

Dante (1265-1321): The Exile and Birth of a Pilgrim

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I. Florence (1265 1302) – *Vita Nuova e Esilio – Humilitas.*

To Sr. M. Diletta Maria Pacetti

THE DREAM. Dante's mother, just prior to his birth, in the end of May, 1265, had a dream with a vision of a peacock whereas *instead of Dante she saw a beautiful peacock* ("subitamente non lui, ma di lui uno bellissimo paone le pareva vedere").

The gentle lady in her pregnancy saw herself at the foot of a lofty laurel, hard by a clear spring, and there gave birth to a son, who, as I have above said, in a short time, feeding on the falling berries of that laurel and the water of the spring, became a great shepherd, and exceedingly desirous of the berries of the laurel under which he was. While he tried to reach them, it appeared to her that he fell, and suddenly she seemed to see, not him, but instead of him a beautiful peacock.²

It remains unknown whether this is true or not. It is certain however that beyond its veracity, the dream is fully justified by the work of Dante.

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² Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's Life of Dante* Vol. 40, B (New York & London: Garland Library of Medieval Literature, 1990), 136. Cf. G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello in Laude di Dante* [Treatise in Laude of Dante] (1362), https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Trattatello_in_laude_di_Dante (accessed May 9, 2020), 57: "Vide la gentil donna nella sua gravidezza sé a piè d'uno altissimo alloro, allato a una chiara fontana, partorire uno figliuolo, il quale di sopra altra volta narra, in breve tempo, pascendosi delle bache di quello alloro cadenti e dell'onde della fontana, divenire un gran pastore e vago molto delle frondi di quello alloro sotto il quale era; a le quali avere mentre che egli si sforzava, le pareva che egli cadesse; e subitamente non lui, ma di lui uno bellissimo paone le pareva vedere. Dalla quale meraviglia la gentil donna commossa, ruppe, senza vedere di lui più avanti, il dolce sonno."

Surely, Dante's work, just like the peacock's flesh, does not perish. "La Vita Nuova," which starts with the death of Beatrice, celebrates both the poet's first meeting with her and her death in this world. It is also the only work that Dante accomplished in Florence where he had only one possibility to conceive his future *Divina Commedia*: on Easter Sunday 1300.³ On January 27, 1302, the first sentence of his exile was already being enforced. On March 10, Dante was permanently exiled. The sorrow of exile is doubled by the loss of his beloved Beatrice: "dal *venir meno della bella difesa per la partenza della donna dello schermo*."⁴ This is how Dante's journey began.

It is well known that Dante suffered tremendously because of his condemnation to exile in 1302. Furthermore, he considered it to be profoundly undeserved.⁵ He was at first desperate to return to Florence and even attempted a military attack on the black Guelphs who had expelled him. But after some time, it seems that he ceased to wish to return.⁶ Why? We would like to suggest that more than anything else, the answer lies within the heart of his poetical oeuvre. The political *essilio* did not simply give Dante the opportunity to completely devote himself to writing, but, more profoundly, it was a landmark in his personal poetical and intellectual development, leading Dante to recognize *himself* as a pilgrim. "Exile" and "pilgrimage" are words regularly taken interchangeably in modern commentaries on Dante's oeuvre. However, although closely related, these are terms with fundamental differences that should be kept in mind if we want to better understand the poetical and philosophical connection between *Vita Nuova* and *Divina Commedia*. In the *Vita*, a poem predating his exile, Dante does not yet recognize himself as a pilgrim, but only addresses a *sonneto* to pilgrims titled: *Deh peregrini che pensosi andate*.⁷ On this occasion, he defines, in general terms,

³ When the first sentence of Dante's exile from Florence was enforced on January 27, 1302, Dante was completing his *Vita Nuova*. The completion of this work would mean in the same time the beginning of *Commedia* which was written during the forty years of poet's exile from Florence, i.e. abroad and until his death.

⁴ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander, ed., *Princeton Dante Project, Opera omnia, with English Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997-1999), <https://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/index.html> (accessed May 9, 2020), *VN V*, 4.

⁵ Cf. *exul inmeritus*, *Ep.* II, 3.

⁶ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project, VN V*, 4.

⁷ *Ibidem, VN XL*, 5.

what a pilgrim is: “chiunque è fuori de la sua patria.”⁸ Such a definition does indeed closely connect pilgrims to exiles. However, in *Vita Nuova*, pilgrims are already endowed with a particular feature: they possess a spirit of love.⁹ This feature inexorably separates pilgrims from exiles, as can be seen from a reading of Dante’s *Convivio*, an unfinished book he seems to have written two or three years after his condemnation, and shortly before he started the *Commedia*. In *Convivio*, Dante reflects on intelligences both in Heaven and on earth, and we learn that intelligences unable to philosophize are the ones where “love is entirely extinguished.”¹⁰ These intelligences, he says, are “in essilio della superna patria,”¹¹ exiled from Heaven and dwelling in Hell.¹² In the *Divina Commedia*, we see that Dante’s pilgrims never appear in Hell, and instead are in the Anti-Purgatory, where they are presented “d’amore punge.”¹³ Only in *Paradiso* we finally see Dante presenting himself as “quasi peregrine,” a pilgrim who has eventually made his way to “the temple of his vow.”¹⁴ The poetical movement that led Dante to his own pilgrimage would probably never had happened without his political exile, since exile made him literally “fuori de la sua patria,” like a pilgrim. But without his own poetical reflection, started already before the exile, he would probably never have been capable of transforming his exile (in any sense of the term) into a pilgrimage of love.

1. From Ulysses’ Haughtiness (pride) to pilgrim’s humilitas

“O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus.” *Lamentationes* I. 12.

⁸ “E dissi ‘peregrini’ secondo la larga significazione del vocabulo; ché; ché peregrini si possono intendere in due modi, in uno largo e in uno stretto: in largo, in quanto è peregrino chiunque è fuori de la sua patria; in modo stretto non s’intende peregrino se non chi va verso la casa di sa’ Iacopo o riede.”

“And I used the word ‘pilgrims’ in its general sense, for the term can be understood in two ways, one general and the other specific.” *Ibidem*, *VN* XI, 6.

⁹ *Ibidem*, *VN* XLI, 11.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, *Conv.* III, 13.

¹¹ *Conv.* III 13, 2.

