

e notte avesse tutte sue dispense,  
 ciascun di noi d'un grado fece letto,  
 ché la natura del monte ci affranse  
 la possa del salir più e 'l diletto.  
 Quali si stanno ruminando manse  
 le capre, state rapide e proterve  
 sovra le cime avantè che sien pranse,  
 tacite a l'ombra, mentre che 'l sol ferve,  
 guardate dal pastor, che 'n su la verga  
 poggiato s'è e lor poggiato serve;<sup>a</sup>  
 e quale il mandrian che fori alberga  
 lungo il peculio suo queto pernotta,  
 guardando perché fiera non lo sperga,  
 tali eravamo tutti e tre allotta,  
 io come capra, ed ei come pastori,  
 fasciati quinci e quindi d'alta grotta.  
 Poco parer potea li del di fori;  
 ma, per quel poco, vedea io le stelle  
 di lor solere e più chiare e maggiori.  
 Sì ruminando e sì mirando in quelle,  
 mi prese il sonno – il sonno che sovente,  
 anzi che 'l fatto sia, sa le novelle.  
 Nell'ora, credo, che dell'oriente  
 prima raggiò nel monte Citerea,  
 che di foco d'amor par sempre ardente,  
 giovane e bella in sogno mi pareo  
 donna vedere andar per una landa  
 cogliendo fiori; e cantando dicea:  
 "Sappia qualunque il mio nome dimanda  
 ch'i' mi son Lia, e vo movendo intorno  
 le belle mani a farmi una ghirlanda.  
 Per piacermi allo specchio qui m'adorno,  
 ma mia suora Rachel mai non si smaga  
 dal suo miraglio, e siede tutto giorno.  
 Ell'è di suoi belli occhi veder vaga  
 com'io dell'adornarmi con le mani;  
 lei lo vedere, e me l'ovrare appaga."  
 E già per li splendori antelucani,

a Other manuscripts read "*e di lor posa serve*" ("and satisfies them by letting them rest").

And night had reassumed its government,  
 Each of made his bed upon one step:  
 The nature of the Mountain took away,  
 Not the desire, the power of climbing up.  
 Like she-goats standing still to ruminate  
 Tamely, though they were restless on the hills  
 Before they had been given enough to eat,  
 Silent in shade, beyond the blazing sun,  
 And guarded by the goatherd, who is leaning  
 Upon his staff and taking care of them,  
 And like the shepherd living out-of-doors,  
 Who spends the night in silence by his flock  
 To keep them safe and sound from predators;  
 Such were we then all three – I like a goat,  
 And they like shepherds, all of us protected  
 By the high rock on this side and on that.  
 Little beyond those walls was visible;  
 But in that little I could see the stars,  
 Larger, more luminous than usual.  
 Gazing up thus and ruminating there,  
 I was subdued by sleep; sleep that so often,  
 Before it happens, shows what will occur.<sup>11</sup>  
 It was, I think, that hour when Cytherea<sup>12</sup>  
 Is shining on the Mountain from the East,  
 She who is always flaming with love's fire,  
 When in my dream I seemed to see a young  
 And lovely lady walking through a meadow  
 And gathering flowers, and saying as she sang:  
 "Whoever wonders who I am may know  
 That I am Leah, and to weave a garland  
 My lovely hands are working to and fro.  
 I deck myself to please my looking-glass;  
 But sister Rachel cannot be distracted  
 From gazing at her image in the glass.  
 She is as keen to see her lovely eyes  
 As I to deck myself; it's contemplation  
 With her, with me it's work which satisfies."<sup>13</sup>  
 Already with the brightness before dawn –

11 Dreams at dawn were believed to be prophetic. Cf. above IX, 13–9 and *Inferno* xxvi, 7.

12 The morning-star, the planet Venus (goddess of love).

13 Leah and Rachel were both wives of Jacob (see Gen. 29), and they came to be regarded as symbols of, respectively, the active and contemplative lives.