Canto XVIII creates an essential link between the fifth heaven of Mars and the sixth heaven of Jupiter; between martyrdom and its eternal reward; between the definitive prophecy of Dante’s exile and the problem of justice on earth. The ascent from Mars to Jupiter, from warrior saints to just rulers, from Fortitude to Justice, is exemplified by the dominant colors, as the blood-red of Mars is replaced by the immaculate silvery whiteness of Jupiter.¹ The pilgrim’s arrival is proclaimed at the center of the Canto’s 136 verses: “[...] now the temperate sixth star’s / white heaven welcomed me into itself” (68–69). The pilgrim must come to view his own future ‘martyrdom’—the sufferings imposed by exile and the unwelcome truths he must broadcast as God’s scribe—in the light of divine justice: that justice which constitutes the very essence of the Comedy, as the Epistle to Cangrande tells us.²
The canto opens with the monosyllabic temporal adverb già (‘already’), a narrative device apparently describing a chronological sequence in the pilgrim’s simultaneous ascent ‘through’ the heavens to the beatific vision. Here, however, the adverb indicates a mental state, creating a brief pause in the action. Cacciaguida, “that blessed mirror,” reflects on his utterances (the Italian verbo weighty with reflections of God’s Word), while the pilgrim tempers the bitter news of exile and the burden of his prophetic mission with his ancestor’s prediction of the eventual honor it must bring him. Beatrice interrupts Dante’s meditation with the reminder that she is now united with God, who “lightens every unjust hurt” (6). Dante the poet-narrator has recourse once more to the inexpressibility topos, confessing that he could not describe the Love glimpsed “in her holy eyes”—not merely owing to the inadequacies of language but also because human memory cannot recall such heights of ecstasy, unless guided by God. The reflection of “the Eternal loveliness” that shines directly on Beatrice beata satisfies all the pilgrim’s desires for the moment—until she pointedly reminds him “not only in my eyes is Paradise” and urges him to turn back to Cacciaguida.

The pilgrim’s great-great grandfather tells him that, in this fifth section of the Tree of Eternal Life which—unlike earthly plants—draws vital sap from its crown “and endlessly bears fruit and never loses any leaves” (30), there are souls that were of such renown on earth “that any poem would be enriched by them” (33). The pilgrim must gaze fixedly at the horns of the Cross: as soon as Cacciaguida utters the name of a blessed soul, the warrior saint will flash across like lightning (36). Centuries before the invention of illuminated publicity hoardings, Dante conjured up these celestial pyrotechnics to astonish his readers’ imagination. The holy warriors appear in chronological order. First, Joshua (the Hebrew name for ‘Jesus’ or ‘Savior’)
who conquered the Promised Land for God’s chosen people. He is followed by another Old Testament hero, Judas Maccabeus, who liberated the Hebrews from tyranny and gained full religious freedom for them from the king of Syria, Antiochus IV. A huge leap in historical time then summons Charlemagne and Roland. These two champions of Christianity are followed by William, Count of Orange, protagonist of the *Chansons de geste du cycle de Guillaume d’Orange*, who, after fighting valiantly against the Saracens, died in 812, in an aura of sanctity in the monastery of Gellona, which he had founded in 804. His partner is a mythical ancestor of Luigi Pulci’s Morgante, known as “Rainouart au tinel,” a gigantic convert from Islam, supposedly baptized by William. According to the twelfth-century poem *Aliscans*, Renouard fought heroically at William’s side with his huge *tinel* or club at a battle near Arles, before ending his life in the monastery founded by his baptizer. “Duke Godfrey” was the Christian Joshua, who set up the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099, and who was to be immortalized by Tasso in his *Gerusalemme Liberata*. The last of the warriors is Robert Guiscard (1015–1085), duke of Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily, the Norman conqueror who drove the Saracens out of both Sicily and southern Italy (where his multitudinous victims are recorded in *Inf. XXVIII, 13–14*).

As readers will have noticed, the flashes of lightning that traverse the Cross constitute four couples: Joshua, Judas Maccabeus; Charlemagne, Orlando; William of Orange, Renouard; Duke Godfrey, Robert Guiscard. The ninth warrior is, of course, Cacciaguida, who acts as celestial master of ceremonies and who—Dante claims—had been knighted by the Emperor Conrad II and then found martyrdom on the field of battle during the Second Crusade. As all readers of his *Vita Nova* are aware, the number nine had special significance for Dante. Some recent scholars have pointed to the theme of the Nine Worthies (*Neuf Preux*) who embodied the ideals of chivalrous
The first clear literary record of the theme is found in *Les Voeux du paon*, a poem by a contemporary of Dante’s, Jean de Longuyon, which has been dated to c. 1313. It contains the names of three pagans (Hector, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar); three Jews (Joshua, David, Judas Maccabeus); and three Christians (King Arthur, Charlemagne, Godfrey of Bouillon). In spite of the supposed salvation of Cato, Trajan, and Ripheus, the three pagan Worthies are certainly not candidates for Dante’s ‘heaven’ of Mars. More pertinent is the fact that the Dantean triad is significantly absent from Cacciaguida’s list: as we have already seen, Joshua is paired with Judas Maccabeus, Charlemagne with Roland. The possible triad (William, Renouard, and Godfrey) is thrown out of kilter by the codicil “and Robert Guiscard.” Even Dante the poet could hardly claim that his ancestor had been a celebrated conqueror. Cacciaguida is instead designated by the neologism *artista*, displaying “his artistry, / among the singers in that sphere” (51). Thus ends the longest episode in the third *cantica*, which places Dante’s father figure center-stage from Canto XV, 13 to XVIII, 51, for a total of some 482 lines of verse.

