties together with alliteration (*lonza, leone, lupa*). Various possibilities have been suggested; the most likely correlates them with the triple division of Hell into sins of disordered appetite (she-wolf), violence (lion), and fraud (leopard); other identifications, such as the leopard with lust and the she-wolf with fraud, though traditional, seem arbitrary. The poem does seem to call out for labels here, but it is important to see that at this point it is withholding definitive clues: the pilgrim may be as mystified as the reader, and only later experience will explain the beasts.

37–43. **The time was . . . the sweet season:** This second astronomical reference identifies the beginning of the action as related to the spring equinox (March 21 by convention, March 14 in fact, in Dante's time); medieval tradition held that at the moment of creation the sun was at the first point of Aries. Other evidence in the poem suggests the date of April 8, 1300.

44-48. but not so . . . tremble at him: Note the repeated emphasis on Dante's fear. The dreamlike character of the scene raises the question to what extent the beasts are projections of internal dangers.

**49-54. And a she-wolf . . . of reaching the heights:** Why the pilgrim should be most afraid of the she-wolf is not explained (cf. line 97, with note).

**55. gladly acquires:** The economic simile (first of many) targets a society, the Florence of Dante's youth and young adulthood, only recently become wealthy and acquisitive.

**60. the sun is silent:** That is, where knowledge is darkened and hope is gone. The sun is traditionally associated with speech (e.g., Psalm 18.2-3).

62-63. **before my eyes . . . seemed hoarse:** Virgil is now introduced, to become Dante's guide. The elaborately contorted phrasing, which the translation renders literally, is striking in two respects. First, the pluperfect "had been offered" suggests that in some sense Virgil has been there for some time; second, the passive suggests that Dante must see Virgil before Virgil can speak to him. These features are particularly appropriate if the figure of Virgil is taken to refer to the codex of the historical Vergil's works (for our spellings, see below), where his voice does exist for the eye; they are most probably to be connected with an allegorical meaning: a reading of Vergil's works, especially of the *Aeneid*, would seem to have played a prominent role in the spiritual crisis of 1300 (cf. Leo 1951). Thus the conventional allegoresis of Dante's Virgil as representing "human reason," while at times undeniably valid, is much too narrow. The figure of Virgil in the poem should be taken to refer to the soul of the historical Vergil, expressed in his voice—his poetry—but in possession of added knowledge because he is

dead, though still subject to scorn, has been variously explained (the Italian is no longer understood by his Latin is no longer understood by Dante or others); or he is a shadowy figure of a poet, or a poet himself. Modern scholarship has established Vergil's name; Dante follows the tradition. We shall maintain the distinction between *Vergil* to refer to the character and *Virgil* to refer to the character.

**65. *Miserere* [have mercy]:** 7 Psalms (especially Psalm 51 [Vential psalm]).

67. Not a man: Because dead  
telian view, a human being is th  
111).

**70. born sub Iulio:** Publius Vergilius Mantua, then in Cisalpine Gaul as *Aeneid*, on which he had spent the last years of his life. Vergil's literary executors distinguished other principal works are his pastoral poetry, the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid*, which has left fewer apparent traces of his influence. "Julius," when Julius Caesar, born 100 B.C., he was only twenty-six when Caesar was not in power at Vergil's birth (100 B.C.). Vergil was not in power at Vergil's birth, but he was not in power at Vergil's birth, but he was not in power at Vergil's birth.

**72. false and lying gods:** Ch., and established since Augustine, Mars, etc.) were demons that have been silenced at Christ's birth (s) as Plato and Aristotle, and often monotheists though they used the names *Jove* and *Apollo* to refer to

**73-74. just son:** Justice, the noun of the goddess Venus and destruction of Troy ("proud Ilion sang of Aeneas in his *Aeneid*, venerable myths: the descent of European

**78. origin and cause of all joy**  
happiness following Aristotle's *telos*, the goal or end) is also the

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*one, lupd*). Various possibilities have  
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#### Notes to *Canto 1*

dead, though still subject to some of his old limitations. Virgil's hoarseness has  
been variously explained (the Italian allows "dim" or "weak" as well as "hoarse");  
his Latin is no longer understood: his works have been disregarded (whether by  
Dante or others); or he is a shade like those of the Vergilian underworld.

Modern scholarship has established that *Vergilius* is the correct spelling of  
Vergil's name; Dante follows the traditional medieval spelling in writing *Virgilio*.  
We shall maintain the distinction, using *Vergil* to refer to the historical Vergil,  
and *Virgil* to refer to the character in Dante's poem.

