

DANTE

ALIGHIERI

PURGATORY

'BRAVO FOR THIS NEW VERSION OF DANTE...
BRAVO, PROFESSOR NICHOLS'
THE CHURCH TIMES

The Divine Comedy

Purgatory

Dante Alighieri

Translated by J.G. Nichols



ALMA CLASSICS
an imprint of

ALMA BOOKS LTD
3 Castle Yard
Richmond
Surrey TW10 6TF
United Kingdom
www.almaclassics.com

Purgatory first published by Alma Classics in 2011
This new, revised edition first published by Alma Classics in 2017
English translation © J.G. Nichols, 2011
Notes and extra material © J.G. Nichols, 2011

**This book is published with the support of the Italian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs.**

Cover image © nathanburtondesign.com

Printed in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK), Croydon CR0 4YY

ISBN: 978-1-84749-611-9

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher. This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be resold, lent, hired out or otherwise circulated without the express prior consent of the publisher.

Contents

Purgatory	1
<i>Illustration of Dante's Purgatory</i>	2
<i>Canto I</i>	3
<i>Canto II</i>	13
<i>Canto III</i>	23
<i>Canto IV</i>	35
<i>Canto V</i>	47
<i>Canto VI</i>	59
<i>Canto VII</i>	71
<i>Canto VIII</i>	83
<i>Canto IX</i>	95
<i>Canto X</i>	107
<i>Canto XI</i>	117
<i>Canto XII</i>	129
<i>Canto XIII</i>	139
<i>Canto XIV</i>	151
<i>Canto XV</i>	163
<i>Canto XVI</i>	173
<i>Canto XVII</i>	185
<i>Canto XVIII</i>	195
<i>Canto XIX</i>	207
<i>Canto XX</i>	219
<i>Canto XXI</i>	231
<i>Canto XXII</i>	241
<i>Canto XXIII</i>	253
<i>Canto XXIV</i>	263

<i>Canto XXV</i>	275
<i>Canto XXVI</i>	285
<i>Canto XXVII</i>	297
<i>Canto XXVIII</i>	307
<i>Canto XXIX</i>	319
<i>Canto XXX</i>	331
<i>Canto XXXI</i>	343
<i>Canto XXXII</i>	355
<i>Canto XXXIII</i>	367
Extra Material	379
<i>Dante Alighieri's Life</i>	379
<i>Dante Alighieri's Works</i>	383
<i>Dante Alighieri's Purgatory</i>	386
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	392
Index	393
Note on the Text and Acknowledgements	404

Purgatory

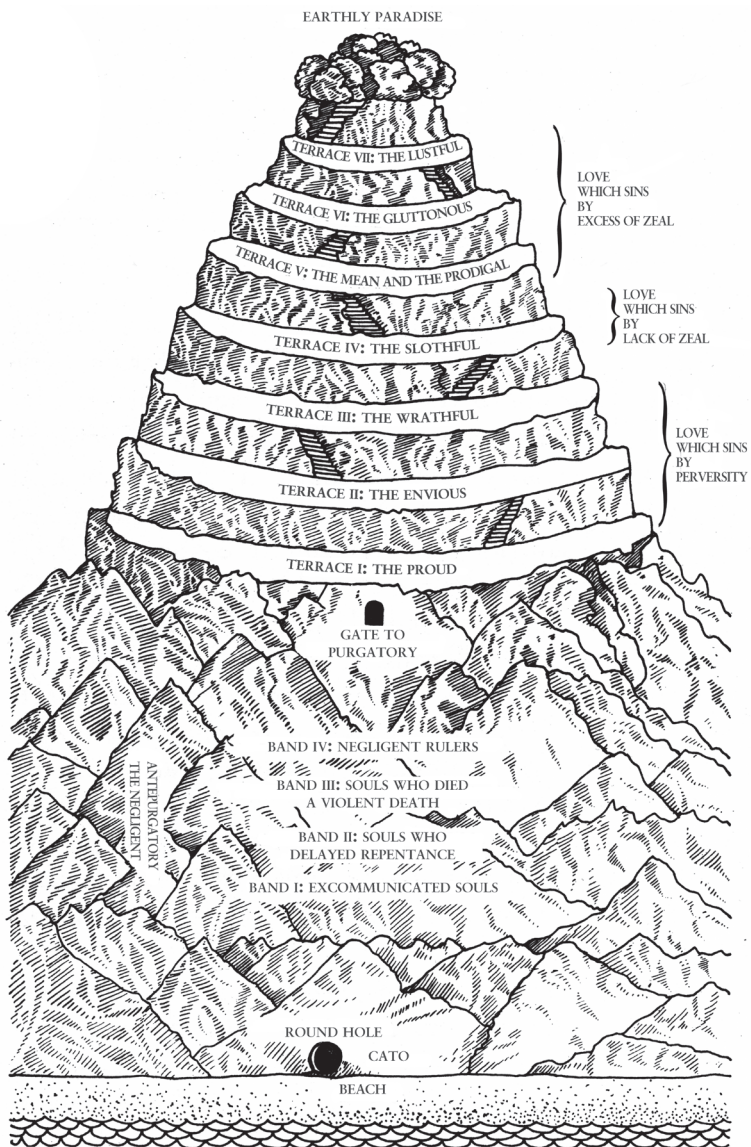


Illustration of Dante's Purgatory

CANTO I

Dante prays to the Muses to inspire him as he describes the second, and “more propitious”, stage of his journey.

The pilgrims have now climbed out of the Inferno and find themselves in the southern hemisphere, on the island of Mount Purgatory. The geography of this place will become clear to them gradually in this and later cantos: on the lower slopes are souls waiting to be admitted to their purgation; above are the seven terraces on which the seven deadly sins are purged; and at the top is the Earthly Paradise, the place of innocence and happiness from which Adam and Eve were expelled after their Fall. The souls in Purgatory suffer severely, but not as in the Inferno, since their suffering has a purpose: to purify them from their last traces of sin and enable them to go to heaven.

For the moment all that Dante notices, and conveys to us, is a strong sense of relief and hope after his experience of the Inferno. He conveys this largely by his descriptions of the sky as day is breaking. The atmosphere is strange, but not frightening: in the sky in this southern hemisphere there are, for instance, stars not seen by anyone since Adam and Eve.

These stars are so bright that they illuminate the face of a venerable old man who seems to appear from nowhere. This is Cato of Utica, the champion of freedom, and the guardian of the entrance to this realm. He is a problematic figure, one who is clearly saved although he was a pagan and a suicide; he is shown as worthy of all honour: even Virgil has to accept a rebuke from him. After questioning, he accepts Virgil's explanation of how he and Dante come to be there, and says that Dante must be girded with a rush (a sign of humility) and have his face washed in dew before he can begin the ascent of the Mountain. Then Cato disappears as mysteriously as he came.

Dante and Virgil descend to the seashore, Cato's commands are obeyed, and Dante is ready for the next stage of his journey.

