

## *Purgatory I*

Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (39AD- 65AD)  
Book II, *Pharsalia*

Cato de Utica was a politician and statesman in the late Roman Republic, and a staunch opponent of Caesar and the triumvirs. In *De monarchia*, Dante emphasizes Cato's self-sacrificing devotion to the Roman ideal of liberty. Dante draws on Lucan's *Pharsalia* and underscores the idea that seeking freedom for others - the arch theme of *Purgatory* - represents a self-redemptive attitude, which allows unsaved but virtuous pagans like Cato to reach Heaven.

### **Book II: The Flight of Pompeius, *Pharsalia***

This was made plain the anger of the gods;  
The universe gave signs Nature reversed  
In monstrous tumult fraught with prodigies  
Her laws, and prescient spake the coming guilt.

How seemed it just to thee, Olympus' king,  
That suffering mortals at thy doom should know  
By omens dire the massacre to come?  
Or did the primal parent of the world  
When first the flames gave way and yielding left  
10 Matter unformed to his subduing hand,  
And realms unbalanced, fix by stern decree'  
Unalterable laws to bind the whole  
(Himself, too, bound by law), so that for aye  
All Nature moves within its fated bounds?  
Or, is Chance sovereign over all, and we  
The sport of Fortune and her turning wheel?  
Whate'er be truth, keep thou the future veiled  
From mortal vision, and amid their fears  
May men still hope.

Thus known how great the woes  
20 The world should suffer, from the truth divine,  
A solemn fast was called, the courts were closed,  
All men in private garb; no purple hem  
Adorned the togas of the chiefs of Rome;  
No plaints were uttered, and a voiceless grief  
Lay deep in every bosom: as when death  
Knocks at some door but enters not as yet,  
Before the mother calls the name aloud  
Or bids her grieving maidens beat the breast,  
While still she marks the glazing eye, and soothes  
30 The stiffening limbs and gazes on the face,  
In nameless dread, not sorrow, and in awe  
Of death approaching: and with mind distraught  
Clings to the dying in a last embrace.

The matrons laid aside their wonted garb:  
Crowds filled the temples -- on the unpitying stones  
Some dashed their bosoms; others bathed with tears  
The statues of the gods; some tore their hair  
Upon the holy threshold, and with shrieks  
And vows unceasing called upon the names  
40 Of those whom mortals supplicate. Nor all  
Lay in the Thunderer's fane: at every shrine  
Some prayers are offered which refused shall bring  
Reproach on heaven. One whose livid arms  
Were dark with blows, whose cheeks with tears bedewed  
And riven, cried, "Beat, mothers, beat the breast,  
Tear now the lock; while doubtful in the scales  
Still fortune hangs, nor yet the fight is won,  
You still may grieve: when either wins rejoice."  
Thus sorrow stirs itself.

Meanwhile the men  
50 Seeking the camp and setting forth to war,  
Address the cruel gods in just complaint.  
"Happy the youths who born in Punic days  
On Cannae's uplands or by Trebia's stream  
Fought and were slain! What wretched lot is ours!  
No peace we ask for: let the nations rage;  
Rouse fiercest cities! may the world find arms  
To wage a war with Rome: let Parthian hosts  
Rush forth from Susa; Scythian Ister curb  
No more the Massagete: unconquered Rhine  
60 Let loose from furthest North her fair-haired tribes:  
Elbe, pour thy Suevians forth! Let us be foes  
Of all the peoples. May the Getan press  
Here, and the Dacian there; Pompeius meet  
The Eastern archers, Caesar in the West  
Confront th' Iberian. Leave to Rome no hand  
To raise against herself in civil strife.  
Or, if Italia by the gods be doomed,  
Let all the sky, fierce Parent, be dissolved  
And falling on the earth in flaming bolts,  
70 Their hands still bloodless, strike both leaders down,  
With both their hosts! Why plunge in novel crime  
To settle which of them shall rule in Rome?  
Scarce were it worth the price of civil war  
To hinder either." Thus the patriot voice  
Still found an utterance, soon to speak no more.

Meantime, the aged fathers o'er their fates  
In anguish grieved, detesting life prolonged  
That brought with it another civil war.  
And thus spake one, to justify his fears:  
80 "No other deeds the fates laid up in store

- When Marius (1), victor over Teuton hosts,  
 Afric's high conqueror, cast out from Rome,  
 Lay hid in marshy ooze, at thy behest,  
 O Fortune! by the yielding soil concealed  
 And waving rushes; but ere long the chains  
 Of prison wore his weak and aged frame,  
 And lengthened squalor: thus he paid for crime  
 His punishment beforehand; doomed to die  
 Consul in triumph over wasted Rome.
- 90 Death oft refused him; and the very foe,  
 In act to murder, shuddered in the stroke  
 And dropped the weapon from his nerveless hand.  
 For through the prison gloom a flame of light  
 He saw; the deities of crime abhorred;  
 The Marius to come. A voice proclaimed  
 Mysterious, 'Hold! the fates permit thee not  
 That neck to sever. Many a death he owes  
 To time's predestined laws ere his shall come;  
 Cease from thy madness. If ye seek revenge
- 100 For all the blood shed by your slaughtered tribes to  
 Let this man, Cimbrians, live out all his days.'  
 Not as their darling did the gods protect  
 The man of blood, but for his ruthless hand  
 Fit to prepare that sacrifice of gore  
 Which fate demanded. By the sea's despite  
 Borne to our foes, Jugurtha's wasted realm  
 He saw, now conquered; there in squalid huts  
 Awhile he lay, and trod the hostile dust  
 Of Carthage, and his ruin matched with hers:
- 110 Each from the other's fate some solace drew,  
 And prostrate, pardoned heaven. On Libyan soil (2)  
 Fresh fury gathering (3), next, when Fortune smiled  
 The prisons he threw wide and freed the slaves.  
 Forth rushed the murderous bands, their melted chains  
 Forged into weapons for his ruffian needs.  
 No charge he gave to mere recruits in guilt  
 Who brought not to the camp some proof of crime.  
 How dread that day when conquering Marius seized  
 The city's ramparts! with what fated speed
- 120 Death strode upon his victims! plebs alike  
 And nobles perished; far and near the sword  
 Struck at his pleasure, till the temple floors  
 Ran wet with slaughter and the crimson stream  
 Befouled with slippery gore the holy walls.  
 No age found pity men of failing years,  
 Just tottering to the grave, were hurled to death;  
 From infants, in their being's earliest dawn (4),  
 The growing life was severed. For what crime?  
 'Twas cause enough for death that they could die.
- 130 The fury grew: soon 'twas a sluggard's part  
 To seek the guilty: hundreds died to swell

The tale of victims. Shamed by empty hands,  
The bloodstained conqueror snatched a reeking head  
From neck unknown. One way of life remained,  
To kiss with shuddering lips the red right hand (5).  
Degenerate people! Had ye hearts of men,  
Though ye were threatened by a thousand swords,  
Far rather death than centuries of life  
Bought at such price; much more that breathing space  
140 Till Sulla comes again (6). But time would fail  
In weeping for the deaths of all who fell.  
Encircled by innumerable bands  
Fell Baebius, his limbs asunder torn,  
His vitals dragged abroad. Antonius too,  
Prophet of ill, whose hoary head (7) was placed,  
Dripping with blood, upon the festal board.  
There headless fell the Crassi; mangled frames  
'Neath Fimbria's falchion: and the prison cells  
Were wet with tribunes' blood. Hard by the fane  
150 Where dwells the goddess and the sacred fire,  
Fell aged Scaevola, though that gory hand (8)  
Had spared him, but the feeble tide of blood  
Still left the flame alive upon the hearth.  
That selfsame year the seventh time restored (9)  
The Consul's rods; that year to Marius brought  
The end of life, when he at Fortune's hands  
All ills had suffered; all her goods enjoyed.