Now, Dante turns back for guidance and discovers that Beatrice, “that miracle,” had become even more resplendent, an indication that the space-travelers have risen up closer to God: “and now the temperate sixth star’s / white heaven welcomed me into itself” (68–69). The hapax *miracolo* evokes a celebrated passage in the *Vita Nova* (XXIX, 3) that explains why the number nine had constellated Beatrice’s life on earth. It was above all “in order to make it understood that she was a nine, that is, a miracle, whose root—that is, of the miracle—is solely the wondrous Trinity.”

It may be noted in passing that Mandelbaum’s translation makes explicit the chromatic change by specifying that “the red of Mars / was gone” (67), whereas in the original text this swift mutation is indicated by the simile contained in 64–66,
which conjures up the image of a woman’s face when a blush inspired by “bashful modesty” is quickly replaced by its natural pallor.\textsuperscript{12}

Suddenly, the “silver” of Jupiter “seemed embossed with gold” (96), as signs taken from human language (72: \textit{nostra favella})—begin to appear in one of the poet’s most breathtaking inventions. Souls of the just form letters, just as birds rising from the banks of a river “form a round flock or another shape” (75). The poet’s invocation to “godly Pegasea” is the sixth of the nine invocations in the \textit{Comedy}—and the last addressed to the muses of classical poetry.\textsuperscript{13} The term \textit{Pegasea} is derived from the myth of Pegasus, the winged horse that brought forth the fountain Hippocrene on Mount Helicon (sacred to the muses) by stamping with his hoof; its waters were regarded as the source of poetic inspiration. Whether or not a particular muse is intended, the “glory and long life” granted to “genius” and “to kingdoms and to cities” (82–84) are achieved chiefly through the writings of great poets.\textsuperscript{14} Now, the poet prays for inspiration that he may render “in these brief lines” the signs that have been “inscribed” in his mind.\textsuperscript{15}

Thirty-five letters of gold thus stand out against the silvery background of Jupiter, the heavenly body associated with both justice and wisdom.\textsuperscript{16} Significantly, the first three letters are also the ‘triple’ name of God (78), while the “five times / seven vowels and consonants” form the opening words—\textit{DILIGITE IUSTITIAM QUI IUDICATIS TERRAM} (“Love justice, you who judge the earth”)—of the Book of Wisdom, attributed to King Solomon, the fifth and most resplendent light introduced by St. Thomas Aquinas in the heaven of the Sun.\textsuperscript{17} As Pertile (1991) has amply demonstrated, this Book is the subtext essential for a proper understanding of Canto XVIII. Indeed, we may extend its direct relevance to the entire sequence, \textit{Par. XVIII–XX}. Its opening chapters affirm that the just or righteous shall be rewarded by eternal
happiness, despite earthly torments and unhappiness, while the wicked shall be
punished. In Solomon’s prayer, the exemplary king beseeches the God to grant him
“the wisdom that sits by your throne […] Send her forth from your holy heavens […]
that I may know what is pleasing to you […]” (Wisdom 9:4–10). The exhortation to love
justice addressed to those who judge their fellow human beings came forth from the
heart of the Florentine poet who described himself no fewer than three times as a man
unjustly exiled, a devotee and preacher of Justice, one whose innocence was obvious
to all.\textsuperscript{19}

For the significance of the way in which the poet describes the thirty-five letters
displayed—“five times seven”—we must turn briefly to the importance of numbers in
medieval thought. Here, once again, we find the essential subtext in the Book of
Wisdom (11, 21), which taught that God had created the world according to number,
weight, and measure\textsuperscript{20}—indeed, few biblical verses were cited so frequently in
medieval writings. As Émile Mâle noted many years ago:

\begin{quote}
The number seven […] intoxicated the mediaeval mystic
 […] The number seven […] expresses the harmony of
man’s nature, but it also expresses the harmonious relation
of man to the universe […] By creating the world in seven
days God gave man a key to these mysteries, and the
Church celebrates the sublimity of the Creator’s plan when
she sings His praises seven times a day.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}
The number five signifies the microcosm and human perfection (Sarolli 1971, 294–295). As we have seen, in Dante’s poem, it is the number associated with Solomon, the exemplary ruler; it is also the number that discloses the miraculous presence of Ripheus, “fifth among the lights” that make up the eye of the eagle in *Par. XX*, 68–69, the most just man in ancient Troy—“iustissimus unus qui fuit in Teucris et servantissimus aequi” (*Aen. II*, 426–427)—who had “set all his love on righteousness” (*Par. XX*, 121). Robert Hollander convincingly links the five words of the Biblical quotation with I Cor. 14:18–19 and St. Paul’s prayer that he might be granted just “five words” of true understanding for the instruction of others:

Here, in the culminating moment of what is perhaps the greatest single theme of this great poem, justice, he resorts, for the last time, to the Pauline five words of understanding. And this understanding is the ultimate expression of that divine justice which he has justified to men.