Per correr migliori acque alza le vele
 omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
 che lascia dietro a sé mar sì crudele;
 e canterò di quel secondo regno
 dove l'umano spirito si purga
 e di salire al ciel diventa degno.
 Ma qui la morta poesi resurga,^a
 o sante Muse, poi che vostro sono;
 e qui Calliopè alquanto surga,
 seguitando il mio canto con quel sòno 10
 di cui le Piche misere sentiro
 lo colpo tal che disperar perdono.
 Dolce color d'oriental zaffiro,
 che s'accoglieva nel sereno aspetto
 del mezzo,^b puro infino al primo giro,
 alli occhi miei ricominciò diletto,
 tosto ch'io uscì' fuor dell'aura morta
 che m'avea contristati li occhi e 'l petto.
 Lo bel pianeto che d'amar conforta 20
 faceva tutto rider l'oriente,
 velando i Pesci ch'erano in sua scorta.
 I' mi volsi a man destra, e puosi mente
 a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
 non viste mai fuor ch'àlla prima gente.
 Goder pareva 'l ciel di lor fiammelle:
 oh settentrional vedovo sito,
 poi che privato se' di mirar quelle!
 Com'io da loro sguardo fui partito,
 un poco me volgendo all'altro polo,

a A form current in verse and prose in Dante's day. His poetry is described as "*morta*" because it has been concerned in the *Inferno* with those who are dead spiritually as well as physically. In the word "*resurga*" there is a hint of the Resurrection.

b Here the word "*mezzo*" stands for "*aria*", the *medium* through which celestial bodies are made visible to humans.

And now the little vessel of my mind
 Sets sail across these more propitious waters,
 Leaving a sea of cruelty¹ behind;
 And now I sing in rhyme that second reign,²
 There where the human spirit is made worthy
 To soar to Heaven, being purged of sin.
 Here raise my inspiration from the dead,
 O sacred Muses, since I am all yours;
 And here, Calliope,³ come to my aid,
 And lend my utterance that more lofty tone 10
 Which struck the wretched magpies, and so hard
 They knew all hope of pardon was in vain.⁴
 Soft hue of oriental sapphire,⁵ clear
 Up to the very circle of the moon,⁶
 Suffusing all the intervening air,
 Restored my joy in seeing, once I'd passed
 Clearly beyond the lifeless atmosphere
 Which was so troublesome to eyes and breast.
 The radiant planet,⁷ love's encourager,
 Occasioned happy laughter through the East, 20
 Veiling the Fishes⁸ that escorted her.
 Then, turning right, I fixed my mind upon
 The other pole,⁹ and I observed four stars¹⁰
 Not seen before but by the world's firstborn.¹¹
 The sky appeared delighted with their light:
 Oh, northern regions, well and truly widowed,
 Because you are excluded from their sight!
 When I could tear my eyes away from them,
 Turning somewhat towards the other pole,¹²

1 The Inferno.

2 Purgatory.

3 The muse of epic poetry.

4 According to the myth, the nine daughters of King Pierus challenged the nine Muses to a singing contest, and were turned into magpies for their presumption.

5 Eastern sapphire is of very high quality.

6 The moon is the nearest planet to the earth.

7 Venus, the morning star.

8 Outshining the stars of the constellation Pisces.

9 The southern celestial pole.

10 Symbolic of the four cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, fortitude and moderation – known to the pagan philosophers.

11 Adam and Eve, who were created in the Earthly Paradise on the top of what is now Mount Purgatory.

12 The northern celestial pole.

là onde 'l Carro già era sparito, 30
vidi presso di me un veglio solo,
degno di tanta reverenza in vista
che più non dee a padre alcun figliuolo.
Lunga la barba e di pel bianco mista
portava, a' suoi capelli simigliante,
de' quai cadeva al petto doppia lista.
Li raggi delle quattro luci sante
fregiavan sì la sua faccia di lume
ch'ì' 'l vedea come 'l sol fosse davanti.
"Chi siete voi che contro al cieco fiume 40
fuggita avete la pregione eterna?"
diss'el, movendo quelle oneste piume.
"Chi v'ha guidati, o che vi fu lucerna,
uscendo fuor della profonda notte
che sempre nera fa la valle inferna?
Son le leggi d'abisso così rotte?
o è mutato in ciel novo consiglio,
che, dannati, venite alle mie grotte?"
Lo duca mio allor mi diè di piglio, 50
e con parole e con mani e con cenni
reverenti mi fe' le gambe e 'l ciglio.
Poscia rispuose lui: "Da me non venni:
donna scese dal ciel, per li cui prieghi
della mia compagnia costui sovvenni.
Ma da ch'è tuo voler che più si spieghi
di nostra condizion com'ell'è vera,
esser non puote il mio che a te si nieghi.
Questi non vide mai l'ultima sera,
ma per la sua follia le fu sì presso
che molto poco tempo a volger era. 60
Sì com'io dissi, fui mandato ad esso
per lui campare, e non li era altra via
che questa per la quale i' mi son messo.
Mostrata ho lui tutta la gente ria;
e ora intendo mostrar quelli spirti
che purgan sé sotto la tua balia.
Com'io l'ho tratto, sarìa lungo a dirti –

There where the Wain¹³ already had gone down, 30
 I saw a solitary ancient man,¹⁴
 Worthy, by how he looked, of such respect
 No father is owed more by any son.
 His beard was long, and it contained a mix
 Of white, as did the hair upon his head,
 Which fell down to his breast in two long locks.
 The rays of those four stars shone down upon
 His face, adorning it with such a glow
 He looked like one who looks into the sun.
 “Who are you who, against the underground 40
 River,¹⁵ have fled the everlasting gaol?”
 He asked, and shook his grizzled hair and beard.
 “Who guided you, what lamp was at your back,
 As you came out of that abysmal night
 Which keeps the infernal valley in the dark?
 The laws of hell are broken, does this mean?
 Or has a new decree come out of Heaven,
 That you, though damned, approach these rocks of mine?”
 So then my leader took a hold of me,
 And with his words and hands and other gestures 50
 He made me lower my eyes and bend the knee.
 And then he answered him: “I did not come
 Unbidden, but a lady¹⁶ came from Heaven,
 And through her prayers I came to succour him.
 But, since it is your will to have expressed
 At greater length exactly how we stand,
 I feel no need to shrink from your request.
 This man has not yet seen his final hour;
 But through his sinfulness it came so close
 That there was very little time to spare. 60
 As I have said to you, I have been sent
 To save him; and there was no other way
 To save him but this one on which I’m bent.
 I’ve shown him all the infernal guilty nation;
 And now I mean to show him all those spirits
 Who, under your control, work their purgation.
 How I have managed with this man so far

13 The seven bright stars of the Great Bear or the Plough.

14 Cato of Utica (95–46 BC), known for his integrity, opposed Julius Caesar and committed suicide to avoid submitting to his tyranny.