"And what of those who at the Sacriport (10)  
And Colline gate were slain, then, when the rule  
160 Of Earth and all her nations almost left  
This city for another, and the chiefs  
Who led the Samnite hoped that Rome might bleed  
More than at Caudium's Forks she bled of old?  
Then came great Sulla to avenge the dead,  
And all the blood still left within her frame  
Drew from the city; for the surgeon knife  
Which shore the cancerous limbs cut in too deep,  
And shed the life stream from still healthy veins.  
True that the guilty fell, but not before  
170 All else had perished. Hatred had free course  
And anger reigned unbridled by the law.  
The victor's voice spake once; but each man struck  
Just as he wished or willed. The fatal steel  
Urged by the servant laid the master low.  
Sons dripped with gore of sires; and brothers fought  
For the foul trophy of a father slain,  
Or slew each other for the price of blood.  
Men sought the tombs and, mingling with the dead,  
Hoped for escape; the wild beasts' dens were full.  
180 One strangled died; another from the height  
Fell headlong down upon the unpitying earth,

And from the encrimsoned victor snatched his death:  
 One built his funeral pyre and oped his veins,  
 And sealed the furnace ere his blood was gone.  
 Borne through the trembling town the leaders' heads  
 Were piled in middle forum: hence men knew  
 Of murders else unpublished. Not on gates  
 Of Diomedes (11), tyrant king of Thrace,  
 Nor of Antaeus, Libya's giant brood,  
 190 Were hung such horrors; nor in Pisa's hall  
 Were seen and wept for when the suitors died.  
 Decay had touched the features of the slain  
 When round the mouldering heap, with trembling steps  
 The grief-struck parents sought and stole their dead.  
 I, too, the body of my brother slain  
 Thought to remove, my victim to the peace  
 Which Sulla made, and place his loved remains  
 On the forbidden pyre. The head I found,  
 But not the butchered corse.

"Why now renew

200 The tale of Catulus's shade appeased?  
 And those dread tortures which the living frame  
 Of Marius (12) suffered at the tomb of him  
 Who haply wished them not? Pierced, mangled, torn --  
 Nor speech nor grasp was left: his every limb  
 Maimed, hacked and riven; yet the fatal blow  
 The murderers with savage purpose spared.  
 'Twere scarce believed that one poor mortal frame  
 Such agonies could bear e'er death should come.  
 Thus crushed beneath some ruin lie the dead;  
 210 Thus shapeless from the deep are borne the drowned.  
 Why spoil delight by mutilating thus,  
 The head of Marius? To please Sulla's heart  
 That mangled visage must be known to all.  
 Fortune, high goddess of Praeneste's fane,  
 Saw all her townsmen hurried to their deaths  
 In one fell instant. All the hope of Rome,  
 The flower of Latium, stained with blood the field  
 Where once the peaceful tribes their votes declared.  
 Famine and Sword, the raging sky and sea,  
 220 And Earth upheaved, have laid such numbers low:  
 But ne'er one man's revenge. Between the slain  
 And living victims there was space no more,  
 Death thus let slip, to deal the fatal blow.  
 Hardly when struck they fell; the severed head  
 Scarce toppled from the shoulders; but the slain  
 Blent in a weighty pile of massacre  
 Pressed out the life and helped the murderer's arm.  
 Secure from stain upon his lofty throne,  
 Unshuddering sat the author of the whole,  
 230 Nor feared that at his word such thousands fell.

At length the Tuscan flood received the dead  
The first upon his waves; the last on those  
That lay beneath them; vessels in their course  
Were stayed, and while the lower current flowed  
Still to the sea, the upper stood on high  
Dammed back by carnage. Through the streets meanwhile  
In headlong torrents ran a tide of blood,  
Which furrowing its path through town and field  
Forced the slow river on. But now his banks  
240 No longer held him, and the dead were thrown  
Back on the fields above. With labour huge  
At length he struggled to his goal and stretched  
In crimson streak across the Tuscan Sea.

"For deeds like these, shall Sulla now be styled  
'Darling of Fortune', 'Saviour of the State'?  
For these, a tomb in middle field of Mars  
Record his fame? Like horrors now return  
For us to suffer; and the civil war  
Thus shall be waged again and thus shall end.  
250 Yet worse disasters may our fears suggest,  
For now with greater carnage of mankind  
The rival hosts in weightier battle meet.  
To exiled Marius, successful strife  
Was Rome regained; triumphant Sulla knew  
No greater joy than on his hated foes  
To wreak his vengeance with unsparing sword.  
But these more powerful rivals Fortune calls  
To worse ambitions; nor would either chief  
For such reward as Sulla's wage the war."  
260 Thus, mindful of his youth, the aged man  
Wept for the past, but feared the coming days.

Such terrors found in haughty Brutus' breast  
No home. When others sat them down to fear  
He did not so, but in the dewy night  
When the great wain was turning round the pole  
He sought his kinsman Cato's humble home.  
Him sleepless did he find, not for himself  
Fearing, but pondering the fates of Rome,  
And deep in public cares. And thus he spake:  
270 "O thou in whom that virtue, which of yore  
Took flight from earth, now finds its only home,  
Outcast to all besides, but safe with thee:  
Vouchsafe thy counsel to my wavering soul  
And make my weakness strength. While Caesar some,  
Pompeius others, follow in the fight,  
Cato is Brutus' guide. Art thou for peace,  
Holding thy footsteps in a tottering world  
Unshaken? Or wilt thou with the leaders' crimes  
And with the people's fury take thy part,