¹² *Ibidem*, cf. “le infernali Intelligenze.”

¹³ *Purg.* VIII, 4-5. “pierced with love.”

¹⁴ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *Par.* XXXI, 43.

Canto XVII of Dante's *Inferno* depicts clear enough the appalling note on his exile from Florence, the flight on the wings of Gerion. It is a detail that could position us not only on our journey through the *Commedia* but also through Dante's historical journey. Dante is presented here as a person (i.e. *personaggio*), while the monster Gerion personifies the exile, or more precisely, the way Dante has lived it. Exile became thus a providential constraint (from the forces of evil) with an advantage for the pilgrim's future. Here, the pilgrim symbolizes *l'humilitas* (a pure Christian notion) as opposed to the state of pride. This providential intervention, in the clothes of the monster (cf. *Inferno*) and in exile itself in Dante's real life, is an answer to the pilgrim's submission, who henceforth will be guided "where you do not want to go."¹⁵ In this journey, he is only a simple passenger, contrarily to Ulysses, and Virgil is here to sustain him. It is an execution of order, *Io non Enea, io non Paulo sono*,¹⁶ to prompt the pilgrim on his way.¹⁷ In Dante's case, it is Gerion who participates on one side; Beatrice on the other side. Beatrice is the true light, the true Guide, in Dante's worldly as much as poetic journey. She will show him, after his exile from Florence, the right path toward the City,¹⁸ a City he is looking for from the beginning of his journey, the City of God. During his exile, embittered, little by little Dante will learn through *humility* how to become himself *quasi peregrin d'amore*.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is only when he reaches the gates of "Paradiso," thirty years later, that we see Dante presenting himself as a pilgrim who had finally accomplished his vow *nel tempio del suo voto*.²⁰

And as a pilgrim in the temple of his vow,
Content within himself, looks lovingly about

¹⁵ "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." (John 21:18)

¹⁶ *Inf.* II, 32.

¹⁷ Aeneas, the hero of Virgil's epic poem, *Aeneid*, written between 29 and 19 BC. It tells the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who travelled to Italy, where he became the ancestor of the Romans. As St. Paul in the Christian world, Aeneas is kind of proto example of lost self-dependence and won humility. As for the future apostle, his previous self-dependant and self-sufficient Saul was transfigured into Paul. In such a sense, Aeneas is already seen by Dante as a pre-pilgrim, although without Christian cognition.

¹⁸ *Par.* XXXI, 39.

¹⁹ *Purg.* VIII, 4-5.

²⁰ *Par.* XXXI, 43. Thirty-three years separates the *Vita Nova* from *Paradiso*.

And expects to tell his tale when he gets home (...).²¹

Only after he had drunk of the waters ‘*quest’acqua* flowing from *the river of Light*, “e vidi lume in forma di rivera,”²² Dante is eventually ready to see the true light.²³ Beatrice prepares him for this baptismal assumption before he will enter into the *temple of his will* (“tempio del suo voto”).²⁴

2. Μουσηγέτης²⁵

Where is this *temple of will*? It is no longer in Florence, even not in Ithaca, where Ulysses returns one day and tells of his journey. This temple is somewhere else (“over the seas”) and it is only Dante who will be allowed to enter and to return from, *the seas I still were never sailed before*, “L’acqua ch’io prendo già mai non si corse.”²⁶

The seas I still were never sailed before.

Minerva fills my sails. Apollo is my guide,
nine Muses point me toward Beers.²⁷

This stanza displays an extraordinary poetic constellation which constitutes a kind of fusion, or river, full of verses related to Christian *humilitas* from the *Vulgata*

And being found in appearance as a man,
he *humbled* himself

²¹ *Par.* XXXI, 43-45. “E quasi peregrin che si ricrea nel tempio del suo voto riguardando, e spera già ridir com’ ello stea (...).”

²² *Par.* XXX, 61.

²³ *Par.* XXXI.

²⁴ *Par.* XXX, 70-75.

²⁵ It is one of many epithets given to Apollon, Μουσηγέτης, Mousēgetēs, proceeding from Μούσα “Muse” and ἡγέτης “leader.” Deriving from the Muses and the poets.

²⁶ *Par.* II, 7-9; and, S. Dučić-Collette, “Reč, tišina i blagovest. *Per verba non si poria*” [“Word, Silence and Grace: *Per verba non si poria*”], *Jezičci i culture u vremenu i prostoru* 8:2 (2019): 11-22; 11-12.

²⁷ *Par.* II, 7-9. “L’acqua ch’io prendo già mai non si corse; Minerva spira, e conducemi Apollo, E nove Muse mi dimostrar l’Orse.” We shall go from the “easy” spectre (cf. *Inf.* V.61-62: in the fifth circle of *Inferno* are all those condemned by lust, with Virgil being perhaps the most significant exemplar of it) to the “decidedly difficult” one. A very difficult one is presented in the second Canto of *Paradiso* (cf. *Par.* II, 7-9), where Dante makes a strong claim for the inspired nature of his third canticle (*Par.* III, 10-15) of his poem.

by becoming obedient to death –
even death on a cross!²⁸

Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
humbled by him, and afflicted.”²⁹

and from *Vita Nuova*³⁰ - *Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare* - where Beatrice is vested in humility, *benignamente d'umiltà vestuta*.³¹

Ab, pilgrims, moving pensively along, thinking, perhaps, of things at home you miss, could the land you come from be so far away (as anyone might guess from your appearance) that you show no signs of grief as you pass through the middle of the desolated city, like people who seem not to understand the grievous weight of woe it has to bear?

If you would stop to listen to me speak, I know, from what my sighing heart tells me, you would be weeping when you leave this place: lost is the city's source of blessedness, and I know words that could be said of her with *power to humble* any man to tears.³²

²⁸ Phil. 2:8.

²⁹ Is. 53:4.

³⁰ *VN* XXVI.