15 See *Inf.* xxxiv, 127–34.

16 Beatrice. See *Inf.* II.

dell'alto scende virtù che m'aiuta
 condurlo a vederti e a udirti.
 Or ti piaccia gradir la sua venuta: 70
 libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara,
 come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.
 Tu 'l sai, che non ti fu per lei amara
 in Utica la morte, ove lasciasti
 la vesta ch'al gran dì sarà sì chiara.
 Non son li editti eterni per noi guasti,
 ché questi vive, e Minòs me non lega;
 ma son del cerchio ove son li occhi casti
 di Marzia tua, che 'n vista ancor ti priega, 80
 o santo petto, che per tua la tegni:
 per lo suo amore adunque a noi ti piega.
 Lasciane andar per li tuoi sette regni:
 grazie riporterò di te a lei,
 se d'esser mentovato là giù degni."
 "Marzia piacque tanto all'i occhi miei
 mentre ch'i' fu' di là," diss'elli allora,
 "che quante grazie volse da me, fei.
 Or che di là dal mal fiume dimora,
 più muover non mi può, per quella legge
 che fatta fu quando me n'uscì' fora. 90
 Ma se donna del ciel ti move e regge,
 come tu di', non c'è mestier lusinghe:
 bastisi ben che per lei mi richegge.
 Va' dunque, e fa' che tu costui ricinghe
 d'un giunco schietto, e che li lavi 'l viso,
 sì ch'ogni sucidume quindi stinghe –
 ché non si converria, l'occhio sorpreso^c
 d'alcuna nebbia, andar dinanzi al primo
 ministro, ch'è di quei di paradiso.

c An imitation of the Latin ablative absolute: the phrase is to be understood as if preceded by "*con*".

Would take too long to tell – strength from above
 Helps me bring him to you, to see and hear.
 Be pleased to make him welcome at this spot: 70
 He comes in search of freedom, which is precious,
 As he must know who gave his life for it.
 You know – for you, not thinking death was bitter
 For freedom's sake, in Utica discarded
 The clothes that on the great day will shine brighter.¹⁷
 We have not broken the eternal laws;
 For this man lives, and Minos¹⁸ does not bind me,
 But I am from that circle¹⁹ where the eyes
 Of your chaste Marcia²⁰ are; she seems to pray,
 O holy man, that you still think her yours: 80
 For love of her receive us favourably.
 Allow us through your seven kingdoms,²¹ so
 That I may tell her of your kindness here,
 If you'll accept being talked of there below."
 "Marcia was pleasing in my sight," he said,
 "While I was yonder in the living world,
 And any kindness she required, I did.
 Now that she is beyond the evil river,
 She cannot move me longer, by that law²²
 Laid down when I went out from there for ever.²³ 90
 But if a heavenly lady is your guide,
 As you declare, there is no need to flatter:
 Ask for her sake, you will not be denied.
 Go now, and take this man, and round him wind
 A smooth and supple rush,²⁴ and wash his face
 Till there is nothing of it left uncleaned.
 For it would not be fitting, with his eyes
 Still clouded over, to approach the First
 Custodian, one of those from Paradise.²⁵

17 Cato's "clothes" (his body) will be glorified on the Day of Judgement. It is clear that Cato, an unbaptized pagan who committed suicide, is saved.

18 Minos is the judge of the underworld (*Inf.* v, 1–12). Virgil, being in Limbo, is beyond his jurisdiction.

19 Limbo.

20 Cato's wife.

21 The seven terraces on Mount Purgatory, on which the seven deadly sins are purged.

22 The decree which separates the saved from the damned.

23 When, after the Crucifixion, Christ harrowed hell and released the souls of the virtuous.

24 A symbol of humility, the pliability of the soul to the will of God.

25 The angel at the gate of Mount Purgatory.

Questa isoletta intorno ad imo ad imo, 100
 là giù colà dove la batte l'onda,
 porta de' giunchi sovra 'l molle limo;
 null'altra pianta che facesse fronda
 o indurasse vi puote aver vita,
 però ch'alle percosse non seconda.
 Poscia non sia di qua vostra reddita:^d
 lo sol vi mosterrà, che surge omai,
 prendere il monte a più lieve salita."
 Così spari, e io su mi levai
 senza parlare, e tutto mi ritrassi 110
 al duca mio, e li occhi a lui drizzai.
 El cominciò: "Figliuol, segui i miei passi:
 volgiànci in dietro, ché di qua dichina
 questa pianura a' suoi termini bassi."
 L'alba vinceva l'ora mattutina
 che fuggia innanzi, sì che di lontano
 conobbi il tremolar della marina.
 Noi andavam per lo solingo piano
 com'om che torna alla perduta strada,
 che 'nfino ad essa li pare ire invano. 120
 Quando noi fummo là 've la rugiada
 pugna col sole – per essere in parte
 dove, ad orezza, poco si dirada –
 ambo le mani in su l'erbetta sparte
 soavemente 'l mio maestro pose:
 ond'io, che fui accorto di sua arte,
 porsi ver lui le guance lacrimose;
 ivi mi fece tutto scoperto
 quel color che l'inferno mi nascose.
 Venimmo poi in sul lito deserto, 130
 che mai non vide navicar sue acque
 omo che di tornar sia poscia esperto.
 Quivi mi cinse sì com'altrui piacque:^e
 oh meraviglia! ché qual elli scelse
 l'umile pianta, cotal si rinacque
 subitamente là onde l'avelse.

d A Latinism for "*ritorno*", appropriate on the lips of the Roman Cato.

e The translation, by capitalizing "Another", takes this as referring to God. Without the capital, as here, it could refer simply to Cato. The ambiguity is in one sense more apparent than real, since what pleases God pleases Cato.

Upon this little island, and all round 100
 Its base where waves are beating on the shore,
 Rushes are growing in the muddy ground;
 No other plant, not such as puts out leaves
 Or grows more stiff and hard, could flourish there,
 Not bending to the blows that it receives.
 And afterwards, do not return this way;
 The sun, which now is rising, will reveal
 How you may climb the Mount more easily.”
 He disappeared; I got up from my knees
 Without a word, and drew close to my guide, 110
 And now it was on him I fixed my eyes.
 He said: “I shall go on; you follow after;
 We must turn back, for if we go that way,
 The land keeps sloping down right to the water.”
 The hour of matins²⁶ had begun to flee
 Before the breaking dawn, and in the distance
 I recognized the ripple of the sea.
 We made our way across the lonely plain,
 Like one returning to the road he’d lost,
 Who till that moment seemed to walk in vain. 120
 And when we came to where the dew had made
 A stand against the sun, a region where
 It thins out slowly, being in the shade,
 My gentle master spread out either hand,
 Taking great care, upon the tender grass;
 And I, who gathered what was in his mind,
 Lifted my face to him – it was still smeared
 With weeping, but my master rediscovered
 That colour the Inferno had obscured.²⁷
 We came then to that solitary shore 130
 Which never saw its waters navigated
 By men who made their way back home once more.²⁸
 And there he girded me, as pleased Another.²⁹
 And what a miracle! Where he had torn
 The humble plant up that he chose to gather,
 It was straightway, identically, reborn.