280 And by thy presence purge the war of guilt?  
 In impious battles men unsheath the sword;  
 But each by cause impelled: the household crime;  
 Laws feared in peace; want by the sword removed;  
 And broken credit, that its ruin hides  
 In general ruin. Drawn by hope of gain,  
 And not by thirst for blood, they seek the camp.  
 Shall Cato for war's sake make war alone?  
 What profits it through all these wicked years  
 That thou hast lived untainted? This were all  
 290 Thy meed of virtue, that the wars which find  
 Guilt in all else, shall make thee guilty too.  
 Ye gods, permit not that this fatal strife  
 Should stir those hands to action! When the clouds  
 Of flying javelins hiss upon the air,  
 Let not a dart be thine; nor spent in vain  
 Such virtue! All the fury of the war  
 Shall launch itself on thee, for who, when faint  
 And wounded, would not rush upon thy sword,  
 Take thence his death, and make the murder thine?  
 300 Do thou live on thy peaceful life apart  
 As on their paths the stars unshaken roll.  
 The lower air that verges on the earth  
 Gives flame and fury to the levin bolt;  
 The deeps below the world engulph the winds  
 And tracts of flaming fire. By Jove's decree  
 Olympus rears his summit o'er the clouds:  
 In lowlier valleys storms and winds contend,  
 But peace eternal reigns upon the heights.  
 What joy for Caesar, if the tidings come  
 310 That such a citizen has joined the war?  
 Glad would he see thee e'en in Magnus' tents;  
 For Cato's conduct shall approve his own.  
 Pompeius, with the Consul in his ranks,  
 And half the Senate and the other chiefs,  
 Vexes my spirit; and should Cato too  
 Bend to a master's yoke, in all the world  
 The one man free is Caesar. But if thou  
 For freedom and thy country's laws alone  
 Be pleased to raise the sword, nor Magnus then  
 320 Nor Caesar shall in Brutus find a foe.  
 Not till the fight is fought shall Brutus strike,  
 Then strike the victor."

Brutus thus; but spake  
 Cato from inmost breast these sacred words:  
 "Chief in all wickedness is civil war,  
 Yet virtue in the paths marked out by fate  
 Treads on securely. Heaven's will be the crime  
 To have made even Cato guilty. Who has strength  
 To gaze unawed upon a toppling world?

When stars and sky fall headlong, and when earth  
 330 Slips from her base, who sits with folded hands?  
 Shall unknown nations, touched by western strife,  
 And monarchs born beneath another clime  
 Brave the dividing seas to join the war?  
 Shall Scythian tribes desert their distant north,  
 And Getae haste to view the fall of Rome,  
 And I look idly on? As some fond sire,  
 Reft of his sons, compelled by grief, himself  
 Marshals the long procession to the tomb,  
 Thrusts his own hand within the funeral flames,  
 340 Soothing his heart, and, as the lofty pyre  
 Rises on high, applies the kindled torch:  
 Nought, Rome, shall tear thee from me, till I hold  
 Thy form in death embraced; and Freedom's name,  
 Shade though it be, I'll follow to the grave.  
 Yea! let the cruel gods exact in full  
 Rome's expiation: of no drop of blood  
 The war be robbed. I would that, to the gods  
 Of heaven and hell devoted, this my life  
 Might satisfy their vengeance. Decius fell,  
 350 Crushed by the hostile ranks. When Cato falls  
 Let Rhine's fierce barbarous hordes and both the hosts  
 Thrust through my frame their darts! May I alone  
 Receive in death the wounds of all the war!  
 Thus may the people be redeemed, and thus  
 Rome for her guilt pay the atonement due.  
 Why should men die who wish to bear the yoke  
 And shrink not from the tyranny to come?  
 Strike me, and me alone, of laws and rights  
 In vain the guardian: this vicarious life  
 360 Shall give Hesperia peace and end her toils.  
 Who then will reign shall find no need for war.  
 You ask, 'Why follow Magnus? If he wins (13)  
 He too will claim the Empire of the world.'  
 Then let him, conquering with my service, learn  
 Not for himself to conquer." Thus he spoke  
 And stirred the blood that ran in Brutus' veins  
 Moving the youth to action in the war.

Soon as the sun dispelled the chilly night,  
 The sounding doors flew wide, and from the tomb  
 370 Of dead Hortensius grieving Marcia came (14).  
 First joined in wedlock to a greater man  
 Three children did she bear to grace his home:  
 Then Cato to Hortensius gave the dame  
 To be a fruitful mother of his sons  
 And join their houses in a closer tie.  
 And now the last sad offices were done  
 She came with hair dishevelled, beaten breast,  
 And ashes on her brow, and features worn



With grief; thus only pleasing to the man.  
380 "When youth was in me and maternal power  
I did thy bidding, Cato, and received  
A second husband: now in years grown old  
Ne'er to be parted I return to thee.  
Renew our former pledges undefiled:  
Give back the name of wife: upon my tomb  
Let 'Marcia, spouse to Cato,' be engraved.  
Nor let men question in the time to come,  
Did'st thou compel, or did I willing leave  
My first espousals. Not in happy times,  
390 Partner of joys, I come; but days of care  
And labour shall be mine to share with thee.  
Nor leave me here, but take me to the camp,  
Thy fond companion: why should Magnus' wife  
Be nearer, Cato, to the wars than thine?"

Although the times were warlike and the fates  
Called to the fray, he lent a willing ear.  
Yet must they plight their faith in simple form  
Of law; their witnesses the gods alone.  
No festal wreath of flowers crowned the gate  
400 Nor glittering fillet on each post entwined;  
No flaming torch was there, nor ivory steps,  
No couch with robes of brodered gold adorned;  
No comely matron placed upon her brow  
The bridal garland, or forbad the foot (15)  
To touch the threshold stone; no saffron veil  
Concealed the timid blushes of the bride;  
No jewelled belt confined her flowing robe (16)  
Nor modest circle bound her neck; no scarf  
Hung lightly on the snowy shoulder's edge  
410 Around the naked arm. Just as she came,  
Wearing the garb of sorrow, while the wool  
Covered the purple border of her robe,  
Thus was she wedded. As she greets her sons  
So doth she greet her husband. Festal games  
Graced not their nuptials, nor were friends and kin  
As by the Sabines bidden: silent both  
They joined in marriage, yet content, unseen  
By any save by Brutus. Sad and stern  
On Cato's lineaments the marks of grief  
420 Were still unsoftened, and the hoary hair  
Hung o'er his reverend visage; for since first  
Men flew to arms, his locks were left unkempt  
To stream upon his brow, and on his chin  
His beard untended grew. 'Twas his alone  
Who hated not, nor loved, for all mankind  
To mourn alike. Nor did their former couch  
Again receive them, for his lofty soul  
E'en lawful love resisted. 'Twas his rule

Inflexible, to keep the middle path  
430 Marked out and bounded; to observe the laws  
Of natural right; and for his country's sake  
To risk his life, his all, as not for self  
Brought into being, but for all the world:  
Such was his creed. To him a sumptuous feast  
Was hunger conquered, and the lowly hut,  
Which scarce kept out the winter, was a home  
Equal to palaces: a robe of price  
Such hairy garments as were worn of old:  
The end of marriage, offspring. To the State  
440 Father alike and husband, right and law  
He ever followed with unswerving step:  
No thought of selfish pleasure turned the scale  
In Cato's acts, or swayed his upright soul.