Like sparks struck from a burning log, a multitude of lights transform the Gothic ‘M’ of TERRAM (“Earth”) into “the image of an eagle’s head and neck,” fashioned by God the supreme artist and creator of all. The other lights, “content / at first to form a lily on the M, / moving a little, formed the eagle’s frame” (113–114). The hapax *ingigliarsi* is one of the words that Dante coined in his determination to convey the realities of his poetic vision. What does the lily symbolize in this celestial metamorphosis? Not the French monarchy, as some commentators suggest, but rather imperial Justice—and, as such, opposed to the emblem of Florence, the devil’s city on earth, whose red lily is evoked by Cacciaguida in *Par. XVI*, 152–154 as
reflecting civic strife and injustice. At last, the sacrosanct sign (Par. VI, 32) of the eagle, “the bird of God” (Par. VI, 32 and 5), is fully revealed, golden against the backdrop of the planet’s silver. The sequence is now complete: the exhortation addressed to earthly rulers to love Justice; the M indicating the emperor, supreme custodian and dispenser of Justice (the lily); and finally, the eagle of the Empire that must safeguard unity and peace for the world. Hence, the poet-narrator can claim:

O gentle star, what—and how many—gems
made plain to me that justice here on earth
depends upon the heaven you engem!

(115–117)

For Dante and his contemporaries Justice was above all the virtue that guaranteed that all were given their due (suum cuique tradere). This is reflected even in the inscription on the gates of Hell, which proclaims: “Justice moved my high maker” (Inf. III, 4), while the whole court of Heaven is described as “this most just and merciful empire” (Par. XXXII, 117). Here, the blessed spirits that appear in the sixth heaven impress upon the pilgrim the essential truth that earthly justice must be inspired by its heavenly source. However, the lesson that the Pantocrator must be given His due will be fully apprehended only in the next canto, when the Eagle, symbol of Divine Justice, tells Dante: “The Primal Will, which of Itself is good, / from the Supreme Good—Its Self—never moved. / So much is just as does accord with It [cotanto è giusto quanto a lei consuona].”

As so often, the description of the Heaven sparks a dialectical opposition between God’s ideal ordering of “a people just and sane” (Par. XXXI, 39) and the bitter reality
of injustice, shame, and corruption on earth. In this, we see that Dante was no mystic but a latter-day prophet. Here, the narrator implores God “to watch that place / which has produced the smoke” (119–120) of sin and corruption that obscures the beneficial rays of Jupiter, with an astronomical image akin to the one found in *Purg.* XX, 42–43, when the founder of the royal dynasty of France describes it as “the obnoxious plant / that overshadows” all of Christendom, thus blocking the rays of the two suns symbolizing the empire and the papacy. In the poem’s fictive chronology (set in 1300) “that place” would have been Rome, as in *Par.* XXVII, 22–27, when St. Peter accuses Boniface VIII of having turned the hallowed ground of his burial place into a sewer. At the time of the composition of the last sections of *Paradiso*, however, the Pope was none other Jacques Duèse, born in Cahors and elected Supreme Pontiff as John XXII, on 7 August 1316. His very birthplace had become a byword for usury. “That place” (119) is the papal curia in Avignon, already castigated as the whore (Purg. XXXII, 148–160). May God’s anger fall upon those who “buy and sell within that temple / whose walls were built by miracles and martyrs” (121–122) even as Jesus’s righteous anger had led Christ to evict from the Temple “all those who bought and sold” within its sacred walls (Matthew 22:12–13). Here, the desecrated temple is a metaphor for the Church of Christ, whose holy structure was raised up by miracles and the blood of martyrs. The poet-narrator implores the heavenly host whom he contemplates at that moment to pray for the deliverance of all those who are on earth, led astray by the bad example set by those who should guide the Church Militant along the path to salvation. As we have seen in the heaven of Mars, Christians had formerly waged war with swords, but now war means depriving Christians of the sacraments, their spiritual bread, as a result of papal excommunication and interdict exploited for political reasons.
The lash of the poet’s invective bites ever deeper in the last seven lines of the canto, as he casts aside the ‘impersonal’ *si* form (*si* solea [*…*] *si* fa) to address directly the Supreme Pontiff with the ‘familiar’ *tu* form, something unthinkable in our earthly reality. The prophet’s voice thunders his call to the degenerate pontiff to remember that St. Peter, the archetypal pope, and St. Paul, apostle to the gentiles, who gave up their lives for Christ’s Church, “are still alive” (132). In reply, the pope is made to claim that he adores only the figure of John the Baptist impressed on the florin, who “for a dance was dragged to martyrdom”—where the phrase *per salti* degrades Salome’s dance to the level of vulgar, licentious cavorting. In his exclusive devotion to St. John, his namesake ignores both ‘the Fisherman’ and Old Paul.

Commentators are quick to explain that the Pope’s adoration of the Baptist is directed to the image of Florence’s patron saint imprinted on one side of the city’s celebrated florin, “the damned flower that / turns both sheep and lambs from the true course, / for of the shepherd it has made a wolf” (*Par.* IX, 130–132). What has not been pointed out in the commentaries, as far as I know, is the irony contained in the phrase *la vigna che guasti* (132: “the vines you spoil”). The image of the vine symbolizing the faithful, with God as the keeper of the vineyard, is found in the Old Testament (e.g., Is. 5:7). It was given new life and force by Christ’s words: “I am the true vine […] you are the branches” (John 15.1,5). The vine (or vineyard) of the Lord became a familiar term to indicate Christ’s Church. It was in fact the metaphor that was used countless times to justify the hunt for and the casting out of heretics. The text of the Song of Songs 2:15 exhorted its audience to “catch the little foxes that ruin the vines.” The *Glossa Ordinaria* (*ad loc.*) likens the action of heretics to those of the fox; they must be expelled lest they destroy the Church’s unity. Already in 1144, referring to heretics, St. Bernard had stated that “from the beginning the Church has
had foxes […] Assuredly the spoiling of the vines is a proof that the fox has been there […] In short, they are foxes, and little foxes.” As is common knowledge, the attempts to exterminate heresy were given great impetus in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. A prime example of heretics regarded as little foxes that must be destroyed in order to save the integrity of the Church is Pope Gregory IX’s Decretal *Ille humani generis* of 1231, with the traditional interpretation of the biblical vineyard and the foxes broadcast yet again:

> Although the heretics have lain concealed for a long time […] like little foxes, attempting to destroy the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts […] now, however […] they rise up in the open […] Wherefore it is fitting that we rise up against them manfully […] we […] come into the vineyard of the Lord at the eleventh hour among the workers […] warned by the voice of the bridegroom to catch the little foxes who seek to destroy the vineyard of the Lord […].”

Indeed, as Nick Havely has shown, Dante’s language at the close of the Canto seem to echo that of John XXII’s letter, addressed to the Inquisitor in Provence (6 November 1317), in which “the hope that the vineyard of the Franciscan Order will bear ‘the fruit of Catholic purity once the little foxes who dare to ravage it […] have been exterminated’.” Now, with supreme irony, Dante condemns John XII for precisely the same crime as that which he and his forerunners had attributed to heretics: namely, the devastation of Christ’s vine, the Church (132).

Although the chronology of Dante’s life and works cannot be established with certainty, it seems likely that the second half of *Paradiso* was composed after 1315.
Indeed, the bitter attack on the terrible example set by the head of Christ’s Church was almost certainly a reaction to “the initial stages of the pope’s campaign [...] to ‘obliterate,’ ‘extirpate,’ and ‘exterminate’ the Spiritual Franciscans and their followers.” In April 1317, the Pope decided in favor of the Franciscan community against the Spirituals in Provence; under his authority, four of the latter were burnt as heretics in May 1318.

“But you who only write to then erase” (130) has frequently been taken to signify the pope’s use of spiritual weapons such as excommunication, only to cancel the bans for large sums of money; others have pointed to his revocation of ecclesiastical benefices granted by his predecessor, Clement V. And, as Havely observes, this description of John’s edicts “effectively characterizes the pope’s actions with regard to the whole Spiritual movement.” The pontiff’s negative, destructive writing is diametrically opposed to God’s positive celestial writing.

Dante’s belief that the Church should practice poverty at all levels “seems more radical even than [that of] the Spiritual Franciscans,” whose desire to practice poverty was restricted to their Order and the original intentions of their founder. What appears not to have been noted is the fact that the two noble heraldic colors that dominate the scene in the heaven of Jupiter—silver and gold—are also emblematic of its opposite: the earth, where gold and silver reign supreme to such an extent that the pilgrim is inspired to inveigh against the leaders of Christ’s Church who have made “a god of gold and silver” (Inf. XIX, 112). Dante was clearly well aware of St. Paul’s denunciation of cupiditas as the root of all evil (I Tim. 6:10), which is usually translated as “the love of money,” although the term found in the Vulgate embraces every form of greed, which constitutes the greatest threat to Justice. Instead, in the Comedy’s sixth heaven, letters of gold emblazoned on a background of celestial silver
spell out God’s message to all those in authority on earth: LOVE JUSTICE. Thus, the 
silver and gold of heaven stand in diametric opposition to the gold and silver that 
corrupt fallen humanity on earth. As opposed to the archetypal pope (here dismissed 
in the voice of the pope himself as a mere ‘fisherman’), who “began with neither gold 
nor silver” (Par. XXII, 88) and was crucified as the first Bishop of Rome, his 
successor in Avignon idolizes the golden florin.47 Christ’s spiritual vicar on earth is 
but a slave to the She-Wolf, which “allows no man to pass along her track, / but 
blocks him even to the point of death” (Inf. I, 95–96); and he, the shepherd of Christ’s 
flock, has been transformed into a rapacious wolf by the “damned flower [the florin] / 
that turns both sheep and lambs from the true course” (Par. IX, 130–132). From the 
heights of the eighth heaven St Peter himself will proclaim the same message; “From 
here on high one sees rapacious wolves / clothed in the cloaks of shepherds” (Par. 
XXVII, 55–56). Yet another threefold pattern based on multiples of Beatrice’s 
number—IX, XVIII, XXVII—is revealed in the sacred poem to which both heaven and 
earth have contributed.