26 The first of the canonical hours (times for prayer) of the Church, usually observed just before daybreak.

27 Dante’s normal complexion had been hidden by the filth of the Inferno.

28 Ulysses made his way there, but did not survive. See *Inf.* xxvi, especially ll. 127–42.

29 See *Inf.* xxvi, 141.

CANTO II

Dante and Virgil are uncertain where to go next. Suddenly they notice a white light on the horizon, which rapidly grows brighter and more distinct. Virgil tells Dante to kneel down in respect: this is one of God's angels, in a boat borne over the sea by no human means, and bringing the souls of the saved to Purgatory. As they land, the angel blesses them, they all spill out onto the beach, and the angel departs as quickly as he had come.

The new arrivals are bewildered by their new surroundings, and they ask Virgil and Dante the way to the Mountain. Virgil explains that they also are strangers there. Then the others notice that Dante is breathing, and they crowd around him in wonder.

One of these spirits, the singer and composer Casella, comes forward to embrace Dante who, recognizing him as an old friend, tries to return the embrace; but his arms meet empty air, for this is an incorporeal spirit. Dante learns that Casella's crossing to the island of Purgatory was delayed for some time after his death, but that he is one of those who have benefited from the plenary indulgences available in the Church's Jubilee Year of 1300. In response to Dante's request, Casella sings one of Dante's own poems. Everyone is enraptured by the singing, but Cato interrupts this apparently harmless amusement to warn them that their duty now is to go to the Mountain and purify themselves of the last traces of their sin. The souls of the saved flee towards the Mountain, and Dante and Virgil move as quickly as any of them.

The poet shows here, as so often, his humanity and at the same time his sense of duty. It is natural that the newly dead should continue to be attracted by what pleased them in their old lives, but they must learn to forsake their old ways, even their most noble and refined ones, in order to fulfil their eternal destiny: Cato is acting as the voice of conscience.

Già era 'l sole all'orizzonte giunto
 lo cui meridian cerchio coverchia
 Ierusalèm col suo più alto punto;
 e la notte, che opposita a lui cerchia,
 uscìa di Gange fuor con le Balance,
 che le caggion di man quando soverchia;
 sì che le bianche e le vermiglie guance,
 là dov'i' era, della bella Aurora
 per troppa etate divenivan rance.
 Noi eravam lunghesso^a mare ancora, 10
 come gente che pensa a suo cammino,
 che va col cuore e col corpo dimora.
 Ed ecco qual, sorpreso dal mattino,
 per li grossi vapor Marte rosseggia
 giù nel ponente sovra 'l suol marino,
 cotal m'apparve, s'io ancor lo veggia,
 un lume per lo mar venir sì ratto
 che 'l muover suo nessun volar pareggia.
 Dal qual com'io un poco ebbi ritratto 20
 l'occhio per domandar lo duca mio,
 rividil più lucente e maggior fatto.
 Poi d'ogne lato ad esso m'apparìo
 un non sapea che bianco, e di sotto
 a poco a poco un altro a lui uscìo.
 Lo mio maestro ancor non faceva motto,
 mentre che i primi bianchi apparser ali;
 allor che ben conobbe il galeotto,
 gridò: "Fa', fa' che le ginocchia cali –
 ecco l'angel di Dio: piega le mani;
 omai vedrai di sì fatti ufficiali. 30
 Vedi che sdegna li argomenti umani,
 sì che remo non vuol, né altro velo

a "Presso" ("along, by the side of").

The sun had made his journey by this time
 To the horizon, whose meridian covers,
 At its most lofty point, Jerusalem –
 And night, wheeling as always opposite,
 Was rising from the Ganges with the Scales
 Which she lets drop when she is dominant;
 So that Aurora's cheeks, first white and then
 Tinged with vermilion, where I stood and watched,
 Were glowing golden as old age drew on.¹
 We were still lingering beside the ocean, 10
 Like men uncertain of the way to take,
 Themselves immobile but their hearts in motion.
 Then just as, overtaken by the day,
 Mars reddens through dense vapours in the west
 Scarcely above the surface of the sea,
 So I saw what I hope to see at last² –
 A light that came across the sea so swiftly
 No bird in flight could ever be so fast.
 I looked again, when I had glanced from it
 One instant only, questioning my guide, 20
 And found that it had grown more broad and bright.
 Then suddenly I saw on either side
 A something that was white, while underneath
 Another whiteness gradually appeared.
 And still my master did not say a word,
 Till the first whitenesses were clearly wings;
 Then, seeing who the pilot was, he cried:
 “Down, down, immediately, and bend your knees!
 This is God's angel! Join your hands in prayer:
 From now on you will see such ministers. 30
 See how he scorns human contrivances,
 And needs no oar, nor any other sail

1 Lines 1–9: with the sun at the western horizon of the northern hemisphere, it is now sunset at Jerusalem (the centre of the inhabited world, as it was then known), while night is rising from the Ganges at the eastern limit of this world. Therefore the sun is now rising in Purgatory, which is in the southern hemisphere, directly opposite Jerusalem. The constellation Libra (“the Scales”) dominates the night sky in spring (the time of Dante's journey), until after the autumn equinox, when the nights are longer than the days. Dawn is personified as the goddess Aurora, ageing as the day breaks. This complex description is not merely a piece of bravura: by means of it Dante reminds us of how his universe is arranged.

2 Dante hopes to return to Purgatory after his death, in order to go eventually to heaven.

che l'ali sue, tra liti sì lontani.
 Vedi come l'ha dritte verso 'l cielo,
 trattando l'aere con l'etterne penne,
 che non si mutan come mortal pelo."
 Poi, come più e più verso noi venne
 l'uccel divino, più chiaro appariva:
 per che l'occhio da presso nol sostenne,
 ma chinail giuso – e quei sen venne a riva 40
 con un vasello snelletto e leggiero,
 tanto che l'acqua nulla ne 'nghiottiva.
 Da poppa stava il celestial nocchiero,
 tal che pareva beato per iscripto;^b
 e più di cento spirti entro sediero.
 "*In exitu Israel de Ægypto*,"
 cantavan tutti insieme ad una voce,
 con quanto di quel salmo è poscia scripto.
 Poi fece il segno lor di santa croce,
 ond'ei si gittar tutti in su la piaggia; 50
 ed el sen gi, come venne, veloce.
 La turba che rimase lì, selvaggia
 pareva del loco, rimirando intorno
 come colui che nove cose assaggia.
 Da tutte parti saettava il giorno
 lo sol, ch'avea con le saette conte
 di mezzo 'l ciel cacciato Capricorno,
 quando la nova gente alzò la fronte
 ver noi, dicendo a noi: "Se voi sapete,
 mostratene la via di gire al monte." 60
 E Virgilio rispuose: "Voi credete
 forse che siamo esperti d'esto loco;
 ma noi siam peregrin come voi siete.
 Dianzi venimmo, innanzi a voi un poco,
 per altra via, che fu sì aspra e forte
 che lo salire omai ne parrà gioco."
 L'anime, che si fuor di me accorte,
 per lo spirare, ch'i' era ancor vivo,

b "His blessedness was written in his appearance." There is a variant reading:
 "*faria beato pur descripto*" ("even if he were merely described, that would
 make blessed anyone who heard the description").