65. *Miserere* [have mercy]: The Latin here derives most immediately from the  
Psalms (especially Psalm 51 [Vulgate 50], liturgically the most important peni-  
tential psalm).

67. **Not a man:** Because dead, a disembodied soul. In Dante's Christian Aristo-  
telian view, a human being is the union of body and soul (see the note to 6.109-  
111).

70. **born sub Iulio:** Publius Vergilius Maro was born in 70 B.C. at Andes, near  
Mantua, then in Cisalpine Gaul; he died at Brundisium in 19 B.C., leaving the  
*Aeneid*, on which he had spent eleven years, incomplete. At the order of Augustus,  
Vergil's literary executors disregarded the poet's wish that it be burned. Vergil's  
other principal works are his pastoral *Ecliques* or *Bucolics*, which strongly influ-  
enced Dante, and his versified treatise on agriculture and husbandry, the *Georgics*,  
which has left fewer apparent traces in Dante's work. Vergil was born "under  
Julius," when Julius Caesar, born about 100 B.C., had barely qualified for the Senate;  
he was only twenty-six when Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. Although Caesar  
was not in power at Vergil's birth, Dante wishes to associate the poet of the Roman  
empire with the figure that he considered its founder (see the note to 2.20-24).

72. **false and lying gods:** Christian opinion, based on Psalm 96.5 [Vulgate 95],  
and established since Augustine, was that the gods of the pagan world (Jove, Juno,  
Mars, etc.) were demons that had led humanity astray through the oracles, which  
were silenced at Christ's birth (see *City of God* 2.2, 2.10); certain individuals, such  
as Plato and Aristotle, and often Vergil, were thought to have been essentially  
monotheists though they used polytheistic terminology. Dante frequently uses the  
names *Jove* and *Apollo* to refer to the Christian God (e.g., 31.92, *Par.* 1.13).

73-74. **just son:** Justice, the noblest of the moral virtues, is attributed to Aeneas,  
son of the goddess Venus and Trojan Anchioes, founder of Rome after the  
destruction of Troy ("proud Ilion") by the Greeks (see *Aen.* 1.544-45). Vergil  
sang of Aeneas in his *Aeneid*, vessel of one of the Middle Ages' most significant  
myths: the descent of Europeans from Aeneas and other Trojans.

78. **origin and cause of all joy:** The mountain is designated as the origin of  
happiness following Aristotle's analysis of causation, in which the final cause (the  
*telos*, the goal or end) is also the first cause (the *arché* origin).

79-80. are you that Virgil . . . river of speech: That Virgil's poetry was like a great river was a traditional topic in ancient and medieval literary criticism. In the Middle Ages, the *Aeneid*, *Georgics*, and *Eclogues* were thought to define the levels of poetic style: "tragic" or "high," "middle" or "rustic," and "low" or "bucolic," respectively.

79. are you that Virgil: Compare *Aen.* 1.617: "Tune ille Aeneas quem . . ." [Are you that Aeneas whom . . .], in Dido's first speech to Aeneas.

85. You are my master and my author: The translation will uniformly translate *maestro* as "master," though the word also means "teacher"; the modern "author" no longer conveys the meaning the term *autore* had for the Middle Ages. An *autore* is one whose formative influence on others has been so great and so widespread that he has acquired *authority* in the strongest possible (positive) sense: he is "worthy of faith and obedience" (*Convivio* 4.6).

87. the pleasing style that has won me honor: There are traces of Vergil's stylistic influence on Dante as early as the *Vita nuova* (ca. 1294) and the *rime petrose* (1296). Dante was already well known as a poet in 1300.

91. You must hold to another path: The pilgrim cannot proceed directly up the mountain; he must first descend. See *Romans* 6.3-4:

Know ye not, that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism into death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.

The penitential descent into Hell imitates Christ's death on the Cross and is parallel to baptism, the sacramental death to sin, followed by "newness of life." The pattern by which the believer's experience is a figural imitation of Christ is fundamental to the poem.

97. she has a nature . . . : Virgil's account of the she-wolf, obscure as it is, makes clear that, as the pilgrim sensed in line 51, she is a terrible external power and a major force in history.

100. the animals with whom she mates: The language is that of the Old Testament prophets, for whom unfaithfulness to Jehovah is "fornication" (cf. Is. 1.21, Jer. 3.1, and Apoc. 18.3).