³¹ Cf. *VN* LX. “And it is to be known further that there are *three ways that those who travel in the service of the Most High* may be accurately designated. They are called ‘palmeri’ who cross the sea to the Holy Land and often bring back palms; they are called ‘pilgrims’ who travel to the house of Galicia, because the tomb of St. James is farther away from his own country than that of any other apostle; they are called ‘Romers’ who travel to Rome, where those whom I call ‘pilgrims’ were going” (*VN* XL, 7). English translation, The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*. “E però è da sapere che in tre modi si chiamano propriamente le genti che vanno al servizio de l'Altissimo: chiamansi ‘palmieri’, in quanto vanno oltremare, là onde molte volte recano la palma; chiamansi ‘peregrini’, in quanto vanno a la casa di Galizia, però che la sepultura di sa’ Iacopo fue più lontana de la sua patria che d'alcuno altro apostolo; chiamansi ‘romei’, in quanto vanno a Roma, là ove questi cu’ io chiamo ‘peregrini’ andavano. Questo sonetto non divido, però che assai lo manifesta la sua ragione.”

³² English translation, The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *VN* XL, 9-10. “Deh! peregrini che pensosi andate, forse di cosa che non v'è presente, venite voi da sì lontana gente, com'a la vista voi ne dimostrate, che non piangete quando voi passate per lo suo mezzo la città dolente, come quelle persone che neente par che 'ntendesser la sua gravitate. Se voi restaste per volerlo audire,

Dante's native Florence, the most ungrateful of all places, *harsh mother to her bard*, "Huic ingrata tulit tristem fructum, Exilium, vati cruda suo"³³ is also the city where the poet has lost his *beatitudine*, *perduta la sua Beatrice*,³⁴ in the earthly death of his beloved Beatrice. But Beatrice will never leave him and will become the first companion during his journey. She will go so far as to humble herself to come down from Heaven into the darkness of the *Inferno* in order to plant the seed of hope within Dante's broken heart.³⁵ Beatrice becomes, instead of death, the annunciator of life eternal. How she transforms Dante's "death" to this world into the vision of Heaven is masterly depicted through Canto XXX of *Paradiso* and *Inferno*,³⁶ which work together as counterpoints to each other—one bringing the fruit of the seed, hope, planted by Beatrice in Dante's darkness,³⁷ and the other opening the poet's eyes and making him able to see the true light in the form of a river located in the middle of Rosa Candida.³⁸

From that torrent issued living sparks
And on either bank, they settled on the flowers,
Like rubies ringed in gold.³⁹

The angels, similar to bees, flying around Rosa Candida and feeding themselves with perfumes and pollen which emanate from it, recall in us the picture from Virgil's *Aeneid*:

Plays with a passing breath, and whispers thro' the trees;
And, just before the confines of the wood,
The gliding Lethe leads her silent flood.
About the boughs an airy nation flew,

certo lo cor de' sospiri mi dice che lagrimando n'uscireste pui. Ell'ha perduta la sua beatrice; e le parole ch'om di lei pò dire hanno vertù di far piangere altrui."

³³ Epitaph written by Master Giovanni del Virgilio of Bologna (*ibidem*), a famous poet at the time and intimate friend of Dante. It was written to be put on Dante's tomb in Ravenna but was undone because of inspected historical coincidences. Cfs. Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 71-72; G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello*, 31.

³⁴ Dante here makes an allusion to himself, losing his earthly *Beatrice*.

³⁵ *Inf.* II, 43-126.

³⁶ *Par.* XXX, 64-66, and *Inf.* II, 43-126.

³⁷ *Inf.* II, 43-126.

³⁸ *Par.* XXX, 64-66.

³⁹ English translation, The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *Par.* XXX, 64-66. "Di tal fiumana uscian faville vive, E d'ogne parte di metien ne' fiori, Quasi rubin che oro circumscrive."

Thick as the humming bees, that hunt the golden dew;
In summer's heat on tops of lilies feed,
And creep within their bells, to suck the balmy seed:
The winged army roams the fields around;
The rivers and the rocks remurmur to the sound.⁴⁰

On its own turn, this image also recalls the initial one, always the second Canto of *Inferno* (II. 32), where Dante exceeds himself and his own “prophecy.”⁴¹ Dante is conscious now that he had failed, in his vision of protagonist, to be similar to two of his precedents, Paolo and Aeneas. It is at this point that he is reborn as he indeed becomes a new Paolo and a new Enea.⁴² This poetic string and reminiscences from the Bible and classical sources have their own tone:

Like sudden lightning that confounds
The faculty of sight, depriving eyes
Of taking in the clearest objects⁴³

At this point, it becomes necessary for Dante to find the appropriate language which would be able to capture alive and clothe in words his vision of Paradise. Propertius' verses which follow show clearly that the poet's mission is sacerdotal and that he (Propertius) is the first priest (*sacerdos*) who will bring the sacred *canti* from Greece to Italy and who will crown it, if the Muses give him the grace, with a new Latin canto:

Shade of Callimachus and rites of Coan Philitas,
suffer me, I pray, to come into your grove.
I am the first to enter, priest from an unsullied spring,

⁴⁰ English translation, J. Henderson, ed., *Loeb Classical Library* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2010), <https://www.loebclassics.com> (accessed May 9, 2020), *Aen.* VI, 703–709. “Interea uidet Aeneas in ualle reducta seclusum nemus et uirgulta sonantia siluae, Lethaemumque domos placidas qui praenatat amnem. hunc circum innumerae gentes populique uolabant: ac ueluti in pratis ubi apes aestate serena floribus insidunt uariis et candida circum lilia funduntur, strepit omnis murmure campus.”

⁴¹ *Ibidem*. “Io non Enea, non Paulo sono; me degno a cio né io né altri ¶crede.” “I am not Aeneas, nor am I Paul. Neither I nor any think me fit for.” English translation, The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander, *Inf.* II. 32-33.

⁴² *Par.* XXX, 49-52.

⁴³ English translation, The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *Par.* XXX 49-51. “così mi circunfulse luce viva, e lasciommi fasciato di tal velo del suo fulgor, che nulla m'appariva.”

bringing Italy's mystic emblems in dances of Greece.⁴⁴

Dante, following this model, will search on his own turn for a new language.⁴⁵ To this new language, the poet gives the name of *donna gentile*. She shall serve the poet as a remedy, as an instrument to overpass the death of beloved Beatrice. This *donna gentile* is none other than *Minerva oscura* (whom Boccaccio names once in his *Prosopoea di Dante*), the Lady Philosophy.⁴⁶ Armed only with her teaching, Dante grasps that grace will be given to him to go over the water of oblivion and overcome death ("first" as he says). This *donna gentile* will unmask his disguised exile into a "blessing." And the flight on the wings of Gerion to *Inferno* becomes now for Dante the springboard (veiled benediction, *benedizione mascherata*) and the means of how to reach his future *Paradiso*. In Propertius' own manner, Dante sees himself as an *auriga*, who first opens the highway for the return of the Muses exiled from Italy (*apre la via al ritorno delle Muse, bandite d'Italia*).