Meanwhile Pompeius led his trembling host  
To fields Campanian, and held the walls  
First founded by the chief of Trojan race (17).  
These chose he for the central seat of war,  
Some troops despatching who might meet the foe  
Where shady Apennine lifts up the ridge  
450 Of mid Italia; nearest to the sky  
Upsoaring, with the seas on either hand,  
The upper and the lower. Pisa's sands  
Breaking the margin of the Tuscan deep,  
Here bound his mountains: there Ancona's towers  
Laved by Dalmatian waves. Rivers immense,  
In his recesses born, pass on their course,  
To either sea diverging. To the left  
Metaurus, and Crustumium's torrent, fall  
And Sena's streams and Aufidus who bursts  
460 On Adrian billows; and that mighty flood  
Which, more than all the rivers of the earth,  
Sweeps down the soil and tears the woods away  
And drains Hesperia's springs. In fabled lore  
His banks were first by poplar shade enclosed: (18)  
And when by Phaethon the waning day  
Was drawn in path transverse, and all the heaven  
Blazed with his car aflame, and from the depths  
Of inmost earth were rapt all other floods,  
Padus still rolled in pride of stream along.  
470 Nile were no larger, but that o'er the sand  
Of level Egypt he spreads out his waves;  
Nor Ister, if he sought the Scythian main  
Unhelped upon his journey through the world  
By tributary waters not his own.  
But on the right hand Tiber has his source,  
Deep-flowing Rutuba, Vulturnus swift,  
And Sarnus breathing vapours of the night  
Rise there, and Liris with Vestinian wave

Still gliding through Marica's shady grove,  
480 And Siler flowing through Salernian meads:  
And Macra's swift unnavigable stream  
By Luna lost in Ocean. On the Alps  
Whose spurs strike plainwards, and on fields of Gaul  
The cloudy heights of Apennine look down  
In further distance: on his nearer slopes  
The Sabine turns the ploughshare; Umbrian kine  
And Marsian fatten; with his pineclad rocks  
He girds the tribes of Latium, nor leaves  
Hesperia's soil until the waves that beat  
490 On Scylla's cave compel. His southern spurs  
Extend to Juno's temple, and of old  
Stretched further than Italia, till the main  
O'erstepped his limits and the lands repelled.  
But, when the seas were joined, Pelorus claimed  
His latest summits for Sicilia's isle.

Caesar, in rage for war, rejoicing found  
Foes in Italia; no bloodless steps  
Nor vacant homes had pleased him (19); so his march  
Were wasted: now the coming war was joined  
500 Unbroken to the past; to force the gates  
Not find them open, fire and sword to bring  
Upon the harvests, not through fields unharmed  
To pass his legions -- this was Caesar's joy;  
In peaceful guise to march, this was his shame.  
Italia's cities, doubtful in their choice,  
Though to the earliest onset of the war  
About to yield, strengthened their walls with mounds  
And deepest trench encircling: massive stones  
And bolts of war to hurl upon the foe  
510 They place upon the turrets. Magnus most  
The people's favour held, yet faith with fear  
Fought in their breasts. As when, with strident blast,  
A southern tempest has possessed the main  
And all the billows follow in its track:  
Then, by the Storm-king smitten, should the earth  
Set Eurys free upon the swollen deep,  
It shall not yield to him, though cloud and sky  
Confess his strength; but in the former wind  
Still find its master. But their fears prevailed,  
520 And Caesar's fortune, o'er their wavering faith.  
For Libo fled Etruria; Umbria lost  
Her freedom, driving Thermus (20) from her bounds;  
Great Sulla's son, unworthy of his sire,  
Feared at the name of Caesar: Varus sought  
The caves and woods, when smote the hostile horse  
The gates of Auximon; and Spinther driven  
From Asculum, the victor on his track,  
Fled with his standards, soldierless; and thou,

Scipio, did'st leave Nuceria's citadel  
530 Deserted, though by bravest legions held  
Sent home by Caesar for the Parthian war (21);  
Whom Magnus earlier, to his kinsman gave  
A loan of Roman blood, to fight the Gaul.

But brave Domitius held firm his post (22)  
Behind Corfinium's ramparts; his the troops  
Who newly levied kept the judgment hall  
At Milo's trial (23). When from far the plain  
Rolled up a dusty cloud, beneath whose veil  
The sheen of armour glistening in the sun,  
540 Revealed a marching host. "Dash down," he cried,  
Swift; as ye can, the bridge that spans the stream;  
And thou, O river, from thy mountain source  
With all thy torrents rushing, planks and beams  
Ruined and broken on thy foaming breast  
Bear onward to the sea. The war shall stop  
Here, to our triumph; for this headlong chief  
Here first at our firm bidding shall be stayed."  
He bade his squadrons, speeding from the walls,  
Charge on the bridge: in vain: for Caesar saw  
550 They sought to free the river from his chains (24)  
And bar his march; and roused to ire, he cried:  
"Were not the walls sufficient to protect  
Your coward souls? Seek ye by barricades  
And streams to keep me back? What though the flood  
Of swollen Ganges were across my path?  
Now Rubicon is passed, no stream on earth  
Shall hinder Caesar! Forward, horse and foot,  
And ere it totters rush upon the bridge."  
Urged in their swiftest gallop to the front  
560 Dashed the light horse across the sounding plain;  
And suddenly, as storm in summer, flew  
A cloud of javelins forth, by sinewy arms  
Hurled at the foe; the guard is put to flight,  
And conquering Caesar, seizing on the bridge,  
Compels the enemy to keep the walls.  
Now do the mighty engines, soon to hurl  
Gigantic stones, press forward, and the ram  
Creeps 'neath the ramparts; when the gates fly back,  
And lo! the traitor troops, foul crime in war,  
570 Yield up their leader. Him they place before

His proud compatriot; yet with upright form,  
And scornful features and with noble mien,  
He asks his death. But Caesar knew his wish  
Was punishment, and pardon was his fear:  
"Live though thou would'st not," so the chieftain spake,  
"And by my gift, unwilling, see the day:  
Be to my conquered foes the cause of hope,

Proof of my clemency -- or if thou wilt  
Take arms again -- and should'st thou conquer, count  
580 This pardon nothing." Thus he spake, and bade  
Let loose the bands and set the captive free.  
Ah! better had he died, and fortune spared  
The Roman's last dishonour, whose worse doom  
It is, that he who joined his country's camp  
And fought with Magnus for the Senate's cause  
Should gain for this -- a pardon! Yet he curbed  
His anger, thinking, "Wilt thou then to Rome  
And peaceful scenes, degenerate? Rather war,  
The furious battle and the certain end!  
590 Break with life's ties: be Caesar's gift in vain."