101-5. the greyhound . . . felt: Innumerable explanations have been offered of this prophecy. There are two main families of interpretation: (1) the greyhound refers to the Second Coming of Christ or to an ecclesiastical figure prefiguring it; (2) the greyhound refers to a secular ruler, who would also prefigure the Second Coming. Prime candidates for the latter figure are Can Grande della Scala, the Ghibelline leader of the Veronese noble house that offered Dante hospitality during his exile (his title, derived from *khan*, also means "dog," hence

greyhound), and Emperor Henry VII, who seemed to Dante to promise, and political institutions for v taken to mean a geographical Montefeltro), an astrological sometimes shown with felt ( Dominicans), and a technique perhaps with reference to an e of the *Purgatorio* (to which it most obscure in the poem. T

106. that humble Italy: D. [low-lying] refers to the physic crew. Note the contrast with (*superbum/Ilum*).

107-8. virgin Camilla . . . Italian war described in the la chief antagonist of Aeneas as and Euryalus) and native Itali are carefully interwoven in l lines suggest patriotism as the

111. whence envy first se the devil, death came into the is the traditional reason for hi

117. the second death: Th ing the first, physical death; fi

118-19. content in the fir tony for all of Purgatory, w rification of Purgatory with fi fire shall try every man's woi fire").

120-26. the blessed people habiting, along with the angels fines of the cosmos; this is "his

122. a soul more worthy: l in the *Vita nuova* (see 2.53).

124-25. that Emperor . . . Virgil was a "rebel" against G

134. the gate of Saint Pet

**speech:** That Vergil's poetry was ancient and medieval literary criticism, and *Edoques* were thought to "high," "middle" or "rustic," and 517: "Tune ille Aeneas quem . . ." first speech to Aeneas.

The translation will uniformly translate also means "teacher"; the modern term *autore* had for the Middle Ages. On others has been so great and so the strongest possible (positive) sense: *virio* 4.6).

**honori:** There are traces of Vergil's *nuova* (ca. 1294) and the *time petrose* poet in 1300.

the pilgrim cannot proceed directly Romans 6.3-4:

ized in Christ Jesus are baptized in r with him by baptism into death: the glory of the Father, so we also

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greyhound), and Emperor Henry VII, whose descent into Italy in 1311 to 1313 seemed to Dante to promise, before his untimely death, the reform of religious and political institutions for which he yearned. "Between felt and felt" has been taken to mean a geographical location (between the towns of Feltré and Montebellero), an astrological sign (the Gemini, Dante's own natal sign, were sometimes shown with felt caps), the two mendicant orders (Franciscans and Dominicans), and a technique of election (counters dropped into felt-lined boxes), perhaps with reference to an emperor. Along with the prophecy in the last canto of the *Purgatorio* (to which it is closely related), this passage remains one of the most obscure in the poem. The best discussion is Davis 1976.

**106. that humble Italy:** Dante adapts *Aen.* 3.522-23, where the term *humilis* [low-lying] refers to the physical appearance of the Italian shore as seen by Aeneas's crew. Note the contrast with line 75, "proud Ilion," itself an echo of *Aen.* 3.2-3 (*superbum/Ilium*).

**107-8. virgin Camilla . . . Nisus:** Dante lists some of the fallen in the Trojan Italian war described in the last six books of Vergil's epic, including Turnus, the chief antagonist of Aeneas as rival for the hand of Lavinia. But Trojans (Nisus and Euryalus) and native Italians (the Rutulian Turnus, the Volscian Camilla) are carefully interwoven in Dante's list, their former antagonisms elided. The lines suggest patriotism as the motive of these deaths.

**111. whence envy first sent her forth:** See Wisdom 2.24: "By the envy of the devil, death came into the world." The devil's envy of man's favored status is the traditional reason for his enmity.

**117. the second death:** The death of the soul in eternal damnation, following the first, physical death; for the expression, see Apoc. 20.15, 21.8.

**118-19. content in the fire:** Souls undergoing the fire of purgation. A metonymy for all of Purgatory, which includes a diversity of punishments; the identification of Purgatory with fire is traditional, resting on 1 Cor. 3.13-15 ("the fire shall try every man's work . . . but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire").

**120-26. the blessed people . . . into his city:** The blessed are thought of as inhabiting, along with the angels, the "Empyrean," a sphere of fire beyond the confines of the cosmos; this is "his city," to which the pilgrim ascends in the *Paradiso*.

**122. a soul more worthy:** Unmistakably, Beatrice, the poet's lady celebrated in the *Vita nuova* (see 2.53).

**124-25. that Emperor . . . a rebel to his law:** For the question of how Virgil was a "rebel" against God's law, see 4.33-39, with notes.