Than his own wings between such distant shores.
 See how he holds them pointing to the skies,
 Fanning the air with those eternal pinions,
 Which do not moult as mortal plumage does.”
 And then, as he came near, and yet more near,
 That bird of God, he grew more luminous,
 And brighter than my eyes could now endure,
 So that I lowered my gaze – the boat meanwhile 40
 Swept into shore: it was so light and swift
 It sank into the water not at all.
 The sailor sent from heaven stood astern,
 Sealed, so it seemed, with his beatitude.
 More than a hundred spirits sat therein,
 And as they sat they sang in unison:
 “*In exitu Israel de Aegypto*”,¹
 With all that’s written after in that psalm.
 He made the sign of Holy Cross, and they
 Flung themselves down as one upon the shore, 50
 And, quickly as he’d come, he went away.
 It looked as though the crowd who’d landed there
 Were strangers in that place, all gazing round
 Like people seeing things not seen before.
 Now on all sides the sun was shooting day,
 Having, with his unfailing arrows, hunted
 Capricorn from the centre of the sky,²
 When the newcomers turned to us and said:
 “Point out the way to take us to the mountain –
 That is, if you’re familiar with the road.” 60
 And Virgil said: “Perhaps you think we are
 At home here, well acquainted with this place;
 But we are wandering strangers, as you are.
 We came here just before you did, but by
 Another road,³ a road so rough and hard
 That this climb facing us⁴ will seem child’s play.”
 The spirits, who had gathered what it meant
 That I was breathing – I was still alive –

1 “When Israel went out of Egypt”: the beginning of Psalm 114, a celebration of the release of the children of Israel from slavery, and here with the allegorical sense of the release of souls from sin.

2 The risen sun, which is in Aries, has made the constellation Capricorn move down from the zenith, where it was at sunrise. The sun is personified as the archer god Apollo.

3 Through the Inferno.

4 The ascent of Mount Purgatory.

maravigliando diventaro smorte.
E come a messagger che porta ulivo 70
tragge la gente per udir novelle,
e di calcar nessun si mostra schivo,
così al viso mio s'affisar quelle
anime fortunate tutte quante,
quasi obliando d'ire a farsi belle.
Io vidi una di lor trarresi avanti
per abbracciarmi con sì grande affetto
che mosse me a fare il simigliante.
Ohi ombre vane, fuor che nell'aspetto!
Tre volte dietro a lei le mani avvinsi, 80
e tante mi tornai con esse al petto.
Di maraviglia, credo, mi dipinsi;
per che l'ombra sorrise e si ritrasse,
e io, seguendo lei, oltre mi pinsi.
Soavemente disse ch'io posasse:
allor conobbi chi era, e pregai
che per parlarmi un poco s'arrestasse.
Rispuosemi: "Così com'io t'amai
nel mortal corpo, così t'amo sciolta:
però m'arresto – ma tu, perché vai?" 90
"Casella mio, per tornar altra volta
là dov'io son, fo io questo viaggio,"
diss'io, "ma a te com'è tanta ora tolta?"
Ed elli a me: "Nessun m'è fatto oltraggio
se quei che leva quando e cui li piace
più volte m'ha negato esto passaggio,
ché di giusto voler lo suo si face;
veramente da tre mesi elli ha tolto
chi ha voluto intrar, con tutta pace.

Had turned quite pale in their astonishment.
 As people, hungry for good tidings, rush 70
 Around an olive-bearing messenger,⁵
 And no one hesitates to shove and push,
 So everybody there, each happy soul,
 Stood gazing at my face, as though forgetting
 To go and make themselves more beautiful.⁶
 And then I noticed one of them, who came
 Up to embrace me, and with such affection
 That he moved me to do the very same.
 Oh shades, in all but your appearance, vain!
 Three times I clasped my hands behind him, and 80
 Three times I brought them to my breast again.
 Wonder, I think, was what my face displayed,
 So that the shade drew back a little, smiling,
 And I pressed forward, following his lead.
 He told me gently that I should hold back:
 And then I realized who he was, and begged him
 To pause a moment so that we might talk.
 He answered me: "Because you had my love
 While bound in flesh, and have it now I'm freed,
 I'll pause; but why do you walk here, alive?" 90
 "Casella,⁷ friend, to come another time
 To where I am," I said, "I make this journey;⁸
 But why are you deprived of so much time?"⁹
 He said: "I have been done no injury,
 Though he who carries whom and when he pleases¹⁰
 Had several times refused to carry me,
 Since his is fashioned by a will that's fair.¹¹
 Nevertheless, for three months he has taken
 All wishing to embark, without demur.¹²

5 An olive branch was a sign that the news was good.

6 To purify themselves from the last traces of sin.

7 A man of whom little is known, except that he sang and set words to music.

8 Dante knows that the purpose of his journey is to make him worthy of salvation.

9 Time to complete his purgation. Dante, who must have known that Casella had been dead for a while, is surprised to find him arriving only now at the island of Purgatory. All those in Purgatory feel the need to complete their purgation as quickly as possible.

10 The angel who ferries the souls to Purgatory.

11 His will is conformed to God's. No reason is given for the angel's previous refusals.

12 Since the Christmas of 1299, when the Pope declared the start of the Jubilee Year of 1300, with the possibility of gaining plenary indulgences for the dead.

Ond'io, ch'era ora alla marina vòlto 100
 dove l'acqua di Tevero s'insala,
 benignamente fu' da lui ricolto.
 A quella foce ha elli or dritta l'ala,
 però che sempre quivi si ricoglie
 qual verso Acheronte non si cala."
 E io: "Se nuova legge non ti toglie
 memoria o uso all'amoroso canto
 che mi solea quetar tutte mie voglie,^c
 di ciò ti piaccia consolare alquanto
 l'anima mia, che, con la sua persona 110
 venendo qui, è affannata tanto!"
 "Amor che nella mente mi ragiona,"
 cominciò elli allor, sì dolcemente
 che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi sona.
 Lo mio maestro e io e quella gente
 ch'eran con lui parevan sì contenti
 come a nessun toccasse altro la mente.
 Noi eravam tutti fissi e attenti
 alle sue note – ed ecco il veglio onesto
 gridando: "Che è ciò, spiriti lenti? 120
 Qual negligenza, quale stare è questo?
 Correte al monte a spogliarvi lo scoglio^d
 ch'esser non lascia a voi Dio manifestò."
 Come quando, cogliendo biada o loglio,
 li colombi adunati alla pastura,
 queti, senza mostrar l'usato orgoglio,
 se cosa appare ond'elli abbian paura,
 subitamente lasciano star l'esca,
 perch'assaliti son da maggior cura,
 così vid'io quella masnada fresca 130
 lasciar lo canto, e gire inver la costa,
 com'uom che va né sa dove riesca:
 né la nostra partita fu men tosta.

c Another reading has "doglie" here. "*Quetar tutte mie doglie*" would then mean "appease all my pain".

d "*Scorza*" ("rind, bark, skin of snakes"). The last meaning seems most appropriate here, since a snake casts its skin.