Pompeius, ignorant that his captain thus  
Was taken, armed his levies newly raised  
To give his legions strength; and as he thought  
To sound his trumpets with the coming dawn,  
To test his soldiers ere he moved his camp  
Thus in majestic tones their ranks addressed:  
"Soldiers of Rome! Avengers of her laws!  
To whom the Senate gives no private arms,  
Ask by your voices for the battle sign.  
600 Fierce falls the pillage on Hesperian fields,  
And Gallia's fury o'er the snowy Alps (25)  
Is poured upon us. Caesar's swords at last  
Are red with Roman blood. But with the wound  
We gain the better cause; the crime is theirs.  
No war is this, but for offended Rome  
We wreak the vengeance; as when Catiline  
Lifted against her roofs the flaming brand  
And, partner in his fury, Lentulus,  
And mad Cethegus (26) with his naked arm.  
610 Is such thy madness, Caesar? when the Fates  
With great Camillus' and Metellus' names  
Might place thine own, dost thou prefer to rank  
With Marius and Cinna? Swift shall be  
Thy fall: as Lepidus before the sword  
Of Catulus; or who my axes felt,  
Carbo (27), now buried in Sicanian tomb;  
Or who, in exile, roused Iberia's hordes,  
Sertorius -- yet, witness Heaven, with these  
I hate to rank thee; hate the task that Rome  
620 Has laid upon me, to oppose thy rage.  
Would that in safety from the Parthian war  
And Scythian steppes had conquering Crassus come!  
Then haply had'st thou fallen by the hand  
That smote vile Spartacus the robber foe.  
But if among my triumphs fate has said  
Thy conquest shall be written, know this heart  
Still sends the life blood coursing: and this arm (28)

Still vigorously flings the dart afield.  
 He deems me slothful. Caesar, thou shalt learn  
 630 We brook not peace because we lag in war.  
 Old, does he call me? Fear not ye mine age.  
 Let me be elder, if his soldiers are.  
 The highest point a citizen can reach  
 And leave his people free, is mine: a throne  
 Alone were higher; whoso would surpass  
 Pompeius, aims at that. Both Consuls stand  
 Here; here for battle stand your lawful chiefs:  
 And shall this Caesar drag the Senate down?  
 Not with such blindness, not so lost to shame  
 640 Does Fortune rule. Does he take heart from Gaul:  
 For years on years rebellious, and a life  
 Spent there in labour? or because he fled  
 Rhine's icy torrent and the shifting pools  
 He calls an ocean? or unchallenged sought  
 Britannia's cliffs; then turned his back in flight?  
 Or does he boast because his citizens  
 Were driven in arms to leave their hearths and homes?  
 Ah, vain delusion! not from thee they fled:  
 My steps they follow -- mine, whose conquering signs  
 650 Swept all the ocean (29), and who, ere the moon  
 Twice filled her orb and waned, compelled to flight  
 The pirate, shrinking from the open sea,  
 And humbly begging for a narrow home  
 In some poor nook on shore. 'Twas I again  
 Who, happier far than Sulla, drave to death (30)  
 That king who, exiled to the deep recess  
 Of Scythian Pontus, held the fates of Rome  
 Still in the balances. Where is the land  
 That hath not seen my trophies? Icy waves  
 660 Of northern Phasis, hot Egyptian shores,  
 And where Syene 'neath its noontide sun  
 Knows shade on neither hand (31): all these have learned  
 To fear Pompeius: and far Baetis' (32) stream,  
 Last of all floods to join the refluent sea.  
 Arabia and the warlike hordes that dwell  
 Beside the Euxine wave: the famous land  
 That lost the golden fleece; Cilician wastes,  
 And Cappadocian, and the Jews who pray  
 Before an unknown God; Sophene soft --  
 670 All felt my yoke. What conquests now remain,  
 What wars not civil can my kinsman wage?"

No loud acclaim received his words, nor shout  
 Asked for the promised battle: and the chief  
 Drew back the standards, for the soldier's fears  
 Were in his soul alike; nor dared he trust  
 An army, vanquished by the fame alone  
 Of Caesar's powers, to fight for such a prize.

And as some bull, his early combat lost,  
Forth driven from the herd, in exile roams  
680 Through lonely plains or secret forest depths,  
Whets on opposing trunks his growing horn,  
And proves himself for battle, till his neck  
Is ribbed afresh with muscle: then returns,  
Defiant of the hind, and victor now  
Leads wheresoe'er he will his lowing bands:  
Thus Magnus, yielding to a stronger foe,  
Gave up Italia, and sought in flight  
Brundisium's sheltering battlements.

Here of old  
Fled Cretan settlers when the dusky sail (33)  
690 Spread the false message of the hero dead;  
Here, where Hesperia, curving as a bow,  
Draws back her coast, a little tongue of land  
Shuts in with bending horns the sounding main.  
Yet insecure the spot, unsafe in storm,  
Were it not sheltered by an isle on which  
The Adriatic billows dash and fall,  
And tempests lose their strength: on either hand  
A craggy cliff opposing breaks the gale  
That beats upon them, while the ships within  
700 Held by their trembling cables ride secure.  
Hence to the mariner the boundless deep  
Lies open, whether for Corcyra's port  
He shapes his sails, or for Illyria's shore,  
And Epidamnus facing to the main  
Ionian. Here, when raging in his might  
Fierce Adria whelms in foam Calabria's coast,  
When clouds tempestuous veil Ceraunus' height,  
The sailor finds a haven.

When the chief  
Could find no hope in battle on the soil  
710 He now was quitting, and the lofty Alps  
Forbad Iberia, to his son he spake,  
The eldest scion of that noble stock:  
"Search out the far recesses of the earth,  
Nile and Euphrates, wheresoe'er the fame  
Of Magnus lives, where, through thy father's deeds,  
The people tremble at the name of Rome.  
Lead to the sea again the pirate bands;  
Rouse Egypt's kings; Tigranes, wholly mine,  
And Pharnaces and all the vagrant tribes  
720 Of both Armenias; and the Pontic hordes,  
Warlike and fierce; the dwellers on the hills  
Rhipaeae, and by that dead northern marsh  
Whose frozen surface bears the loaded wain.  
Why further stay thee? Let the eastern world

Sound with the war, all cities of the earth  
Conquered by me, as vassals, to my camp  
Send all their levied hosts. And you whose names  
Within the Latian book recorded stand,  
Strike for Epirus with the northern wind;  
730 And thence in Greece and Macedonian tracts,  
(While winter gives us peace) new strength acquire  
For coming conflicts." They obey his words  
And loose their ships and launch upon the main.