**134. the gate of Saint Peter:** The gate to Purgatory (see *Purg.* 9.73-145).



## C 2

## CANTO 2

*Fears—precedents for the journey—Virgil's account of his being sent—  
Beatrice's account of her being sent*

e l'aere bruno  
o in terra  
uno  
ner la guerra  
pietate,  
non erra.  
o, or m'aiutate;  
ch'io vidi,  
te.  
e mi guidi,  
possente,  
mi fidi.  
parente,  
mortale  
nente.  
igne male  
o effetto  
chi e 'l quale,  
no d'intelletto;  
e di suo impero  
e eletto:  
er dir lo vero,  
o  
ggior Piero.  
i dai tu vanto,  
ne  
ammanto.  
azione,  
lla fede  
lvazione.

1           The day was departing, and the darkened air was  
releasing all living creatures on the earth from their  
          toils; and I alone  
4           prepared myself to undergo the war both of the  
          journey and of pity, which memory, unerring, will  
          depict.  
7           O muses, O high wit, now help me; O memory  
          that wrote down what I saw, here will your nobility  
          appear.  
10          I began: "Poet who are my guide, consider my  
          strength, if it is powerful enough, before you entrust  
          me to the deep pass.  
13          You say that the father of Silvius, still in  
          corruptible flesh, went to the immortal realm and  
          was there with his senses.  
16          Therefore, if the adversary of all evil was liberal to  
          him, considering the high effect that was to come  
          forth from him, and who and what he was,  
19          it does not seem unworthy to a man of intellect;  
          for he in the Empyrean heaven had been chosen to  
          be father of mother Rome and her empire:  
22          and Rome and her empire, to tell the truth, were  
          established to be the holy place where the successor  
          of great Peter is enthroned.  
25          Through this journey that you claim for him, he  
          understood things that were the cause of his victory  
          and of the papal mantle.  
28          Later the chosen Vessel went there, to bring back  
          strengthening for that faith which is the beginning of  
          the way of salvation.

rvi? o chi 'l concede?  
 Paulo sono;  
 né altri 'l crede.  
 re io m'abbandono,  
 n sia folle.  
 ch'i' non ragiono."  
 isvuol ciò che volle  
 già proposta,  
 itto si tolle:  
 lla oscura costa,  
 sumai la 'impresa  
 o tanto tosta.  
 a tua intesa,"  
 o quell' ombra,  
 e offesa,  
 io ingombra  
 lo rinvolve,  
 quand' ombra.  
 che tu ti solve,  
 quel ch' io 'ntesi  
 ti dolve.  
 n sospesi,  
 a e bella,  
 la richiesi.  
 più che la stella;  
 ve e piana,  
 favella:  
 toana,  
 mondo dura,  
 lontana,  
 la ventura,  
 edito  
 per paura;  
 si smarrito  
 so levata,  
 l cielo udito.  
 arola ornata  
 uo compare,  
 lata.

Canto 2

31 But I, why come there? or who grants it? I am  
 not Aeneas, I am not Paul; neither I nor others  
 believe me worthy of that.  
 34 Therefore, if I abandon myself to the journey, I fear  
 lest my coming may be folly. You are wise, you  
 understand better than I speak."  
 37 And like one who unwill's what he just now  
 willed and with new thoughts changes his intent, so  
 that he draws back entirely from beginning:  
 40 so did I become on that dark slope, for, thinking, I  
 gave up the undertaking that I had been so quick to  
 begin.  
 43 "If I have well understood your word," replied the  
 shade of that great-souled one, "your soul is  
 wounded by cowardice,  
 46 which many times so encumbers a man that he  
 turns back from honorable endeavor, as a false sight  
 turns a beast when it shies.  
 49 That you may free yourself from this fear, I will  
 tell you why I came and what I heard in the first  
 moment when I grieved for you.  
 52 I was among those who are suspended, and a lady  
 called me, so blessed and beautiful that I begged her  
 to command me.  
 55 Her eyes were shining brighter than the morning  
 star; and she began to speak gently and softly, with  
 angelic voice, in her language:  
 58 'O courteous Mantuan soul, whose fame still lasts  
 in the world and will last as far as the world will go,  
 61 my friend, not the friend of fortune, on the  
 deserted shore is so blocked in his journey that he  
 has turned back for fear;  
 64 and I am afraid that he may be already so lost  
 that I have risen too late to help him, according to  
 what I have heard of him in Heaven.  
 67 Now go, and with your ornamented speech and  
 whatever else is needed for his escape help him so  
 that I may be consoled.