This was that Dante of whom I write; this was that Dante who was granted to our age by the special Grace of God; this was that *Dante who first was destined to open the way for the return to Italy of the banished Muses*.⁴⁷

Questi fu quel Dante, del quale e il presente sermone; questi fu quel Dante che a' nostri secoli fu conceduto di speciale

⁴⁴ J. Henderson, ed., *Loeb Classical Library*, Propertius, *Elegies*, III. I, 1-5. Sexti Properti, *Elegiarum Liber Tertius*, I, 1-5: "Callimachi Manes et Coi sacra Philitae, in vestrum, quaeso, me sinite ire nemus. primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos Itala per Graios orgia ferre choros."

⁴⁵ *Com.* I, 10-13.

⁴⁶ "Dante Alighieri son, Minerva oscura/ D'intelligenza e d'arte, nel cui ingegno/L'eleganza materna aggiunse al segno/Che si tien gran miracol di natura." C. Da Pistoia, *Le Rime di M. Cino da Pistoia e d'altri del secolo XIV* [The Rhymes of Cino Da Pistoia and Others of the 14th Century XIV] (Milano: Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1862). G. Boccaccio, *Prosopoea di Dante*, https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Prosopoea_di_Dante (accessed May 10, 2020), CVIII, 1-4. *Opere Volgari di Giovanni Boccaccio*, "Sonetto CVIII: Prosopoea di Dante" (Firenze: L. Fiacchi & I. Moutier (eds.), 1827-1834).

⁴⁷ Cf. Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 47. "This was that Dante of whom I write; this was that Dante who was granted to our age by the special Grace of God; this was that *Dante who first was destined to open the way for the return to Italy of the banished Muses*. By him the Glory of the Florentine idiom was made manifest; by him all the beauties of the common speech were set to fitting numbers; by him dead poetry may properly be said to have been revived. These things, if fittingly considered, will show that he could have rightly had no other name than Dante."

grazia da Dio; questi fu quel Dante, il qual primo doveva al ritorno delle Muse, sbandite d'Italia, aprir la via.

Boccaccio, Giovanni, *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, II, "Patria e maggiori di Dante."⁴⁸

And he is honouring it with a new language, neither Greek, nor Latin, but Italian.

II. Verona (1303–1304/1312–1318?). *Commedia* and unaccomplished works (*Convivio* and *de Volgari eloquentia*)

Through Cantos XV to XVII of *Paradiso*, Dante introduces his great-grandfather, Cacciaguida, who gives him two prophecies. The first is the poet's exile from Florence. The second one is his journey to, and stay in, Verona. They both foretell the months of vain hopes and Dante's wanderings in Tuscany before he arrives in Verona at the court of Bartolomeo della Scala.

You shall leave behind all you lost dearly love,
and that shall be *the arrow first loose from exiled bow*.⁴⁹

In these verses Dante might be alluding to Hippolytus from Virgil's poem⁵⁰ and Hippolytus' *second life* under the name of "Virbus" (i.e. double men). Dante is portraying himself as a New Hippolytus. We may also consider that "Dante's Phaedra"⁵¹ is Florence, his boldest betrayer.

But Trivia, kindly goddess, hides *Hippolytus* in a secret dwelling, and sends him away to the nymph Egeria and her grove, that there alone, amid *Italian woods*, he might live out his inglorious days, and take the *altered name of Virbius*.⁵²

⁴⁸ *Trattatello in laude di Dante*. Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio [Treatise in Laude to Dante. Complete works of Giovanni Boccaccio]. Vol. 3, ed. P. G. Ricci (Milano: Mondadori, 1974), 9.

⁴⁹ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, Par. XVII, 55-57. "Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta più caramente; e questo è quello strale che l'arco de lo essilio pria saetta."

⁵⁰ *Aen.* VII, 774 – 777.

⁵¹ J. Henderson, ed., *Loeb Classical Library*, Virgil, *Aen.* VII. 777; Ovid, *Metam.* XV, 497-546.

⁵² J. Henderson, ed., *Loeb Classical Library*, Virgil, *Aen.* VII. 774-777. "(...) at Trivia Hippolytum secretis alma recondite sedibus et nymphae Egeriae nemorique relegat, solus ubi in silvis Italis ignobilis aevum exigeret versoque ubi nomine Virbius esset."

Here follow the verses from *Paradiso*, the second prophecy, and how it mirrors Virgil's Epic:

You shall find welcome and first refuge,
In the courtesy of the noble Lombard,
the one who bears the *sacred bird* above the ladder.⁵³

1. At the Court of Bartolomeo della Scala

Dante arrives in Verona in 1303 where he is received with benevolence by Bartolomeo della Scala (1277-1304).⁵⁴ He writes here his two unfinished works, *De vulgari eloquentia* and *Convivio*. It is difficult to know much more of his life during these years, and the little we know, we know by identifying ourselves with the “cacciatori alla pantera” from *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. Furthermore, it is only by applying their *assiduous practice of cunning* that we can take hold of *pantera's* moving.

Now that we have hunted across the woodlands and pastures of all Italy without finding the panther we are trailing, let us, in the hope of tracking it down, carry out a more closely reasoned investigation, so that, by the assiduous practice of cunning, we can at last entice into our trap this creature whose scent is left everywhere but which is nowhere to be seen.⁵⁵

Between the mount and the vales of Italy, Dante finds that the beast (“panther”) smells and sniffs everywhere but does not remain in any one place, *redolentem ubique et necubi*.⁵⁶ The beast we are looking for is none other than the fruit of Dante's exile, and Dante's love for Beatrice. It shall be the future language for all those *fedeli d'amore* and humbled in their heart, for all those who are going to serve the Lord (“delle genti che

⁵³ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, Par. XVII, 70-73. “Lo primo tuo refugio e 'l primo ostello sarà la cortesia del gran Lombardo che 'n su la scala porta il santo Uccello.”

⁵⁴ Giovanni Bocaccio says “Alberto della Scala” by error, cf. Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 64; 183.