But Caesar's might, intolerant of peace  
Or lengthy armistice, lest now perchance  
The fates might change their edicts, swift pursued  
The footsteps of his foe. To other men,  
So many cities taken at a blow,  
So many strongholds captured, might suffice;  
740 And Rome herself, the mistress of the world,  
Lay at his feet, the greatest prize of all.  
Not so with Caesar: instant on the goal  
He fiercely presses; thinking nothing done  
While aught remained to do. Now in his grasp  
Lay all Italia; -- but while Magnus stayed  
Upon the utmost shore, his grieving soul  
Deemed all was shared with him. Yet he essayed  
Escape to hinder, and with labour vain  
Piled in the greedy main gigantic rocks:  
750 Mountains of earth down to the sandy depths  
Were swallowed by the vortex of the sea;  
Just as if Eryx and its lofty top  
Were cast into the deep, yet not a speck  
Should mark the watery plain; or Gaurus huge  
Split from his summit to his base, were plunged  
In fathomless Avernus' stagnant pool.  
The billows thus unstemmed, 'twas Caesar's will  
To hew the stately forests and with trees  
Enchained to form a rampart. Thus of old  
760 (If fame be true) the boastful Persian king  
Prepared a way across the rapid strait  
'Twixt Sestos and Abydos, and made one  
The European and the Trojan shores;  
And marched upon the waters, wind and storm  
Counting as nought, but trusting his emprise  
To one frail bridge, so that his ships might pass  
Through middle Athos. Thus a mighty mole  
Of fallen forests grew upon the waves,  
Free until then, and lofty turrets rose,  
770 And land usurped the entrance to the main.

This when Pompeius saw, with anxious care  
His soul was filled; yet hoping to regain  
The exit lost, and win a wider world



Wherein to wage the war, on chosen ships  
 He hoists the sails; these, driven by the wind  
 And drawn by cables fastened to their prows,  
 Scattered the beams asunder; and at night  
 Not seldom engines, worked by stalwart arms,  
 Flung flaming torches forth. But when the time  
 780 For secret flight was come, no sailor shout  
 Rang on the shore, no trumpet marked the hour,  
 No bugle called the armament to sea.  
 Already shone the Virgin in the sky  
 Leading the Scorpion in her course, whose claws  
 Foretell the rising Sun, when noiseless all  
 They cast the vessels loose; no song was heard  
 To greet the anchor wrenched from stubborn sand;  
 No captain's order, when the lofty mast  
 Was raised, or yards were bent; a silent crew  
 790 Drew down the sails which hung upon the ropes,  
 Nor shook the mighty cables, lest the wind  
 Should sound upon them. But the chief, in prayer,  
 Thus spake to Fortune: "Thou whose high decree  
 Has made us exiles from Italia's shores,  
 Grant us at least to leave them." Yet the fates  
 Hardly permitted, for a murmur vast  
 Came from the ocean, as the countless keels  
 Furrowed the waters, and with ceaseless splash  
 The parted billows rose again and fell.  
 800 Then were the gates thrown wide; for with the fates  
 The city turned to Caesar: and the foe,  
 Seizing the town, rushed onward by the pier  
 That circled in the harbour; then they knew  
 With shame and sorrow that the fleet was gone  
 And held the open: and Pompeius' flight  
 Gave a poor triumph.

Yet was narrower far  
 The channel which gave access to the sea  
 Than that Euboean strait (34) whose waters lave  
 The shore by Chalcis. Here two ships stuck fast  
 810 Alone, of all the fleet; the fatal hook  
 Grappled their decks and drew them to the land,  
 And the first bloodshed of the civil war  
 Here left a blush upon the ocean wave.  
 As when the famous ship (36) sought Phasis' stream  
 The rocky gates closed in and hardly gripped  
 Her flying stern; then from the empty sea  
 The cliffs rebounding to their ancient seat  
 Were fixed to move no more. But now the steps  
 Of morn approaching tinged the eastern sky  
 820 With roseate hues: the Pleiades were dim,  
 The wagon of the Charioteer grew pale,  
 The planets faded, and the silvery star

Which ushers in the day, was lost in light.

Then Magnus, hold'st the deep; yet not the same  
Now are thy fates, as when from every sea  
Thy fleet triumphant swept the pirate pest.  
Tired of thy conquests, Fortune now no more  
Shall smile upon thee. With thy spouse and sons,  
Thy household gods, and peoples in thy train,  
830 Still great in exile, in a distant land  
Thou seek'st thy fated fall; not that the gods,  
Wishing to rob thee of a Roman grave,  
Decreed the strands of Egypt for thy tomb:  
'Twas Italy they spared, that far away  
Fortune on shores remote might hide her crime,  
And Roman soil be pure of Magnus' blood.

#### ENDNOTES:

- (1) When dragged from his hiding place in the marsh, Marius was sent by the magistrates of Minturnae to the house of a woman named Fannia, and there locked up in a dark apartment. It does not appear that he was there long. A Gallic soldier was sent to kill him; "and the eyes of Marius appeared to him to dart a strong flame, and a loud voice issued from the gloom, 'Man, do you dare to kill Caius Marius?'" He rushed out exclaiming, "I cannot kill Caius Marius." (Plutarch, "Marius", 38.)
- (2) The Governor of Libya sent an officer to Marius, who had landed in the neighbourhood of Carthage. The officer delivered his message, and Marius replied, "Tell the Governor you have seen Caius Marius, a fugitive sitting on the ruins of Carthage," a reply in which he not inaptly compared the fate of that city and his own changed fortune. (Plutarch, "Marius", 40.)
- (3) In the "gathering of fresh fury on Libyan soil", there appears to be an allusion to the story of Antruns, in Book IV.
- (4) See Ben Jonson's "Catiline", Act i., scene 1, speaking of the Sullan massacre.  
Cethegus: Not infants in the porch of life were free.  
....  
Catiline: 'Twas crime enough that they had lives: to strike but only those that could do hurt was dull and poor: some fell to make the number as some the prey.
- (5) Whenever he did not salute a man, or return his salute, this was a signal for massacre. (Plutarch, "Marius", 49.)
- (6) The Marian massacre was in B.C. 87-86; the Sullan in 82-81.
- (7) The head of Antonius was struck off and brought to Marius at supper. He was the grandfather of the triumvir.
- (8) Scaevola, it would appear, was put to death after Marius the elder died, by the younger Marius. He was Pontifex Maximus,