ti faccio andare;  
 riar disio;  
 i fa parlare.  
 i al signor mio,  
 a lui.  
 mincia' io:  
 ola per cui  
 ogne contento  
 li cerchi sui,  
 io comandamento  
 , m'è tardi;  
 mi il tuo talento.  
 che non ti guardi  
 in questo centro  
 nar tu ardi.'  
 cotanto a dentro,  
 i rispuose,  
 enir qua entro.  
 quelle cose  
 altrui male;  
 n paurose.  
 a mercé, tale  
 i mi tange,  
 io non m'assale.  
 el che si compiangere  
 ov' io ti mando,  
 i frange.  
 i suo dinando  
 il tuo fedele  
 ando.—  
 in crudele,  
 dov' i' era,  
 Rachele.  
 di Dio vera,  
 i t'ammò tanto  
 e schiera?  
 suo pianto,  
 i combatte  
 on ha vanto?—

70  
 73  
 76  
 79  
 82  
 85  
 88  
 91  
 94  
 97  
 100  
 103  
 106

I am Beatrice who cause you to go; I come from  
 the place where I long to return; love has moved me  
 and makes me speak.  
 When I shall be before my lord, I will praise you  
 frequently to him.' Then she was silent, and I began:  
 'O lady of power, through whom alone the human  
 race rises above all the contents of that heaven whose  
 circles are smallest,  
 so pleasing to me is your command that obeying,  
 had it already taken place, is slow; no more is  
 needed than to unfold your desire.  
 But tell me the reason why you do not shrink  
 from coming down here, into this center, from the  
 spacious place where you desire to return.'  
 'Since you wish to know so deeply, I will tell you  
 in brief,' she replied, 'why I do not fear to come  
 inside here.  
 One must fear only those things that have the  
 power to harm; not other things, for they are not  
 fearful.  
 I am made by God, in his mercy, such that your  
 misery does not touch me, the flame of this burning  
 does not assail me.  
 There is a noble lady in Heaven, who grieves for  
 this impediment to which I send you, so that she  
 vanquishes harsh judgment there on high.  
 She called Lucia in her request and said:—Now  
 your faithful one has need of you, and I put him in  
 your hands.—  
 Lucia, enemy of all cruelty, moved and came to  
 the place where I was sitting with the ancient Rachel.  
 She said:—Beatrice, true praise of God, why do  
 you not help him who loved you so, who because of  
 you came forth from the common herd?  
 Do you not hear the anguish of his weeping, do  
 you not see the death that attacks him there, by the  
 torrent where the sea has no boast?—

Canto 2

ai persone ratte  
r danno,  
le fatte,  
o beato scanno,  
e onesto,  
lito l'hanno.  
gionato questo,  
do volse,  
r più presto.  
ella volse:  
evai  
o andar ti tolse.  
è, perché restai,  
e allette,  
a non hai,  
e benedette  
il cielo,  
ti promette?"  
arno gelo  
"I sol li 'mbianca,  
pro stelo:  
trude stanca,  
or mi corse,  
sona franca:  
mi soccorse!  
sto  
tsel!  
il cor disposto  
e,  
io proposto.  
è d'ambidue:  
naestro."  
osso fue,  
alto e silvestro.

|     |                                                            |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 109 | In the world there have never been persons so              |
|     | swift to seek their advantage or to flee their loss, as I, |
|     | after hearing such words spoken,                           |
| 112 | came down here from my blessed throne, trusting            |
|     | in your virtuous speech, which honors you and those        |
|     | who have heeded it.'                                       |
| 115 | After she had spoken all this to me, she turned            |
|     | her shining eyes, shedding tears, which made me            |
|     | quicker to come here.                                      |
| 118 | And I have come to you as she willed: from                 |
|     | before that beast I have taken you, that deprived you      |
|     | of the short path up the mountain.                         |
| 121 | Therefore what is it? why, why do you stand                |
|     | still? why do you nurse such cowardice in your             |
| 124 | heart? why do you not have boldness and freedom,           |
|     | seeing that three such blessed ladies have a care          |
|     | for you in the court of Heaven, and my speech              |
|     | promises you so much good?"                                |
| 127 | As little flowers, bowed and closed in the chill of        |
|     | night, when the sun whitens them straighten up all         |
|     | open on their stems:                                       |
| 130 | so did I become with my tired strength, and so             |
|     | much good boldness ran to my heart, that I began           |
|     | like a person feed:                                        |
| 133 | "Oh full of pity she who has helped me! and you            |
|     | courteous, who have quickly obeyed the true words          |
|     | she offered you!                                           |
| 136 | Your words have so filled my heart with desire to          |
|     | come with you, that I have returned to my first            |
|     | purpose.                                                   |
| 139 | Now go, for one same will is in both: you are              |
|     | leader, you lord, and you master." So I said to him;       |
|     | and when he had set forth                                  |
| 142 | I entered upon the deep, savage journey.                   |