THE ITALIAN TEXT

As we have seen in noting the form of address (tu, 130), translations, however 
faithful, cannot reproduce or mirror every detail of the original text. Hence, the 
attention of readers is drawn to some salient features of this canto that cannot appear 
in translation. A general point is of course the effect of Dante’s terza rima, with its 
interlocking pattern of rhymes based on the sacred number three.48

The rapidity with which the warrior saints flash through the cross is emphasized 
by the singular verbal form trasse (‘drew’), which has no fewer than four subjects or 
actors: Pocia trasse Guiglielmo e Rinoardo / e ’l duca Gottifredi la mia vista / per
quella croce, e Roberto Guiscardo. A singular verb (but in the rhyming position) is again found, this time with two subjects in 118–119: *per ch’io prego la mente in che s’inizia / tuo moto e tua virtute […]*. The translator has no choice but to use the plural form of the verb in English: “drew” (46), “begin” (118). One of the striking features of Canto XVIII is the use of proper names in a dense cluster (40–48). Although it is a commonplace in Dante studies to insist on the poet’s creative powers as all-conquering, his readers must be aware of the fact that, once a rhyme word has been inserted, the poet is limited by his own rules to using two words that will correspond phonically to that choice (except at the beginning and end of the canto, where only one correspondence is necessary). Consequently, it is hardly surprising to note that, of the 202 words that occur only once in the *Comedy*, no fewer than 173 are to be found in the rhyming position: e.g., the Latinism *opima* (33) and the vernacular *paleo* (42). As we have noted, proper names are very much in evidence: that of an Old Testament hero, Macabeo (40), leads to the epenthetic ‘o’ of *feof* (38: for *fē* = *fece*) and the surprising comparison of a blessed soul’s motion to that of a child’s toy, a whirling *paleo* or ‘top’ (42). In similar fashion *Rinoardo* (46) attracts *sguardo* (44) and *Guiscardo* (48). In 77–81, *faciens* (77) / *moviens* (79) / *tacios* (81) are to be pronounced—*iEnsi*, and not, as Charles Singleton states in his commentary, *faciens/moviens/tacios*. The stress on the *i* would in fact add three *rime sdrucciole* or *proparoxytones* to the twelve occurrences of this form of rhyme found in *Paradiso*.

Alliteration is another essential element that cannot be reproduced in translation. A few examples may be given: *mi menava … muta pensier; pensa … presso …* (4–6); *perch’io pur del mio parlar* (10); *fiammeggiar del folgór* (25); *mota e mista, mostrommi* (49–50); *paia tua possa* (87); *cantando, credo* (99); *stolli sogliono* (102);
ma or si fa togliendo or qui or quivi (128); pensa che Pietro e Paolo (131); volle viver (134). The swiftness of the gaze that follows the falcon’s flight is suggested lexically by the verb volando and phonically by the repetition of the sibilant s in “com’ occhio segue suo falcon volando” (45).

An outstanding feature of Dante’s poetic syntax is the freedom and frequency with which he uses enjambment in this canto. The first nine lines set the pattern:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Già si godeva solo del suo verbo} \\
& \text{quello specchio beato, // e io gustava} \\
& \text{lo mio, // temprando col dolce l’acerbo;} \\
& \text{e quella donna ch’a Dio mi menava} \\
& \text{disse: // “Muta pensier; / pensa ch’i’ sono} \\
& \text{presso a colui ch’ogne torto disgrava.”} \\
& \text{Io mi rivolsi a l’amoroso suono} \\
& \text{del mio conforto; // e qual io allor vidi} \\
& \text{ne li occhi santi amor; / qui l’abbandono.}
\end{align*}
\]

In 2–3 and 8–9, monotony is further avoided by alternating the length of the hemistichs (a maiore and a minore) as well as by creating a strong pause or caesura after the first two syllables in line 5 and in line 8 after the fifth syllable, while the object of vidi is only revealed in the fifth word of line 9. Other examples of enjambment might include: in picciol varco / di tempo (64–65); la temprata stella / sesta (68–69); notai / le parti si (89–90); che moriro / per la vigna che guasti (131–132). Enjambment strengthens the terzina as the syntactic unit favored by the poet:

\[
E \text{ vidi scendere altre luci dove}
\]
era il colmo de l’emme, e li quetarsi

cantando, credo, il ben ch’a sé le move.

(97–99)

After this brief overview of what is inevitably lacking in translations, it should be
remembered that Dante himself belabored this point in Convivio 1.7.14–15 by
reminding his future readers that:

Everyone should know that nothing harmonized according to the
rules of poetry [per musica legame armonizzata] can be
translated from its native tongue into another without destroying
all its sweetness and harmony […] And this is the reason why the
verses of the Psalter lack the sweetness of music and harmony; for
they were translated from Hebrew into Greek and from Greek into
Latin, and in the first translation all their sweetness was lost.

Clearly, the best way to read Dante is to use the translation as an essential stepping-
stone toward an appreciation of the poet’s demiurgic powers as a lord of language in
what he called “this vernacular of mine,” and which he transformed in his Comedy so
that it became in truth “a new sun […] which shall give light to those who lie in
shadows and in darkness” (Conv. 1.13.5, 12).

NOTES
Cf. *Convivio* 2.13.25 [Lansing’s translation]: “it [Jupiter] moves between two heavens antithetical to its admirable temperateness, those of Mars and Saturn […] it alone among the stars is white in appearance, as if covered in silver.” Jupiter “moves between two heavens that are antithetical to its fine temperance, namely that of Mars and that of Saturn […] among all the stars it appears white, almost silvery. Cf. *Par.* XIV, 86–87; XVIII, 68 and 96.

If the poem is interpreted allegorically, then “[…] the subject is man, as he deserves reward of punishment by justice through his merits or demerits in exercising his free will” (*Ep.* XIII, 8.25). For the reference to Dante as a ‘martyr,’ the full force of the etymological meaning of the word as one who bears witness to the Truth must be borne in mind (Uguccione da Pisa, *Derivationes*: “MARTIR—ris grece, latine dicitur testis, unde et testimonia martiria dicunt”). Cf. Schnapp, 1986: 215–238.