- and slain by the altar of Vesta.
- (9) B.C. 86, Marius and Cinna were Consuls. Marius died seventeen days afterwards, in the seventieth year of his age.
  - (10) The Battle of Sacriportus was fought between Marius the younger and the Sullan army in B.C. 82. Marius was defeated with great loss, and fled to Praeneste, a town which afterwards submitted to Sulla, who put all the inhabitants to death (line 216). At the Colline gate was fought the decisive battle between Sulla and the Marianes, who, after a furious contest, were defeated.
  - (11) Diomedes was said to feed his horses on human flesh. (For Antaeus see Book IV., 660.) Enomaus was king of Pisa in Elis. Those who came to sue for his daughter's hand had to compete with him in a chariot race, and if defeated were put to death.
  - (12) The brother of the Consul.
  - (13) So Cicero: "Our Cnaeus is wonderfully anxious for such a royalty as Sulla's. I who tell you know it." ("Ep. ad Att.", ix. 7.)
  - (14) Marcia was first married to Cato, and bore him three sons; he then yielded her to Hortensius. On his death she returned to Cato. (Plutarch, "Cato", 25, 52.) It was in reference to this that Caesar charged him with making a traffic of his marriage; but Plutarch says "to accuse Cato of filthy lucre is like upbraiding Hercules with cowardice." After the marriage Marcia remained at Rome while Cato hurried after Pompeius.
  - (15) The bride was carried over the threshold of her new home, for to stumble on it would be of evil omen. Plutarch ("Romulus") refers this custom to the rape of the Sabine women, who were "so lifted up and carried away by force." (North, volume i., p. 88, Edition by Windham.) I have read "vetuit" in this passage, though "vitat" appears to be a better variation according to the manuscripts.
  - (16) The bride was dressed in a long white robe, bound round the waist with a girdle. She had a veil of bright yellow colour. ("Dict. Antiq.")
  - (17) Capua, supposed to be founded by Capys, the Trojan hero. (Virgil, "Aeneid", x., 145.)
  - (18) Phaethon's sisters, who yoked the horses of the Sun to the chariot for their brother, were turned into poplars. Phaethon was flung by Jupiter into the river Po.
  - (19) See the note to Book I., 164. In reality Caesar found little resistance, and did not ravage the country.
  - (20) Thermus, to whom Iguvium had been entrusted by the Senate, was compelled to quit it owing to the disaffection of the inhabitants. (Merivale, chapter xiv.) Auximón in a similar way rose against Varus.
  - (21) After Caesar's campaign with the Nervii, Pompeius had lent him a legion. When the Parthian war broke out and the

Senate required each of the two leaders to supply a legion for it, Pompeius demanded the return of the legion which he had sent to Gaul; and Caesar returned it, together with one of his own. They were, however, retained in Italy.

(22) See Book VII., 695.

(23) See Book I., 368.

(24) That is to say, by the breaking of the bridge, the river would become a serious obstacle to Caesar.

(25) See line 497.

(26) This family is also alluded to by Horace ("Ars Poetica,") as having worn a garment of ancient fashion leaving their arms bare. (See also Book VI., 945.)

(27) In B.C. 77, after the death of Sulla, Carbo had been defeated by Pompeius in 81 B.C., in which occasion Pompeius had, at the early age of twenty-five, demanded and obtained his first triumph. The war with Sertorius lasted till 71 B.C., when Pompeius and Metellus triumphed in respect of his overthrow.

(28) See Book I., line 369.

(29) In B.C. 67, Pompeius swept the pirates off the seas. The whole campaign did not last three months.

(30) From B.C. 66 to B.C. 63, Pompeius conquered Mithridates, Syria and the East, except Parthia.

(31) Being (as was supposed) exactly under the Equator. Syene (the modern Assouan) is the town mentioned by the priest of Sais, who told Herodotus that "between Syene and Elephantine are two hills with conical tops. The name of one of them is Crophi, and of the other, Mophi. Midway between them are the fountains of the Nile." (Herod., II., chapter 28.) And see "Paradise Regained," IV., 70: --

"Syene, and where the shadow both way falls,

"Meroe, Nilotick isle;..."

(32) Baetis is the Guadalquivir.

(33) Theseus, on returning from his successful exploit in Crete, hoisted by mistake black sails instead of white, thus spreading false intelligence of disaster.

(34) It seems that the Euripus was bridged over. (Mr. Haskins' note.)

(35) The "Argo".

(Translated by Sir Edward Ridley)

(Edited, proofed, and prepared by Douglas B. Killings)

## *Purgatory II*

### Psalm 113

#### *Vulgate*

Here, Dante references Psalm 113 of the *Vulgate*. It commemorates the Exodus of the Jews from their slavery in Egypt. It also signals the fundamental structure of the poem; the pilgrim's quest for moral liberty. Dante uses the psalm to explain his theory of medieval allegory. He also uses it in his Letter to Cangrande della Scala to elucidate the multiple meanings of the first verse from the psalm: "*In exitu Israel de Aegypto*."

### **Psalm 113, the Vulgate**

1 alleluia in exitu Israhel de Aegypto domus Iacob de populo barbaro  
2 facta est Iudaea sanctificatio eius Israhel potestas eius  
3 mare vidit et fugit Iordanis conversus est retrorsum  
4 montes exultaverunt ut arietes colles sicut agni ovium  
5 quid est tibi mare quod fugisti et tu Iordanis quia conversus es retrorsum  
6 montes exultastis sicut arietes et colles sicut agni ovium  
7 a facie Domini mota est terra a facie Dei Iacob  
8 qui convertit petram in stagna aquarum et rupem in fontes aquarum  
9 non nobis Domine non nobis sed nomini tuo da gloriam  
10 super misericordia tua et veritate tua nequando dicant gentes ubi est Deus eorum  
11 Deus autem noster in caelo omnia quaecumque voluit fecit  
12 simulacra gentium argentum et aurum opera manuum hominum  
13 os habent et non loquentur oculos habent et non videbunt  
14 aures habent et non audient nares habent et non odorabuntur  
15 manus habent et non palpabunt pedes habent et non ambulabunt non clamabunt in gutture suo  
16 similes illis fiant qui faciunt ea et omnes qui confidunt in eis  
17 domus Israhel speravit in Domino adiutor eorum et protector eorum est  
18 domus Aaron speravit in Domino adiutor eorum et protector eorum est  
19 qui timent Dominum speraverunt in Domino adiutor eorum et protector eorum est  
20 Dominus memor fuit nostri et benedixit nobis benedixit domui Israhel benedixit domui Aaron  
21 benedixit omnibus qui timent Dominum pusillis cum maioribus  
22 adiciat Dominus super vos super vos et super filios vestros  
23 benedicti vos Domino qui fecit caelum et terram  
24 caelum caeli Domino terram autem dedit filiis hominum  
25 non mortui laudabunt te Domine neque omnes qui descendunt in infernum  
26 sed nos qui vivimus benedicimus Domino ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum

### **Psalm 113, King James Bible (Psalm 114-115)**

1 When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;  
2 Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.  
3 The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.  
4 The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

5 What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?  
6 Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?  
7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;  
8 Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.  
9 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.  
10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?  
11 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.  
12 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.  
13 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:  
14 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:  
15 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.  
16 They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.  
17 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.  
18 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.  
19 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.  
20 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.  
21 He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.  
22 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.  
23 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.  
24 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.  
25 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.  
26 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

## *Purgatory II*

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321)

### *Convivio*

Dante draws the line from his *Banquet*, which interprets the lovely lady of the song as Philosophy. The song reflects the mixture of eros and intellect, on which human soul feeds. Cato, however, rebukes them for indulging into the pleasure of the song and urges them to start the ascent of the hill.

### ***Canzone Seconda, Convivio***

De la mia donna disiosamente,  
Move cose di lei meco sovente,  
Che lo 'ntelletto sovr'esse disvia.  
Lo suo parlar sì dolcemente sona,  
Che l'anima ch'ascolta e che lo sente  
Dice: "Oh me lassa! ch'io non son possente  
Di dir quel ch'odo de la donna mia!  
E certo e' mi conven lasciare in pria,  
S'io vo' trattar di quel ch'odo di lei,  
Ciò che lo mio intelletto non comprende;  
E di quel che s'intende  
Gran parte, perché dirlo non savrei.  
Però, se le mie rime avran difetto  
Ch'entreran ne la loda di costei,  
Di ciò si biasmi il debole intelletto  
E 'l parlar nostro, che non ha valore  
Di ritrar tutto ciò che dice Amore.