## NOTES

1-3. **The day was departing . . . and I alone:** Like Canto 1, Canto 2 begins with an indication of time and of the pilgrim's isolation; whereas he slept in Canto 1, here he alone is awake. The contrast between the protagonist and the peace permeating nature draws on several passages in the *Aeneid*, such as 8.26-27:

Nox erat et terras animalia fessa per omnis  
altituum pecudumque genus sopor altus habebat,  
cum pater . . .

[It was night and through all lands deep sleep held the tired  
living creatures, the winged ones and the flocks,  
while the father . . .]

and 9.224-25:

Cetera per terras omnis animalia somno  
laxabant curas et corda oblita laborum

[Other creatures through all lands in sleep  
loosened their cares and their hearts, forgetting their labors]

and compare 4.522-32.

7-9. **O muses . . . appear:** The appearance of an invocation to the muses here retrospectively turns the entire first canto into a kind of *propositio* [announcement of subject]; compare the sequence of Vergil's *Aeneid*, Book 1: lines 1-7, proposition ("Arms and the man I sing . . ."), and lines 8-11, invocation ("Muse, remind [*memora*] me of the causes . . ."). The opening invocations of *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* constitute an ascending series with this one.

7-8. **O muses, O high wit:** The identification of the muses (the "daughters of memory") with the powers of the poet's own mind or with the lore of the craft was common in the Middle Ages. We use "wit" to translate Dante's term

*ingegno*, regularly used by Dante to refer to those acquired by practice or knowledge; see notes to *Par.* 22.1-9.

8. **O memory that wrote down:** in derivation to *memoria* (cf. *memoria* *mind*, as in "Mind your p's and q's" book, basic to the entire *Vita nuova*). Chaucer adapted this and the form of the *House of Fame*, lines 523-28:

O Thought that wrot al that  
And in the tresore hyt shett  
Of my brayn, now shal men  
Yf any vertu in the be,  
To tellen al my drem aright.  
Now kythe thyng engin and n

[O Thought that wrote down  
And shut it in the treasury  
Of my brain, now shall men see  
If there be any virtue in thee  
To tell all my dream aright.  
Now make known thy skill as

The lines strongly suggest that Chaucer (see the notes to 1.2 and 1.11).

13. **the father of Silvius:** Silvius was Aeneas, whose journey to the underworld chief models, especially for the *Inferno*, considered the events of the *Aeneid* 1

14-15. **still . . . with his senses:** The rather than in dream or in the spirit count. See, for example, *Aen.* 6.290-291: "ever, he leaves Hades by the gate of

17. **the high effect:** This is specific to mean "he [*Aeneas*] does not seem

*ingegno*, regularly used by Dante to refer to the innate qualities of mind as opposed to those acquired by practice or knowledge; the term is further discussed in the notes to *Par.* 22.1–9.

8. **O memory that wrote down:** Dante's word is *mente* [mind], closely related in derivation to *memoria* (cf. *memora* [*Aen.* 1.8] and compare the English verb *to mind*, as in "Mind your p's and q's"). Implicit here is the idea of memory as a book, basic to the entire *Vita nuova* (see especially Chapter 1).

Chaucer adapted this and the following lines in the Prologue to Book 2 of the *House of Fame*, lines 523–28:

O Thought that wrot al that I mette,  
And in the tresorye hyt shette  
Of my brayn, now shal men se  
Yf any vertu in the be,  
To tellen al my drem aryght.  
Now kythe thyn engin and myght.

[O Thought that wrote down all I dreamed,  
And shut it in the treasury  
Of my brain, now shall men see  
If there be any virtue in thee  
To tell all my dream aright.  
Now make known thy skill and might.]

The lines strongly suggest that Chaucer thought of the *Comedy* as a dream-vision (see the notes to 1.2 and 1.11).

13. **the father of Silvius:** Silvius was the posthumous son (*Aen.* 6.760–66) of Aeneas, whose journey to the underworld is related in *Aeneid* 6, one of Dante's chief models, especially for the *Inferno*. Here, as elsewhere, Dante writes as if he considered the events of the *Aeneid* to be historical fact.