⁵⁵ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* I, xvi 1. “Postquam venati saltus et pascua sumus Ytalie nec panteram quam sequimur adinvenimus, ut ipsam reperire possimus, rationabilius investigemus de illa ut, solerti studio redolentem ubique et necubi apparentem nostris penitus irretiamus tenticulis.”

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

vanno al servizio de l'Altissimo").⁵⁷ In other words, the pilgrims. This new language must hold within itself Christ's dream for a renovated humanity through the spirit of love (*lo spirit sopra lo amore*)⁵⁸ whose signature is tinged with *humilitas*. *Humilitas* will become the seal and the crown of Dante's entire work and life.⁵⁹ It is now evident that this new tongue cannot be at the same time *humble* and *renowned, cardinal, and notorious* as Latin was, "illustre, cardinale, aulicum e curiale."⁶⁰

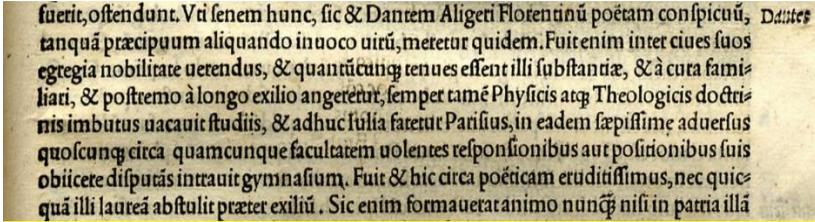


Fig. 1. Trattatello in Laude di Dante, apud Giovanni Boccaccio

On March 17, 1304, Cardinal Nicola da Prato is invited by the new Pope Benedetto XI (1240-07 July 1304) to pacify Florence with the union of the divided Guelphs. Dante immediately leaves for Verona, as recorded in his Epistle I to Messer Niccolò Vescovo from Ostia and Veletri, written in late March or early April. From the end of March and the end of April or beginning of May (we do not know precisely), Dante moves probably to Treviso (or to Padova or Venezia) where he is received at the court of Gherardo da Camino.⁶¹ At the beginning of May,

⁵⁷ VN LX, 7.

⁵⁸ VN XLI, 11.

⁵⁹ *Epistle I Cor.* 9:2. "If I am not an apostle to others, yet at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." Dante has seen himself as the seal of Beatrice's apostleship. After her death, he continues his apostleship in recreating his own language, *lingua Nova e Dolce*, to all *fedeli d'amore e di gentil'cuor* ("faithful in love and of gentle heart"). Dante's *Convivio* will become a kind of a catechesis of the Good News already foreboded in *Vita Nuova* through a new style of writing. So *Convivio* (i.e. "Symposium") could refute a traditional language (which was clearly Latin) and choose a new one, as it were a frame for a New Icon, a shell around *Vita Nuova* which was about to be borne.

⁶⁰ *De Vulgari Eloquentia*. XVI, 6.

⁶¹ *Conv.* IV, 16. Gherardo III da Camino (c. 1240- 1306) was an Italian feudal lord and military leader. He is generally considered the most outstanding member in the Camino family. Gherardo was a tyrannical, but efficient administrator, and increased its economic importance. He was also patron of feasts and arts, housing in his courts numerous

he comes to Arezzo. The mission of Nicola fails when on June 7 Pope Benedetto dies unexpectedly. By July 20, the alliance between the Ghibellines and the Whites in the camp of La Lastra also fails. But Dante, for a while dissociated from the alliance, remains in Arezzo. On this same date, Petrarch is born in the same city, *sì ch'a te fia bello averti fatta parte per te stesso*.⁶² In Canto XVII of *Paradiso* (61-69), there is a passage which records this historical day which will have a resonance beyond history.

But the heaviest burden, your shoulders must bear
Shall be this the companions, wicked and witless,
Among whom you shall fall in your descent.⁶³

When the papal court transfers to Avignon, Dante may have visited Paris (from 1309 -1310), as Boccaccio says in *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, XV, vi., and in *Genealogia deorum gentilium* [*On the Genealogy of the Gods of the Gentiles*] XV, 6 “Dante apud Boccaccio.”⁶⁴

From 1310 to 1312, Dante visits different places, Asti and Poppi, during the descent of Henry VII, but mainly he remains at Casentino. In 1310 Henry VII (1274 – August 24, 1313), whom Dante admired for his courage and rightmindedness, came to Italy. In this period of renovated political hopes Dante writes one *Epistle* (*Ep.* VII) to the Holy Roman Emperor. During the same year, it is possible that Dante also writes *Monarchia* (notwithstanding, many believe it to be later, in 1317). The death of Emperor Henry VII in 1313 in the neighbouring city of Siena destroys both Dante’s hope for the regeneration of Italy by the help of an imperial guide and the hope that his own honour might be restored in Florence during his lifetime.⁶⁵ He immediately decides to return to Verona, where he is received by Messer Cangrande della Scala “il quale egli (Dante) oltre a ogni altro uomo avea in reverenza,” *whom Dante*

cultural figures, such as Dante Alighieri, and of the troubadours (one of the last!) the renowned composer and anthologist Ferrarino da Ferrara.

⁶² *Paradiso*, XVII, 67-69. “And it shall bring you honour to have made a single party of yourself alone (...).” It is a clear reminder, or better to say, Dante’s own prophecy of the day of the birth of the future poet, he obviously could not know at this moment!

⁶³ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Par.* XVII, 61-63. “E quel che piu ti graverà le spalle, sarà la compagnia malvagia e scempia con la qual tu cadrai in questa valle.”

⁶⁴ G. Boccaccio, “Genealogia deorum gentilium” [*On the Genealogy of the Gods of the Gentiles*] (Basel, 1532), *Dante apud Boccaccio* [Dante by Boccaccio], Liber XV. vi. 389.

⁶⁵ Dante was in Verona after the death of Henry VII and in the neighbouring city of Siena in 1313. The city of Verona was at that time under the seignory of Cangrande della Scala.