Non vede il sol, che tutto 'l mondo gira,  
Cosa tanto gentil, quanto in quell'ora  
Che luce ne la parte ove dimora  
La donna di cui dire Amor mi face.  
Ogni Intelletto di là su la mira,  
E quella gente che qui s'innamora  
Ne' lor pensieri la truovano ancora,  
Quando Amor fa sentir de la sua pace.  
Suo esser tanto a Quei che lel dà piace,  
Che 'nfonde sempre in lei la sua vertute  
Oltre 'l dimando di nostra natura.  
La sua anima pura,  
Che riceve da lui questa salute,  
Lo manifesta in quel ch'ella conduce:  
Ché 'n sue bellezze son cose vedute  
Che li occhi di color dov'ella luce  
Ne mandan messi al cor pien di desiri,  
Che prendon aire e diventan sospiri.

In lei discende la virtù divina

Sì come face in angelo che 'l vede;  
E qual donna gentil questo non crede,  
Vada con lei e miri li atti sui.  
Quivi dov'ella parla si dichina  
Un spirito da ciel, che reca fede  
Come l'alto valor ch'ella possiede  
È oltre quel che si conviene a nui.  
Li atti soavi ch'ella mostra altrui  
Vanno chiamando Amor ciascuno a prova  
In quella voce che lo fa sentire.  
Di costei si può dire:  
Gentile è in donna ciò che in lei si trova,  
E bello è tanto quanto lei simiglia.  
E puossi dir che 'l suo aspetto giova  
A consentir ciò che par meraviglia;  
Onde la nostra fede è aiutata:  
Però fu tal da eterno ordinata.

Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto  
Che mostran de' piacer di Paradiso,  
Dico ne li occhi e nel suo dolce riso,  
Che le vi reca Amor com'a suo loco.  
Elle soverchian lo nostro intelletto,  
Come raggio di sole un frale viso:  
E perch'io non le posso mirar fiso,  
Mi conven contentar di dirne poco.  
Sua bieltà piove fiammelle di foco,  
Animate d'un spirito gentile  
Ch'è creatore d'ogni pensier bono;  
E rompon come trono  
Li 'nnati vizii che fanno altrui vile.  
Però qual donna sente sua bieltate  
Biasmar per non parer queta e umile,  
Miri costei ch'è essempro d'umiltate!  
Questa è colei ch'umilia ogni perverso:  
Costei pensò chi mosse l'universo.  
Canzone, e' par che tu parli contraro  
Al dir d'una sorella che tu hai;  
Che questa donna che tanto umil fai  
Ella la chiama fera e disdegnosa.  
Tu sai che 'l ciel sempr'è lucente e chiaro,  
E quanto in sé, non si turba già mai;  
Ma li nostri occhi per cagioni assai  
Chiaman la stella talor tenebrosa.  
Così, quand'ella la chiama orgogliosa,  
Non considera lei secondo il vero,  
Ma pur secondo quel ch'a lei pareva:  
Ché l'anima temea,  
E teme ancora, sì che mi par fero  
Quantunqu'io veggio là 'v'ella mi senta.  
Così ti scusa, se ti fa mestero;



E quando poi, a lei ti rappresenta:  
Dirai: "Madonna, s'ello v'è a grato,  
lo parlerò di voi in ciascun lato".

### Translation

#### Love, that speaks to me within my mind, the *Banquet*

Love, that speaks to me within my mind,  
So passionately, of my lady,  
Often stirs such thoughts of her,  
They lead my intellect astray.  
Love's speech sounds in me so sweetly,  
That my soul which feels and hears him,  
Says: 'Alas, that I lack power  
To speak what I hear of my lady!  
And if I would say what I hear,  
Surely I am forced to leave aside  
What intellect cannot comprehend,  
As well as much of what I understand,  
Since I have no way to express it.  
Thus, if my verses are defective  
Which enter on their praise of her,  
Blame then my weak intellect  
And our speech, that lacks power  
To echo everything that Love says.

The Sun, that circles the whole world,  
Sees nothing nobler than that hour,  
When it shines where that lady lives,  
The lady of whom Love makes me speak.  
Those Intelligences above admire her,  
And folk down here who are in love  
Ever find her in their thoughts,  
When Love makes his peace felt there.  
Her being pleases God so, who made her,  
He endlessly instils His virtue in her,  
Beyond the powers of our nature.  
That pure soul of hers,  
Which receives such bliss from Him,  
Reveals Him then in what she brings:  
For in her beauty such things are seen  
That the eyes into which she shines  
Send messages of longing, to the heart,  
That mix with air and turn to sighs.

Divine virtue descends in her,  
As into the Angels that see Him;  
And if any noble lady disbelieves it,  
Let her walk with her and note her gestures.

Here where she speaks, a spirit  
Descends from heaven to bear witness  
That this high worth she possesses  
Exceeds what appertains to us.  
The graceful gestures she displays  
Vie with each other, calling on Love  
In that voice which makes him hear.  
Of her indeed it can be said:  
Noble in woman, what we find in her,  
And beauty, what most resembles her.  
And her countenance it may be said  
Allows belief in what seems a marvel;  
By which our own faith is strengthened:  
For such, by eternity, she was ordained.

Such things appear in her aspect  
As show the joys of Paradise,  
I mean in her eyes and her sweet smile,  
For Love draws them there as to his place.  
They overwhelm this intellect of ours,  
As a ray of light does weak vision;  
And since I cannot fix my gaze on them,  
I am forced to say little of them.  
Her beauty rains flamelets of fire,  
Kindled by a noble spirit  
That is the creator of all fine thoughts;  
And like lightning they dispel  
The innate vices that make men base.  
So let those ladies who know her beauty,  
Those blamed for not being calm, humble,  
Gaze at her, humility's exemplar!  
This is she who humbles haughtiness:  
Conceived by Him who moves the universe.  
Canzone, you seem to contradict  
The words of a sister of yours;  
This lady, whom you say is humble,  
She calls proud and disdainful.  
You know the sky, ever bright and clear,  
Is such, in itself, it is never clouded;  
Yet our eyes, for many reasons,  
Will say that a star appears dim.  
Likewise, when she is called proud,  
She is not seen according to the truth,  
But only in accord with what she seems.  
For my soul was full of fear,  
And still fears, such that all I see  
Of her seems proud, when she looks at me.  
So excuse yourself should need arise;  
When you can, present yourself to her,  
Saying: 'My lady, if it pleases you,  
I will speak of you everywhere.'

(Translated by A. S. Kline -- This work may be freely reproduced, stored, and transmitted, electronically or otherwise, for any non-commercial purpose.)