14–15. **still . . . with his senses:** That Aeneas journeyed to Hades in the flesh, rather than in dream or in the spirit, is repeatedly emphasized in Vergil's account. See, for example, *Aen.* 6.290–94, 413–14; at the end of the book, however, he leaves Hades by the gate of false dreams (lines 893–99).

17. **the high effect:** This is specified in lines 20–24. Line 19 may also be taken to mean "he [Aeneas] does not seem unworthy."

I alone: Like Canto 1, Canto 2  
the pilgrim's isolation; whereas he  
he contrast between the protagon-  
on several passages in the *Aeneid*,

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with this one.

ation of the muses (the "daughters  
own mind or with the lore of the  
use "wit" to translate Dante's term

20-24. for he . . . great Peter: Dante's view that the Romans were a second chosen people, and that the establishment of the Roman empire was part of God's providential preparation for the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Church, underlies the entire *Divine Comedy* and is set forth in his *Convivio* (4.4-5) and *Monarchia* (Book 2).

24. the successor of great Peter: The pope; Christ's gift to Saint Peter of the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16.13-20) was interpreted by the Roman Church as signifying Peter's appointment as the first pope.

26-27. the cause . . . papal mantle: That is, Aeneas's journey to the underworld was the cause of his victory in Latium and thus, according to Vergil, of the Roman empire; for Dante, the cause of the eventual establishment of the papacy as well.

28. the chosen Vessel: *Vas electionis*, the phrase used by God to refer to Saul/Paul in Acts 9.15. Saint Paul relates his vision of the "third heaven" in 2 Cor. 12.1-7. There is an account of Saint Paul's visit to Hell in the fifth- or sixth-century Latin "Apocalypse of Paul" (*Visio Pauli*; see Elliott).

32. I am not Aeneas, I am not Paul: After the periphrases of lines 13 and 28, the use of the names themselves is climactic. In addition to developing the theme of the pilgrim's fear (see below), the raising of this question serves to emphasize the iconoclastic, in fact epoch-making importance of a journey to the other world being claimed by a layman and politically active private individual.

43-45. If I have . . . cowardice: A continuation of the theme of the pilgrim's fear, a chief obstacle in Canto 1 (see 1.19, 44, 52, 90). The *terzina* opposes magnanimity (largeness of spirit) with baseness or smallness of spirit, in this case the pilgrim's unwillingness to believe he is destined for great things and his reluctance to trust Virgil; the concepts are discussed in *Convivio* 1.11, on the basis of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (4.3).

52-117. I was among those . . . quicker to come here: Virgil answers the pilgrim's fears with an account of how he was sent to the pilgrim, which reveals the hierarchical chain of mediation of God's grace (Virgin Mary-Saint Lucy-Beatrice-Virgil) that his presence implies. His authority is guaranteed by his connection with the highest (God) via the hierarchical chain (note that his knowledge of the upper levels is itself mediated by Beatrice's account). On the

importance of the "great chain pp. 18-20.

52. those who are suspended:

53-57. a lady . . . in her *lingua* derives from the lyric poetry of the medieval tradition of narrative and *Vita nuova*, which narrates Dante's death and establishes her status as Boccaccio, identified her with a Beatrice died on the appropriate day; the n

61. not the friend of fortune: T advantage.

67. your ornamented speech: 113-14 and exemplified in this en

71. the place . . . return: The E

76-78. O lady . . . smallest: Thirgonical dimension of Beatrice; in : lady Dante loved, she represents, vmodation, revelation, and divine g

78. that heaven whose circles a thought to be confined to the sul beginning with the moon, were pe

82-114. But tell me . . . those v Beatrice's answer reproduce the str pilgrim's question expressing his f lowed by its result (lines 43-142). L fear of Hell (in this case, her own l sent.

91. your misery does not touch n echoes the risen Jesus' words to Mary, [Do not touch me].

e's view that the Romans were a second  
t of the Roman empire was part of God's  
3 of Christ and the establishment of the  
nedy and is set forth in his *Convivio* (4.4—

he pope; Christ's gift to Saint Peter of  
was interpreted by the Roman Church  
first pope.

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destined for great things and his  
discussed in *Convivio* 1.11, on the

to come here: Virgil answers the  
sent to the pilgrim, which reveals  
od's grace (Virgin Mary—Saint  
es. His authority is guaranteed by  
a hierarchical chain (note that his  
ed by Beatrice's account). On the

Notes to Canto 2

importance of the "great chain of being" in the *Comedy*, see Introduction,  
pp. 18–20.

52. **those who are suspended:** The souls in Limbo (see Canto 4).