So he, when I'd arrived upon the shore, 100
 There where the River Tiber meets salt water,¹³
 Kindly received me as a passenger.
 He is now winging to that mouth again,
 For it is there that all souls always gather,
 Unless they sink down to the Acheron."¹⁴
 I answered: "If no legislation here
 Bans use or memory of those loving songs
 Which always fully solaced my desire,
 I beg you sing them, and refresh somewhat
 My soul which, since it travelled with my body 110
 To reach this place, is utterly tired out!"
 "Love who is talking with me in my mind..."¹⁵
 So he began to sing, and sang so sweetly
 That I still hear the sweetness of that sound.
 My master then, and I, and all that band
 Around the singer seemed so well contented
 As nothing else could ever come to mind.
 All of us were entranced, intent upon
 The notes, when, "What is this, you idle spirits?"
 It was that venerable aged man,¹⁶ 120
 Who cried: "What negligence! And what a waste
 Of time! Run to the mountain; cast the slough!¹⁷
 That will not let you see God manifest."
 As pigeons that have gathered for their feed,
 And peck and pick up grains of wheat or tares,
 Calmly, with none of their accustomed pride,¹⁸
 Should something happen to provoke their fear,
 Straight away leave their victuals where they are,
 Being concerned with some much greater care –
 Just so I saw that group who'd just come there 130
 Desert the singing for the mountainside,
 Like men who rush away and don't know where:
 Nor was our own departure with less speed.

13 Where the Tiber flows into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

14 The souls of the saved assemble at the mouth of the Tiber, and the damned on the bank of Acheron.

15 The first line of a *canzone* by Dante which is discussed in the third section of his *Convivio*.

16 Cato.

17 Their covering of sin.

18 An allusion to the way a pigeon struts with pouting breast.



THE RADIANT PLANET, LOVE'S ENCOURAGER,
OCCASIONED HAPPY LAUGHTER THROUGH THE EAST...



“DOWN, DOWN, IMMEDIATELY, AND BEND YOUR KNEES!
THIS IS GOD’S ANGEL! JOIN YOUR HANDS IN PRAYER”...

CANTO III

The souls of those destined for Purgatory are running towards the Mountain. So are Dante and Virgil. But Dante clings to Virgil, while Virgil himself seems shamefaced, regretting their dilatoriness which earned Cato's rebuke. As Virgil slows to a walk, Dante looks up at the Mountain rising so far above the sea.

Dante is frightened when he sees that only one shadow, his own, is visible on the ground in front of him, and suspects that he has been abandoned. Virgil is still there, however; but his mortal body was buried in Italy, and his present one is diaphanous and therefore casts no shadow, although he still feels pain and cold and heat. As Virgil explains, the human mind cannot conceive how this may be, and must be contented with the fact itself.

Meanwhile the pilgrims have come to the foot of the Mountain where it rises sheer. While they are wondering what to do next, they see another group of souls approaching them and moving very slowly. Virgil and Dante make towards them and, when the souls notice this, they huddle together against the rock in their uncertainty. Those in front see that Dante is casting a shadow – behind him now and stretching out to the edge of the mountain, since the sun is low on the horizon – and they are baffled. Virgil explains the reason for this and says that Dante's journey is sanctioned by God. The souls tell them the way to go and courteously ask them to walk in front.

One of the souls explains that he is Manfred, once the ruler of Sicily, who was killed in battle and was refused Christian burial because he was excommunicate. Since he repented only at the instant of death, his entry into Purgatory, like that of the other souls with him, is delayed for a period thirty times the length of his contumacy. This period can, however, be shortened by the prayers of the living.

Avvegna che la subitana fuga
 dispergesse color per la campagna,
 rivolti al monte ove ragion ne fruga,
 i' mi ristrinsi alla fida compagna:
 e come sare' io senza lui corso?
 Chi m'avria tratto su per la montagna?
 El mi pareva da sé stesso rimorso:
 o dignitosa coscienza e netta,
 come t'è picciol fallo amaro morso!
 Quando li piedi suoi lasciâr la fretta,
 che l'onestade ad ogn'atto dismaga,
 la mente mia, che prima era ristretta,
 lo 'ntento rallargò, sì come vaga,
 e diedi 'l viso mio incontro al poggio
 che 'nverso 'l ciel più alto si dislaga.^a
 Lo sol, che dietro fiammeggiava roggio,
 rotto m'era dinanzi alla figura,
 ch'avea in me de' suoi raggi l'appoggio.
 Io mi volsi da lato con paura
 d'essere abbandonato, quand'io vidi
 solo dinanzi a me la terra oscura;
 e 'l mio conforto: "Perché pur diffidi?"
 a dir mi cominciò tutto rivolto,
 "non credi tu me teco e ch'io ti guidi?"
 Vespero è già colà dov'è sepolto
 lo corpo dentro al quale io facea ombra:
 Napoli l'ha, e da Brandizio^b è tolto.
 Ora, se innanzi a me nulla s'aombra,
 non ti maravigliar più che de' cieli
 che l'uno all'altro raggio non ingombra.
 A sofferrir tormenti, caldi e geli
 simili corpi la Virtù dispone
 che, come fa, non vuol ch'a noi si sveli.
 Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione
 possa trascorrer la infinita via
 che tiene una sustanza in tre persone.

a A coinage of Dante's, from "*lago*" in the general sense of water.

b The Apulian town of Brindisi, from the French form of the name (Brandis): the Latin form is Brundisium.

But while those spirits, put to sudden flight,
 Were scattering pell-mell towards that Mountain
 Where we are goaded on by what is right,
 I drew much closer to my trusty guide.
 For how could I have carried on without him?
 Who could have led me up the mountainside?
 It seemed to me that he felt culpable:¹
 Oh, what a fine, discriminating conscience,
 To whom each petty fault's a bitter pill!
 Now, when his feet had given up that speed
 Which robs all actions of their dignity,
 My mind, which had been too preoccupied,
 Widened its scope, in curiosity,
 And saw the Mountain rising from the water
 Up to the sky, as far as eye could see.
 The sun's rays, which were flaming red behind,
 Were broken by the obstruction of my body,
 And formed my shape before me on the ground.
 I turned and looked beside me, now afraid
 That I had been abandoned, since I saw,
 In front of me alone, the earth in shade;
 But then my comforter: "Still terrified?"
 He questioned, and he turned around to face me.
 "Can't you believe I'm with you as your guide?
 It is now evening where they buried me² –
 My flesh and blood which used to cast a shadow –
 In Naples, carried there from Brindisi.³
 Therefore, if there's no shadow made by me,
 You should not wonder more than at the heavens,
 Since none of them obstructs another's ray.⁴
 The heavenly Power creates bodies like those,⁵
 Except they suffer and feel cold and heat,
 But will not have us know just how He does.
 One would be mad to think a human brain
 Could make its way along that endless road
 One Substance in three Persons⁶ travels on.