Cf. the emblematic openings of *Inf.* xii and *Purg.* VIII: “Già era in loco onde s’udia il rimbombo;” “Già era ’l sole a l’orizzonte giunto”; and, for a detailed analysis of this aspect of the poet’s technique, see Blasucci, “Per una tipologia degli esordi nei canti danteschi,” *La parola del testo* 4:1 (2000), 17–46. The change from direct speech at the end of *Par.* XVII to narration in the opening lines of the following canto is a notable structural feature of the third cantica.

Men—made in God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1:26: “faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram”)—and angels are mirrors in so far as they reflect their Creator (the “Eternal Goodness” of *Par.* XXIX, 143–145, that “has made / so many mirrors, which divide Its light / but, as before, Its own Self is One”). Glossing I Corinthians 13:12 and Romans 1:20, J. A. Mazzeo, *Structure and Thought in the “Paradiso,”* 86. Ithaca, NY, 1958, notes that “These two texts were related by equating *speculum* with *creatura mundi*. The created world was a mirror of God, and everything in it reflected in some degree, by analogy, some aspect of the Creator.”
“After Cacciaguida’s speech, Dante the pilgrim again turns his gaze toward Beatrice and one again the rhetoric of failure moves into action […] with regard to Beatrice’s eyes […] Then the failure of both language and memory on the part of Dante the poet is immediately redoubled […] by the pilgrim’s failure, when his sight is overcome by Beatrice’s smile” (Giuseppe Ledda, *La guerra della lingua. Ineffabilità, retorica e narrativa della “Commedia” di Dante*, 276. Ravenna, 2002). See also the section on “Inexpressibility topoi” in Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 159–160. New York, 1953.

Cf. *Par.* I, 7–9. Note the parallel between *s'altri non la guidi* (12) and *non ha chi 'l guidi* (109).


For a balanced analysis of the possibility that Dante was acquainted with this traditional motif, see Robert Hollander, “Dante e l’epopea marziale.” *Letture Classensi* 18 (1989): 111–113.

The word *artista* occurs for the first time in Cino da Pistoia’s sonnet “Qua’ son le cose vostre ch’io vi tolgo.” In his detailed study, “Dante and Cino da Pistoia” (*Dante Studies* 110 [1992], 201–231) Robert Hollander’s argues convincingly that Dante had originally planned that Beatrice should reveal his future sufferings and exile (cf. *Inf.* X, 130–132), and that she
should therefore name Cino “as the artista who was to have shared with him the poetic crown for the vernacular.” Instead, “he gives this role to Cacciaguida, and also gives him the word that he had reserved for Cino: artista, the reward originally intended for him who had seen, where Guido Cavalcanti had been blind” (ibid., 217–218).

11 Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*. Italian Text with Facing English Translation by Dino S. Cervigni and Edward Vasta. Notre Dame, 1995, 117. The plural miracoli is also found only once in the *Comedy* (*Par. xxi*, 1070).

12 In modern times, the word ‘pallor’ has taken on negative connotations, which are clearly absent from the adjective ‘white’ in *Bianca donna* (65). A white complexion was one of the norms of feminine beauty in western culture until the twentieth century: cf. the image of a pearl “displayed on a white forehead” found in *Par. iii*, 15. It may be noted that the white of Jupiter and the red of Mars will be used in a reverse mutation, when St. Peter’s sudden anger is depicted in *Par. xxvii*, 11–15.


14 Cf. Statius’ self-portrait in *Purg. xxi*, where he claims that, as poet, he “bore the name that lasts the longest / and honors most [...].” Hollander (*op. cit.*, 37, n. 7) “leans toward Clio, since the Muse of history is likely to be thought of as bestowing fame upon cities and kingdoms […].” The topos that no one would have heard of the great conquerors of antiquity, such as Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, was to be cultivated *ad nauseam* by Renaissance poets and historians in their appeals to powerful patrons.

15 I agree with Steven Botterill that, while a number of contemporary scholars “have found in Dante a soulmate and precursor in the skepticism about poetic language characteristic of contemporary literary theory and our self-consciously modern (or rather postmodern) cultural climate,” Dante demonstrates in his sacred poem “a positive valuation of the power of human language to express and to represent […] to put it more bluntly, Dante believes in words”
(“Dante’s Poetics of the Sacred Word.” *Philosophy and Literature* 20:1 (1996): 154–162 [at 159 and 154]). In an earlier invocation (*Inf.* XXXII, 10–12), Dante had appealed to the muses to give him the linguistic powers necessary “so that my tale not differ from the fact” (note the Italian of 12: *si che dal fatto il dir non sia diverso*). That invocation is preceded by the ‘confession’ that the poet does not possess “the crude and scrannel rhymes to suit / the melancholy hole” that constitutes the pit of hell. Nevertheless, just as the pilgrim says that he is neither Aeneas nor St. Paul, so admissions of the poet’s limitations as a mere human should not blind us to Dante’s steadfast faith in his ability to portray his vision of the other world and to convey its message *in pro del mondo che mal vive* (*Purg.* XXXII, 103: “to profit that world which / lives badly”).


17 *Par.* X, 109–113; “The fifth light, and the fairest light among us, / breathes forth such love that all the world below / hungers for tidings of it; in that flame / there is the lofty mind where such profound / wisdom was placed that, if truth be true, / no other ever rose with so much vision.” For God’s triple name contained in line 78, see Guglielmo Gorni, *Lettera nome numero. L’ordine delle cose in Dante*, 169. Bologna, 1990.