53–57. **a lady . . . in her language:** The style of Virgil's description of Beatrice  
derives from the lyric poetry of the *dolce stil novo* (itself deriving from the long  
medieval tradition of narrative and lyric exaltation of ladies) and especially the  
*Vita nuova*, which narrates Dante's youthful love for her before and after her  
death and establishes her status as a miracle. Florentine tradition, related by  
Boccaccio, identified her with a Beatrice Portinari, a young married woman who  
died on the appropriate day; the name *Beatrice* means "she who makes blessed."

61. **not the friend of fortune:** That is, he loved her without regard to personal  
advantage.

67. **your ornamented speech:** Virgil's rhetorical power, praised also in lines  
113–14 and exemplified in this entire account (see the note to line 126).

71. **the place . . . return:** The Elysian (see the note to lines 120–26).

76–78. **O lady . . . smallest:** This is the first reference in the poem to the alle-  
gorical dimension of Beatrice; in addition to being the soul of the Florentine  
lady Dante loved, she represents, variously, the principles of mediation, accom-  
modation, revelation, and divine grace.

78. **that heaven whose circles are smallest:** That of the moon. Change was  
thought to be confined to the sublunar realm, since all the heavenly bodies,  
beginning with the moon, were perfect and changeless.

82–114. **But tell me . . . those who have heeded it:** Virgil's question and  
Beatrice's answer reproduce the structure governing the canto as a whole: the  
pilgrim's question expressing his fears (lines 10–36) and Virgil's answer, fol-  
lowed by its result (lines 43–142). Like Virgil, Beatrice answers a question about  
fear of Hell (in this case, her own lack of it) with the narrative of how she was  
sent.

91. **your misery does not touch me:** Beatrice's use of the verb *tangere* [to touch]  
echoes the risen Jesus' words to Mary Magdalen (John 20.17): "Noli me tangere"  
[Do not touch me].

94. noble lady: The Virgin Mary.

97. Lucia: Saint Lucy of Syracuse, the patroness of vision (probably because her name seems derived from the Latin word for "light"). There has been much discussion of the question of Dante's devotion to her, about which nothing more is known except her appearance helping Dante in *Purg.* 9.35-63 and *Par.* 32.136-38.

102. Rachel: The story of Jacob's love for Rachel, for whom he served seven years, and then another seven years when her older sister Leah was substituted for her, is told in Genesis 29-30. The two sisters were traditionally interpreted as symbolic of the contemplative life (Rachel) and the active life (Leah) (see *Purg.* 27.94-108).

105. came forth . . . herdi: That is, Dante's love for Beatrice itself distinguished him, and it also motivated him to seek acclaim as a poet.

108. the torrent . . . no boast: A deliberately obscure line, variously interpreted; in our view, the reference is the same as in 1.26-27, "the pass that has never yet left anyone alive," in other words the abyss or flood of sin/Hell (Boccaccio). On the assumption that the torrent is a separate river, however, parallels have been suggested with Acheron and Jordan, which do not flow into the sea (Freccero 1966b).

126. my speech: Looking back on Virgil's speech, one notes its formal rhetorical structure: proem with *propositio* (lines 43-51), narration (lines 52-120), emotive peroration (lines 121-26). Despite the pilgrim's disclaimer, the sanctions for his journey do strictly parallel the precedents of Aeneas and Saint Paul, though with important differences. Of his two guides, Virgil is a representative of the Roman empire, Beatrice of the Church. But the pilgrim's claim on each is that of an individual, a layman, not someone authorized by institutional status: his claims are his devotion to Virgil's poetry and his being himself a poet (cf. 1.79-87), which of course already place him in an exalted literary tradition, though a secular one (the epoch-making decision to write in the vernacular is also at stake here), and his human love for the earthly Beatrice (cf. 2.61, 103). Virgil's role in the pilgrim's journey will be to prepare him for the coming of Beatrice (implied in 1.121-23), a process analogous to the historical function of Rome as Dante saw it, that of bringing the world under the rule of law in preparation for the coming of Christ. Though it seems to concern only the pilgrim's salvation, the passage in fact lays the foundation for the view of the poem as a providentially inspired intervention in current history, set forth especially in

*Paradiso* 17 and 27. Jacoff and Steg  
issues in this canto.

127-132. As little flowers . . .  
approach of night and the pilgri  
(cf. 1.37-42).

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127–132. **As little flowers . . . a person freed:** The canto began with the approach of night and the pilgrim's fears; here, in simile, it is dawn again (cf. 1.37–42).