1 After Cato's rebuke in the previous canto.

2 As the sun is rising in Purgatory it is evening in Italy.

3 Virgil died in Brindisi, and he was taken to Naples for burial.

4 The heavens were thought to be concentric transparent spheres, on which the stars and planets revolved.

5 Like the heavenly spheres.

6 The Blessed Trinity.

State contenti, umana gente, al *quia*;
 ché, se possuto aveste veder tutto,
 mestier non era parturir Maria;
 e disiar vedeste senza frutto 40
 tai che sarebbe lor disio quetato,^c
 ch'eternalmente è dato lor per lutto:
 io dico d'Aristotile e di Plato
 e di molt'altri" – e qui chinò la fronte
 e più non disse, e rimase turbato.
 Noi divenimmo intanto a piè del monte;
 quivi trovammo la roccia sì erta,
 che 'ndarno vi sarien le gambe pronte.
 Tra Lerice e Turbìa, la più diserta,
 la più rotta ruina è una scala, 50
 verso di quella, agevole e aperta.
 "Or chi sa da qual man la costa cala,"
 disse 'l maestro mio fermando il passo,
 "sì che possa salir chi va sanz'ala?"
 E mentre ch'e' tenendo il viso basso
 essaminava del cammin la mente,
 e io mirava suso intorno al sasso,
 da man sinistra m'apparì una gente
 d'anime, che movieno i piè ver noi,
 e non pareva, sì venian lente. 60
 "Leva," diss'io, "maestro, li occhi tuoi:
 ecco di qua chi ne darà consiglio,
 se tu da te medesmo aver nol puoi."
 Guardò allora, e con libero piglio
 rispuose: "Andiamo in là, ch'ei vegnon piano;
 e tu ferma la spene, dolce figlio."
 Ancora era quel popol di lontano,
 i' dico dopo i nostri mille passi,
 quanto un buon gittator trarria con mano,
 quando si strinser tutti ai duri massi 70
 dell'alta ripa, e stetter fermi e stretti
 com' a guardar, chi va, dubbiando stassi.^d

c Another interpretation of this line is "[people] such that [even] their great longing would have been appeased [by the knowledge]".

d "*Dubbiando*" has here the sense of "doubting fearfully", and "*stassi*" the sense of "stops moving".

Be happy with the *quia*,⁷ men of earth;
 For if you had been able to see all,
 Mary had never needed to give birth;
 And you have seen those men who longed in vain,⁸ 40
 Who could, if any could, have stilled that longing
 Which now is given them for eternal pain –
 Aristotle, Plato and all the rest –
 So many others.” And he bowed his head
 And said no more, but clearly was distressed.⁹
 We came upon the Mountain’s base meanwhile;
 And there we found the rock face was so sheer
 The nimblest legs would be of no avail.
 The loneliest broken cliff between Turbia
 And Lerici’s a broad and easy stairway¹⁰ 50
 Compared to the ascent we’re faced with here.
 “Now, who knows where there is some gentler slope,”
 My master wondered, and he paused a while,
 “Where men who have no wings can clamber up?”
 And while he pondered which way we might take,
 Keeping his eyes still fixed upon the ground,
 And I looked up, examining the rock,
 A band of souls came shuffling into view
 Upon the left, and moved their feet our way,
 But hardly seemed to, since they were so slow. 60
 “Lift up your eyes from off the ground, my master.
 You see these people here: they will advise us,
 If you yourself cannot provide the answer.”
 Then he looked up, seemed to be more serene,
 And said: “We’ll go to them, since they come slowly;
 Meanwhile you can be full of hope, my son.”
 And still that band of people was as far –
 Even when we had gone a thousand paces –
 As a good stone’s throw by a mighty thrower,
 When they flattened themselves against the rock 70
 Which stood so high, and huddled up, like people
 Who don’t know where to go, but stop and look.

7 A medieval scholastic term, indicating what is, as opposed to how or why it is.

8 In Limbo (*Inf.* IV). Their longing is for knowledge and understanding.

9 Virgil is himself one of those condemned to Limbo, because he was not baptized, and suffering the pain of unsatisfied longing, since he is separated from God.

10 These places, where in Dante’s day the cliffs fell sheer into the sea, are at the western and eastern limits of the Italian Riviera.

“O ben finiti, o già spiriti eletti,”
 Virgilio incominciò, “per quella pace
 ch’i’ credo che per voi tutti s’aspetti,
 ditene dove la montagna giace,
 sì che possibil sia l’andare in suso,
 ché perder tempo a chi più sa più spiace.”
 Come le pecorelle escon del chiuso
 a una, a due, a tre, e l’altre stanno 80
 timidette atterrando l’occhio e ’l muso –
 e ciò che fa la prima, e l’altre fanno,
 addossandosi a lei, s’ella s’arresta,
 semplici e quete, e lo ’mperché non sanno –
 sì vid’io muovere a venir la testa
 di quella mandra fortunata allotta,
 pudica in faccia, e nell’andare onesta.
 Come color dinanzi vider rotta
 la luce in terra dal mio destro canto,
 sì che l’ombra era da me alla grotta, 90
 restaro, e trasser sé in dietro alquanto,
 e tutti li altri che venieno appresso,
 non sappiendo il perché, fenno altrettanto.
 “Sanza vostra domanda io vi confesso
 che questo è corpo uman che voi vedete;
 per che il lume del sole in terra è fesso.
 Non vi maravigliate, ma credete
 che non senza virtù che da ciel vegna
 cerchi di soverchiar questa parete.”
 Così ’l maestro – e quella gente degna 100
 “Tornate,” disse, “intrate innanzi dunque,”
 coi dossi delle man faccendo insegna.
 E un di loro incominciò: “Chiunque
 tu se’, così andando volgi il viso:
 pon mente se di là mi vedesti unque.”^e
 Io mi volsi ver lui e guardail fiso:
 biondo era e bello e di gentile aspetto,
 ma l’un de’ cigli un colpo avea diviso.
 Quand’i’ mi fui umilmente disdetto
 d’averlo visto mai, el disse: “Or vedi” – 110
 e mostrommi una piaga a sommo ’l petto.

e A form of “*unqua*” (“ever”), from the Latin “*unquam/umquam*”.