18 Wisdom 9:10: “Mitle illam [sapientiam] de caelis sanctis tuis […] ut sciam, quid acceptum sit apud te.” Such is the lesson that has to be apprehended by the pilgrim at this stage in his ascent to God, in spite of the doubts he had nurtured about predestination (*Par.* XIX, 25–27).

19 See *exul inmeritus* in: *Ep.* II:1.3; *V.titulus*; *VI.titulus*; “Absit a viro predicante iustitiam” “*Innocentia manifesta quibuslibet*” (XII, 3.6 and 5). In *Par.* XVII, 46–48, Dante’s condemnation and exile from his motherland, Florence, are compared to the persecution of the innocent Hippolytus by his pitiless and perfidious stepmother, Phaedra.

20 Wisdom 11:21: “[…] you have arranged everything by measure and number and weight” (*omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuisti*).

22 For the reasons that are likely to have inspired Dante to include this virtually unknown Vergilian personage, see the present writer’s “Dante, Boezio e l’enigma di Rifeo.” *Studi Danteschi* 61 (1989): 187–192.


24 “‘God as painter’ is an old topos, which first appears in Empedocles and Pindar and which is transmitted to the Middle Ages through Clement […]” E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 562. New York, 1952.

25 In a long note, André Pézard proposes the reading *insiglarsi* (from *sigla* or ‘monogram’), based on the possible confusion of the long s and a hastily formed ‘open’ g: Dante, *Oeuvres complètes. Traduction et commentaires par A. P.*., 1534–1535. Paris, 1965.

26 For a recent attempt to associate the lily with the heraldic emblem of the kings of France (esp. Louis IX), see E. Fumagalli, “Par. XVIII, 88–114, l’enigma del giglio e la sapienza di Re Salomone.” *L’Alighieri* 26 (2005): 111–125.

27 Cf. the condemnation (attributed by the poet to the aptly named ‘Justinian’ [*Par. VI, 100–101]*) of those who “oppose the universal emblem [the eagle]” with the heraldic golden lilies of France and the Angevin Kingdom of Naples, which had led the opposition against Henry VII’s attempt to restore imperial authority in Italy. For a seminal study of the lily as symbolizing justice (and, with a scepter with head carved in the shape of a lily, imperial power), see G. R. Sarolli, “Ingigliarsi all’emme (*Par. XVIII, 113*): archetipo di poliunivoca concordanza.” In *Atti del congresso internazionale di studi danteschi* (20–27 aprile 1965), vol. 2, 237–254 (with illustrations). Florence, 1966.
Readers of Dante’s *Monarchia* (composed in 1317–1318) will readily seize the links between the political treatise and this section of *Paradiso*: e.g., *Mon.* 1.11.1, “the world is ordered in the best possible way when justice is at its strongest in it”; 1.11.8, “justice it strongest in the world when it is located in the monarch [emperor] alone” 1.11.12, “of all men the monarch can be the purest embodiment of justice”; 1.8.5, “mankind is most like God when it is ruled by one ruler […].” All quotations from this work are taken from: Dante, *Monarchia. Edited and translated by Prue Shaw*. Cambridge, 1995.

Cf. what Dante had written in the great canzone *Tre donne* (Rime, CIV.69): that the three allegorical ladies representing the different forms of Justice are of heavenly origin ([…] noi che semo dell’etterna rocca).

*Par.* XIX.85–88. Cf. *Monarchia* 2.2.5, “that which God wills in human society must be considered pure and true right.”

prophecies [...] coincide to say that the divine cannot and will not permanently eclipse itself in the world and in human experience [...]). Oxford, 2005.

32 Cf. Par. XXVII, 58–59. Where St. Peter denounces “The Gascons [Clement V, born in Gascony] and the Cahorsines [John XXII]—they both prepare to drink our blood.” As Boccaccio points out in his commentary (to Inf. xi, 50) to call someone a native of Cahors was to brand him as a usurer. (Cf. Matthew Paris, Chronica majora, ad an. 1251: “transalpine usurers, whom we call Cahorsines” (“usurarii transalpine, quos Causinos appellamus”).

33 The use of the present tense “I contemplate” (124) is the result of the intensity with which Dante now evokes and relives the spectacle of the heavenly host in the heaven of Justice. Mandelbaum’s translation “all who, led by bad example, stray / within the life they live on earth [...]” (125–126) – does not carry the full force of Dante’s color che sono in terra / TUTTI sviati dietro al malo esemplo! (my emphasis).

34 Many commentators take 128–129 to have been inspired by Pope John’s excommunication of Cangrande della Scala on 6 April 1318 with the interdict placed on his Veronese territory for his refusal to submit to the bull Si fratrum, issued on 31 March 1317. Although Matteo Visconti of Milan and Passarino Bonaccolsi of Mantua were also targeted in 1318, the phrase “seizing here and there” (128) would seem to have a generic application, rather than a reference to a particular episode in papal politics. It may be noted that John XXII did not neglect traditional warfare, as is evident from the fact that “63.7 per cent [of his income] went on war expenditure” (V. H. H. Green Medieval Civilization in Western Europe, 136. London, 1971).