*reverenced beyond any other man.*⁶⁶ In this same year is born Giovanni Boccaccio. In 1314, Dante publishes *Inferno*, which he dedicates to Cangrande della Scala, “Egli era suo costume, quale ora sei o otto o più o meno canti fatti n’avea, quegli, prima alcuno altro gli vedesse, donde che egli fosse, mandar a messer Can della Scala (...).”⁶⁷ Cangrande della Scala was the great Signore of Verona, and Dante admired him for his courage, boldness, and humanity.⁶⁸

Not with cloudy sayings, by which the foolish folk
Were once ensnared, before the Lamb of God,
Who takes away our sins, was slain,
But in plain words and with clear speech
That paternal love replied (...).⁶⁹

The poet depicts him as a kind of lombard Robin Hood, “per lui fia trasmutata molta gente, /cambiando condizioni ricchi e mendici,” *on his account many will find alteration, Rich men changing states with beggars.*⁷⁰

Look to him and trust gracious deeds.
On his account many will find alteration,
Rich men changing states with beggars.⁷¹

In addition to his noble hospitality, Cangrande was also a great protector for Dante, one of the many great writers of that time who enjoyed an association with him. Some say that he [Dante] had dedicated not only a third of his *Paradiso* but all of it to Messer Cane Grande della Scala, and not to Federico of Sicily, as it is believed.⁷²

⁶⁶ G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello*, XVI; Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 123; 50, n. 209.

⁶⁷ Cfs. G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello*, 52; “It was his custom, when he had finished six or seven cantos, more or less, before anyone else saw it, to send it from wherever he was, to Messer Cane della Scala, whom he revered (...),” Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 123.

⁶⁸ *Par.* XVII, 70-75, 88-90.

⁶⁹ Translation, The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *Par.* XVII, 70-75. “Né per ambage, in che la gente folle già s’inviscava pria che fosse anciso l’Agnel di Dio che le peccata tolle, ma per chiare parole e con preciso latin rispuose quello amor paterno (...).”

⁷⁰ *Par.* XVII, 89-90.

⁷¹ Translation, The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *Par.* XVII. 88-90. “A lui t’aspetta e a’ suoi benefici; per lui fia trasmutata molta gente, cambiando condizion ricchi e mendici (...).”

⁷² “... the third part, namely *Paradise*, be dedicated to Frederick III, King of Sicily. Some say that he had dedicated it all to Messer Cane Grande della Scala...” cf. Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 129.

In this same year, 1313, Dante also writes several epistles to Italian cardinals (especially *Ep.* XII).⁷³ In July/August 1315, he rejects the offer of the citizens of Florence, urged by the chief of Ghibellins, Uguccione della Faggiuola, allowing all the exiles permission to return to their city if they pay an amount “very reduced in respect of the initial fine.”⁷⁴

2. *Catulli Carmina* manuscript

1316 is an important date [for us humanists as it was for Dante] because of the discovery of Catulli Carmina's (*Codex Vaticanus Ottobonianus Latinus* 1829) manuscript in Verona. By 1316, Dante is in the midst of his redaction of the future *Paradiso*. It was not merely coincidental, we would say [we are in fact personally convinced] that Dante was impressed by catulian poetry – a type of poetry which celebrates, amongst everything, the happy way back home. It is also a type of neoteric poetry with a new and unusual style, in comparison to Catulu's contemporaries. Let it be recorded that Catullus influenced many poets that Dante openly celebrates and names in his *Commedia* such as Virgil or Horace. However, Dante never names Catullus, but records him under the cloth of the poetic reminiscence of “nostos aristocratico.” In it, Dante sees his own

⁷³ In this letter (*Ep.* XII) written on 19 May 1315, addressed to “amico fiorentino” (in which the appellation of “pater” reserved for him is avoided by the poet so that it is not identified with a religious man), Dante thanks the interlocutor for having poured out his favour for his [i.e. Dante] way back in Florence. Briefly summarizing the conditions imposed on the exiles for the revocation of the provision of exile and for the reintegration into their civil and political rights (payment of a fine and oblation of oneself to San Giovanni during a public ceremony), Dante rejects with disdain the proposal of his friend, considering it harmful to his dignity. After declaring that he is willing to accept any other agreement capable of safeguarding his honour and fame, Dante concludes that he is in any case ready to no longer return home if a solution that he can consider honourable is not found. In the final outburst, the tone of the letter is elevated, with a calm and incisive style, yet the refined images lacking rhetorical ornaments are striking, certainly due to the distance that now separates him from his city and at the same time from nostalgia and from hope. If there is no possibility for him to return to Florence, perhaps he will not be able to see, under any sky, the sun and the stars, and will be not able to devote himself to his studies and philosophical reflections? He will not miss bread either (he is a guest of Cangrande della Scala in Verona).

⁷⁴ Cfs. R. Hollander, *Dante Alighieri Life and Works* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001); Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 93. n. 203; “Life of Dante,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. Jacoff Rachel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1-13.

happy way back Home, not to Florence, but to the City of Heaven, his *Paradiso*.

At this point, it became a necessity for Dante to also create a new language—a language appropriate to describe a poet’s visions of this New City and to put in words what is wordless. All its beauty makes him blind, speechless.⁷⁵ Dante’s Maecenas, instead of Cornelius Nepos (or Hieron of Syracuse or Theron),⁷⁶ will be the nobleman, Can’Grande della Scala, to whom he dedicated the first part of his *Paradiso* (§xxx).⁷⁷ It is within the aristocracy at the court of Verona that Dante had discovered and recognized his Latin Master, Catullus. It is through Catullus’ poetry that Dante could also directly have an access to the antique religious valour and to unknown sources, or those forgotten by his contemporaries. Like Propertius, Dante claimed for himself “*primus ego ingredior puro de fonte sacerdos Itala per Graios orgia ferre choras*” (§x Sexti Properti, Elegiarum, L.III.I.)⁷⁸ Dante recognizes himself to be under the same mission as Propertius’, *Primo Sacerdos*. Exiled from his own homeland (Florence), he found himself honoured by the citizens of Verona and Ravenna to whom he brought back this “font” (i.e. fount) of living water—*L’acqua della Vita*—coming from the Muses’ songs.⁷⁹ In all his poetic fusion and re-creation of historical and poetic realities, the rediscovery of the Catullan manuscript was paramount, and its poetic *nostos* is not to be neglected.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ *Par.* XXX-XXXIII.

⁷⁶ The poetic reminiscence of Catullus’ *nostos*, which looks back to Homer (“Odyssey”), the happy way back to home comes to its apex at the court of Hieron of Syracuse (or Theron), tyrant of Syracuse in Sicily from 478 to 467 BC.

⁷⁷ G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello*, 26.