“O you who’ve ended well, you the elect,”
 Said Virgil, “by the virtue of that peace
 Which I am certain all of you expect,
 Inform us where the mountainside slopes least
 And where it’s possible to make the ascent:
 Wise men are most annoyed when time is lost.”
 Even as sheep that come out of the fold
 By one, by two, by three, while others stand 80
 And timidly keep eyes and muzzles lowered –
 And what the first sheep does the others do,
 Crowding upon it should it chance to stop,
 All meek and mild, not knowing why they do –
 So I saw then the leaders of that flock,
 So happy in their fortune,¹¹ coming forward
 With humble faces at a steady walk.
 When those in front noticed on my right side
 That the sun’s light upon the ground was broken,
 My shadow stretching to the mountainside, 90
 They stopped walking, and then stepped back a bit,
 And all the others coming up behind them,
 Without knowing the reason, did just that.
 “Before you ask, I want to make it plain:
 This is a human body that you see,
 Which causes the occlusion of the sun.
 Don’t be surprised, however wonderful
 This seems: not without strength derived from Heaven
 Does he intend to scale this obstacle.”
 So said my master; to which “Turn around,” 100
 Those worthy people said, “and go before us,”
 And showed the way with gestures of the hand.
 One of them said: “Whoever you may be,
 Look back as you are walking, and consider
 If ever, back there,¹² you set eyes on me.”
 I turned and looked at him with steady eyes:
 Though he was fair and handsome and looked noble,
 A blow had cloven one of his eyebrows.
 When I in all humility confessed
 I’d never seen him, he replied: “But look! 110
 And pointed to a wound high on his chest.

11 Because they are destined for heaven.

12 In the world of the living.

Poi sorridendo disse: “Io son Manfredi,
 nepote di Costanza imperadrice;
 ond’io ti priego che, quando tu riedi,
 vadi a mia bella figlia, genitrice
 dell’onor di Cicilia e d’Aragona,
 e dichì il vero a lei, s’altro si dice.
 Poscia ch’io ebbi rotta la persona
 di due punte mortali, io mi rendei,
 piangendo, a quei che volontier perdona. 120
 Orribil furon li peccati miei,
 ma la bontà infinita ha sì gran braccia
 che prende ciò che si rivolge a lei.
 Se ’l pastor di Cosenza, che alla caccia
 di me fu messo per Clemente, allora^f
 avesse in Dio ben letta questa faccia,
 l’ossa del corpo mio sarieno ancora
 in co del ponte presso a Benevento,
 sotto la guardia della grave mora.
 Or le bagna la pioggia e move il vento 130
 di fuor dal regno, quasi lungo il Verde,
 dov’e’ le trasmutò a lume spento.
 Per lor maladizion sì non si perde
 che non possa tornar, l’eterno amore,
 mentre che la speranza ha fior del verde.^g
 Vero è che quale in contumacia more
 di Santa Chiesa, ancor ch’al fin si penta,
 star li convien da questa ripa in fore,
 per ogni tempo ch’elli è stato, trenta,
 in sua presunzion, se tal decreto 140
 più corto per buon prieghi non diventa.

f The word “*allora*” is probably to be taken with “*avesse... letta*”, rather than “*fu messo*”, since the Bishop of Cosenza represented the Pope at the court of Charles of Anjou before Manfred’s death.

g The metaphor “*fior del verde*” is either of a plant which has not quite withered, or else of a candle not quite spent: the lower parts of candles were coloured green. See Petrarch, *Canzoniere* XXXIII, 9: “*mia speme già condotta al verde*” (i.e. “about to die”).

“I am Manfred,”¹³ he told me, and he smiled,
 “The grandson of the Empress Constance; and
 I beg you, when you’re once more in the world,
 To go and see my lovely daughter, mother
 Of kings of Sicily and Aragon;
 Tell her the truth,¹⁴ if she’s heard something other.
 After I’d had my body riven by
 Two mortal wounds, I wept, and I repented
 To Him Who gives His pardon readily. 120
 My sins were dreadful, but the infinite
 Goodness has arms which it keeps open wide,
 Embracing all of those who turn to it.
 And had the Bishop of Cosenza known
 And understood that aspect of the Lord,
 When Clement sent him out to hunt me down,
 My body’s bones, still buried, would have lain
 Against the bridge’s head by Benevento,
 Under the shelter of the heavy cairn.¹⁵
 Now they are scattered by the wind, and drenched 130
 With rain, outside the Kingdom,¹⁶ near the Verde,¹⁷
 Where he transported them with candles quenched.¹⁸
 For all their maledictions there’s not one
 So lost eternal love may not return,
 As long as hope still shows a touch of green.
 The truth is, he who dies unreconciled
 With Holy Church, repenting *in extremis*,
 Has to be dilatory too outside
 This threshold, thirty years for every year
 He lived in his presumption, if that time 140
 Be not abbreviated by true prayer.

13 Born in Sicily c.1231, the natural son of the Emperor Frederick II. He was appointed regent of Sicily in 1250, and became King in 1258. He was a Ghibelline, and was excommunicated by two Popes. Defeated by Charles of Anjou (who was supported by Pope Clement IV) at Benevento in 1266, he was killed in the battle.

14 That, although excommunicate, he has been saved.

15 Manfred could not be laid in consecrated ground, because he had been excommunicated. Charles of Anjou, however, had him buried with honour under a cairn to which each of Charles’s soldiers contributed a stone.

16 Outside the lands of the Church.

17 The river known now as the Garigliano.

18 It was the custom to take the bodies of heretics and excommunicates to the grave with candles inverted and extinguished. It would seem that Manfred’s remains were not buried, or at least not buried very well, after their removal from the cairn.

Vedi oggimai se tu mi puoi far lieto,
revelando alla mia buona Costanza
come m'hai visto, e anco esto divieto,
ché qui per quei di là molto s'avanza.”

So now you know the way to gladden me,
If you tell Constance, my beloved daughter,¹⁹
How you have found me here, and that decree:
Those over there²⁰ can make our time here shorter.”

19 See ll. 115–17.

20 People who are still alive.

CANTO IV

Much of this canto consists in explanations – of the make-up of the human soul, of the reason for the sun's apparently erratic course, and of the nature of Mount Purgatory.

Dante's insistence on the oneness of the human person allows him to indicate how much time has passed since he and Virgil arrived on the island. It also, by implication, stresses an essential assumption behind the *Comedy* – that each human being is an indivisible whole and responsible for his actions.

Dante and Virgil begin their ascent through a gap in the rock. Its narrowness may bring to mind Christ's saying: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life..." (Matt. 7:14). The track they take has to be "flown" rather than trodden: this metaphor is first a hyperbolic way of conveying the steepness of the track, and then indicative of the eagerness which alone can scale these heights. This movement between the concrete and the abstract, and the literal and the figurative, exemplifies in a few lines the *modus operandi* of the poem as a whole.

When the two reach at last a level terrace, Virgil explains how normal astronomical assumptions are reversed in the southern hemisphere. He also encourages Dante by telling him that the ascent becomes easier as one goes on.

The pilgrims are surprised by a voice coming from behind a large boulder. This is Belacqua, languidly awaiting his time to enter Purgatory proper. He, with the other souls there, delayed his repentance until the time of death, and so he has to wait outside for a time equal to that which he spent on earth. The conversation between Dante and Belacqua is on a low key, intimate and teasing as befits old friends.

Virgil, as so often, reminds Dante that they have no time to waste, since it is now midday where they are and – as follows from what has been said previously – night time in the northern hemisphere, where the living are.