35 Dante the pilgrim addresses the damned pope Nicholas III as tu in Inf. XIX, 90–102, whereas, after using the tu form in Purg. XIX, 94–95, he switches to the honorific voi in Purg. xix, 131, when he discovers the identity of the penitent soul who had been pope Adrian V. As most readers will be aware, the Lei form of address was unknown in the Italy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.
The form *Pólo for Paolo* is found, e.g., in San Polo in Chianti, while the *sestiere di San Polo* has been the home of the main market in Venice since 1097. Whether or not it mimics the Pope’s French pronunciation (*Pól*), the vulgarized form *Polo of Paulo* (131) is indicative of the extraordinary linguistic range found in Dante’s *Paradiso*, where the *sermo humilis* coexists with the ‘noble’ style praised in the *De vulgari*. The immense variety of the *Comedy*’s linguistic range was to be decried by Renaissance upholders of decorum. In 1525, Pietro Bembo compared the poem to a beautiful cornfield full of weeds and chaff.

Soon after writing this section, I discovered that Nick Havely had preceded me in his fine study entitled *Dante and the Franciscans. Poverty and Papacy in the “Commedia,”* 168. Cambridge, 2004: “*Paradiso* xviii, 132 thus appears to be turning against the pope himself the kind of rhetoric that he was using to denounce the Spirituals.”


See: Edward Peters, *Heresy and Authority in medieval Europe*, 196–197. London, 1980. This decretal charged the prior of the Dominican Convent in Regensburg to set up an inquisitorial tribunal, with authority derived directly from the pope: “This momentous act […] was the birth of the papal Inquisition” (ibid., 191).

N. Havely, op. cit, 167–168.

Michelangelo Picone (“Avignone come tema letterario: Dante e Petrarcha.” *L’Alighieri* 20 (2002): 12) thinks it is likely that Dante’s phrase *per la vigna che guasti* contains an allusion to the “*interpretatio vulgata*” of the name *Avignon*. Picone cites Petrarch’s second Epistle *Sine nomine*, in which the Italian poet condemns Avignon, whose vine shall produce bitter grapes and a harvest of blood. He concludes that name of the city of shame and Babylonian exile is probably “hidden, virtually buried” in *Par. XVIII*, 132. In his *Familiares* (vi, 3, 67) Petrarch
claims that Avignon, formerly known as Avenio, has now become Avinio: i.e., deprived of the vine[s] (cf. Seniles X, 2). In fact, the second paragraph of Sine nomine 2 harps on the negative etymologies of names in the region: Durentia (the scourge of rows of vines), Rodanus (that gnaws away at everything in its path). Rather than a well-known, popular etymology, Ugo Dotti refers to Avinio ("da a privativo + vinea) as “l’etimologia di P.[etrarca]” (Petrarca, Sine nomine, Lettere polemiche e politiche, ed. U. Dotti, 21 n. 7. Bari, 1974). Petrarch made these allusions some three decades after Dante’s death. Unless further evidence is adduced, it seems unlikely that Dante (who never refers to Avignon by name) should have intended his readers to look beyond the established metaphor whereby the Lord’s vineyard signified the Church.

43 N. Havely, ibid., 161.

44 Ibid., 167.

45 See: Charles Till Davis, Dante’s Italy and Other Essays: 53. Philadelphia, 1984. Two years after Dante’s death, the belief that Christ and the early Church had no possessions was declared “erroneous and heretical” by John XXII in the Decretal Cum inter nonnullos (text in E. Peters, op. cit., 247). In 1376, the Inquisitor General in the kingdom of Aragon, Nicolas Eymeric, declared in his Directorium Inquisitorum that the doctrine of evangelical poverty was at the root of all recent heresies (cited by Nevio Matteini, Il più antico oppositore politico di Dante: Guido Vernani da Rimini, 79. Padua, 1958).

46 Mon. 1.11.7: “the thing that is most contrary to justice is greed, as Aristotle states in the fifth book of the Ethics. When greed is entirely eliminated, nothing remains which is opposed to justice […].”

47 St. Paul denounced avarice as a form of idolatry in Eph. 5:5 and Col. 3:5.

Of the 27 occurrences of rhyme words ending in –eo, no fewer than 10 are proper names such as Batisteo and Eliseo (again rhyming with feo in Par. XV, 134), and only two are standard forms: Deo (Purg. xvi, 108, xx, 136) and reo (Inf. v, 64, xxxi, 102; Purg. XVI, 104; Par. XII, 87).

See the article “Rima” by Ignazio Baldelli in ED IV.931B. The twelve proparoxytones are found in the later cantos of Paradiso xix, 14–18; xxvi, 125–129; xxviii, 125–129; xxix, 65–69. Singleton’s instructions to his readers concerning the lines in Par. xviii would inflate the total by 25%: “77. faciensi = si facevano. The word is pronounced faciensi … 79 […] moviensi = si movevano. The pronunciation is moviensi. 81. taciensi = si tacevano. ‘Taciensi’ is pronounced taciensi.” D. A., The Divine Comedy, translated, with a commentary by Charles S. Singleton. Paradiso 2. Commentary, 308. Princeton, NJ, 1975.

I count 44 examples of enjambment in canto xviii. As Joan Ferrante points out, whereas instances of this device are “usually fewer than fifteen per canto in Inferno, they rise to the thirties, forties, and fifties in Paradiso […] The line is no longer a sufficient unit for Dante’s thought here” (“A Poetics of Chaos and Harmony.” In The Cambridge Companion to Dante, ed. by R. Jacoff, 159. Cambridge, 1993.).

A line of verse that begins with a longer hemistich is termed a maiore; one that begins with a shorter hemistich is a minore.

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