⁷⁸ J. Henderson, ed., *Loeb Classical Library*, Propertius, III. I.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Par.* II, 7-9.

⁸⁰ Cf. S. Dučić-Collette, (upcoming paper) “CATULLI CARMINA. CODEX VATICANUS OTTOBONIANUS LATINUS 1829 E IL SUO INFLUSSO SUL PASSO DEL CANTO XXXI DI PARADISO DI DANTE” [“Catullus’ Poems. CODEX VATICANUS OTTOBONIANUS LATINUS 1829 AND ITS INFLUENCE IN CANTO XXXI OF DANTE’S PARADISE,”] *Proceedings of the Fifth Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Heritage of Western Greece* (2021).

III. Ravenna (1318-1321) – The End of the *Commedia*⁸¹ – The Feast of Holy Cross

The final period of Dante's life, 1312-1321, was probably his happiest. He enjoyed longer periods of time in fixed dwellings (1312- 1318) at the court of Cangrande della Scala (1291-1329) in Verona, and eventually in Ravenna where he was received as the guest of a graceful nobleman and knight, "podestà e nobile cavaliere," Guido Novello da Polenta (1275-1333). Dante died in Ravenna, where he also completed his *Commedia*. Boccaccio, although through a novelistic shade in his reconstruction of Dante's life, offers us a persuasive account of Dante's situation in his twilight years:

In those days there was the Lord of Ravenna, a famous and ancient city of Romagna, noble knight, whose name was Gido Novello da Polenta. Trained in liberal studies, he paid high honours to men of worth especially those who surpassed others' knowledge.⁸²

It is by that time, having all hope of ever returning to Florence taken away (as if the desire were not removed), "tolta via ogni speranza di ritornare mai in Firenze, come che tolto non fosse il disio,"⁸³ that Dante eventually acquires the serenity for which he desperately languished throughout his journey. With this serenity he moves to the court life of Ravenna: "The Lord there honourably received him, and revived his fallen hope by kindly fosterings and giving him abundantly such things as were fitting, he kept him with him there for many years – even to the last year of his life."⁸⁴

⁸¹ The important biographical data on Dante's life came from the precious account of Andrea Poggi, Dante's nephew and close friend of Boccaccio. Andrea Poggi "greatly resembles him in face and stature, Boccaccio receives much information as to Dante's ways and habits from (...)" cf. Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, n. 142.

⁸² G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello*, "Dante ospite di Guido Novel da Polenta" XII. "Era in que' tempi signore di Ravenna, famosa e antica città di Romagna, uno nobile cavaliere, il cui nome era Guido Novel da Polenta; il quale, ne' liberali studii ammaestrato, sommamente i valorosi uomini onorava, e massimamente quegli che per iscienza gli altri avanzavano..."

⁸³ G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello*, "Grandezza del poeta volgare -Sua morte" XIV.

⁸⁴ Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 66; G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello*, 26. "Dove onorevolmente dal signore di quella ricevuto, e con piacevoli conforti risuscitata la caduta speranza (...) in quella seco per più anni il tenne, anzi infino a l'ultimo, anzi infino a l'ultimo della vita di lui."

1. *Dante's last years and death*

In Ravenna, Dante enters in poetic correspondence with several great humanists of his period, including Giovanni del Virgilio (1280?–1327?) in 1319.⁸⁵ In this period, Giovanni del Virgilio lectured in Cesena (1319, November 24 and March 23, 1320) and Bologna (?) about his last work, *De Quaestio de Aqua et Terra*. The great humanist opens his lecture with Dante's lessons, which are also the first written investigations of humanistic teaching in the Italian universities of the late Medieval period, *la prima prova scritta dell'insegnamento umanistico nelle università italiane del tardo medioevo*.⁸⁶

... under the protection of this gracious lord; and hereby his teachings trained many scholars in poetry, and especially in the vulgar tongue, who, according to my judgment, was the first to exalt and make esteemed among us Italians, precisely as Homer made his tongue esteemed among the Greeks and Virgil his among the Latins.⁸⁷

In the same year, 1319, Dante is invited to Milano by Matteo Visconti (1250-1322), a man of arms and faithful servant to his great-uncle Ottone in his battles and conquest of Milano. In 1287, uncle Ottone made him the captain of "Popolo" of the potent Lombard community: an invitation which cost Dante the nickname "mago" (magus) since Dante was suspected of participating in the poisoning of Pope John XXII.⁸⁸ Shortly before his death in 1321, Dante goes as an ambassador of his protector, Guido da Polenta, to Venice, sent with a mission of re-pacification after

⁸⁵ Giovanni del Virgilio (da Bologna ...) was a poet, grammarian and Italian Latinist, contemporary to Dante and famous for having entertained correspondence with him.

⁸⁶ P.O. Kristeller, "Un 'Ars Dictaminis' di Giovanni del Virgilio" [An 'Ars Dictaminis' by Giovanni del Virgilio], *Italia medioevale e umanistica* IV (1961): 181-200. In his letter of proposal (Pyridum vox alma ...) which swings between the 19th and mid-29th of the first of Dante's eclogues (Vidimus in nigris ...) and from December 20th to the late spring and autumn of 1320 with Dante's answering eclogue (Forte sub inriguos ...); and from September 1320 to 1321, in other words, the last years of his life, Dante's second eclogue (Velleribus Colchis ...), which arrived only posthumously to his correspondent.

⁸⁷ Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, 77. G. Boccaccio, *Trattatello*, XV, *Grandezza del poeta volgare - Sua morte*. "e quivi con le sue dimostrazioni fece più scolari in poesia e massimamente nella volgare; la quale, secondo il mio giudicio, egli primo non altramenti fra noi Italicis esaltò e recò in pregio."

⁸⁸ Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio's*, n. 98.

a long period of rivalry between the two cities. We do not know how his mission went. We only know that Dante came back with malaria. During the same year, he finishes *Paradiso*. Little after, during the vigils of the Feast of the Holy Cross, Dante dies in Ravenna in the arms of his daughter, Beatrice,⁸⁹ who became an abbess shortly after his death. He was buried at his favourite church, San Francesco, in Ravenna.

2. *Paradiso and “coronated humility”*

Beatrice appears twice in *Commedia*. She assists Dante to “overcome” two experiences otherwise unattainable to human nature. In the first instance, she makes her epiphany in Canto II of *Inferno*:

I who bid you go am Beatrice.
I come from where I most desire to return.
The love that moved me makes me speak.⁹⁰

She thus sows in the poet’s broken heart the seed of Hope and shows him the right path toward the City he is languishing for, *Paradiso*. She will reappear a second time at the Entrance to *Paradiso*.⁹¹ The first time she is descending from Heaven to *Inferno* to reach Dante, and the second time she is awaiting him on his ascent toward the Gates of *Paradiso*. Beatrice’s descent clearly recalls in us the picture of Christ’s coming down (*Philippians 2*), allowing herself to leave her footprints there in Hell.

O lady who give strength to all my hope
And who allowed yourself, for my salvation,
To leave your footprints there in Hell (...)⁹²

⁸⁹ Z. Bollettino, *Giovanni Boccaccio*’s, 102, n. 102.

⁹⁰ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *Inf.* II, 70-72. “T’son Beatrice che ti faccio andare; Vegno del loco ove tornar disio; Amor mi mosse, che mi fa parlare.”

⁹¹ *Par.* XXX, 19-21.

⁹² *Par.* XXXI, 79-80. “O donna in cui la mia speranza vige, e che soffristi per la mia salute in inferno lasciar le tue vestige.” The appellative, “O donna,” never noted in the various interpretations of *Commedia*, could be seen as a sign that Christ sent to Beatrice—a sign that she may come down from Heaven to console and give spirit to Dante on his journey in *Inferno*.

She opens Dante's eyes, unaccustomed to all the light flowing down from the streams of the Living Waters of *Paradiso*.⁹³ The Waters of Divine Wisdom are personified in *Minerva che spira*, "Minerva fills my sails."⁹⁴

In the same year, 1319, the crown of Dante's earthly life, he finishes writing *Paradiso*. The verses below conclude both our study and Dante's journey, *Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare*,⁹⁵ best illustrating Dante's journey: how a bitter exile was transfigured into a sweet song of praise, *Paradiso*; how Beatrice, twice, clothed in humility, will become for Dante a living icon of Pietà. A miracle.

Moving, benignly *clothed in humility*,
Untouched by all the praise along her way,
She seems to be a creature come from Heaven to earth,
to manifest a *miracle*.⁹⁶

IV. Conclusion

Beatrice is not an abstract lady the troubadours would sing about, nor is she similar to Buonagiunta's intellectual love for Lady philosophy.⁹⁷ *Dama gentile sì*, Dante's Beatrice is alive; she is *la Porta* (Gate) and *la Scala verso il Cielo* (Ladder to Heaven). All of Dante's work has born to witness it, going through the earthly realm in the same proportion as through the heavenly one.⁹⁸ In Dante's heart, Beatrice transforms his vision of antique Eros to *caritas Cristiana*, and Dante's journey from bitterness and

⁹³ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *Par.* XVIII 73-78. "E come augelli surti di rivera,/ quasi congratulando a lor pasture, fanno di sé or tonda o altra schiera, sì dentro ai lumi sante creature (...)." "And as birds risen from the river's edge,/ seeming to celebrate their pleasure in their food,/ from new a rounded arc, and now another shape,/ so radiant within their lights, the holy creatures (...)."

⁹⁴ §Par. II 7-9.

⁹⁵ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *VN* XXVI, 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, *VN* XXVI, 6. "Ella sì va, sentendosi laudare, benignamente d'umiltà vestuta; e par che sia una cosa venuta da cielo in terra a miracol mostrare."

⁹⁷ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project*, *Purg.* XXIV, 34-63; and 34-35: "But as man might look around and take more note, / Of one than another, so I did with him from Lucca, / who clearly seemed to know me." "Ma come fa chi guarda e poi s'apprezza/più d'un che d'altro, fei a quel da Lucca,/ che più pareo di me aver contezza."

⁹⁸ R. Jaccoff, *The Cambridge*, 20. "Dante and the Lyric Past".

offence toward a pilgrimage of love, *moving, benignly* ...“Ella si va, sentendosi laudare, ...”⁹⁹ The Poet has lost his Beatrice in this earthly life together with his native Florence, but he eventually finds her at the end of his *Paradiso*.¹⁰⁰ She greets Dante shortly before his earthly death, “I who bid you go am Beatrice. *I come from where I most desire to return*, “I’son Beatrice che ti faccio andare”!¹⁰¹ Once she had opened Dante’s eyes for the vision of the heavenly Light,¹⁰² in Canto XXX of *Paradiso*, it is only then that Dante hears the echo of her voice transforming and gathering every vision into the ray of light, with a single “salute”!

The love that calms this haeven
Always offers welcome with such *greetings*,
To make candle ready for its flame.

Sempre l’amor che queta questo cielo
accoglie in sé con sì fatta *salute*,
per far disposto a sua fiamma il candelo.¹⁰³
Par. XXX. 50-52.

⁹⁹ Cf. Here Dante alludes to *I Peter* 3:3-4 “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and humble [quiet] spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”

¹⁰⁰ §II. 7-9

¹⁰¹ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project, Inf. II*, 70-72.

¹⁰² In these verses of *Paradiso* (XXX. 50-52), Dante makes a clear allusion to Saul who by the Lord’s doing and through light on his way to Damascus has been transfigured into Paul, *Acts of the Apostles* 22:6-11, “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ He replied. My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of Him who was speaking to me. ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked. ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.” By light from *Paradiso* and by Beatrice’s *salute* ‘poet’s [Dante’s] Saulo’ has also been transfigured into a new one, a Pilgrim who eventually came back to his Home.

¹⁰³ The Trustees of Princeton University and R. Hollander ed. & transl., *Princeton Dante Project, Par. XXX. 50-52.*

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Abbreviations

<i>LCL</i>	<i>Loeb Classical Library</i>
<i>Aen.</i>	<i>Aeneis</i> [<i>Aeneide</i>]
<i>Metam.</i>	<i>Metamorphoseon libri</i> [<i>Metamorphosis</i>]
<i>V. N.</i>	<i>Vita Nova</i> [<i>New Life</i>]
<i>Inf.</i>	<i>Inferno</i> [<i>Hell</i>]
<i>Purg.</i>	<i>Purgatorio</i> [<i>Purgatory</i>]
<i>Par.</i>	<i>Paradiso</i> [<i>Paradise</i>]
<i>Conv.</i>	<i>Convivio</i> [<i>Banquet</i>]