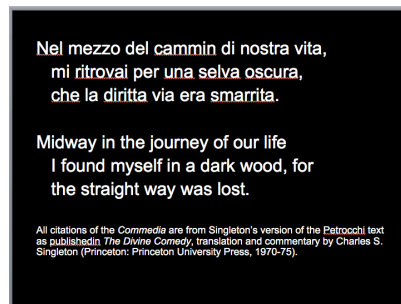


“Dante’s *Commedia*: from Despair to Hope to Glory”
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Much of the contemporary appeal of the *Commedia* seems to be summed up in the poem’s opening lines – lines that for various reasons manage (to borrow a venerable Quaker phrase) “to speak to our condition.”

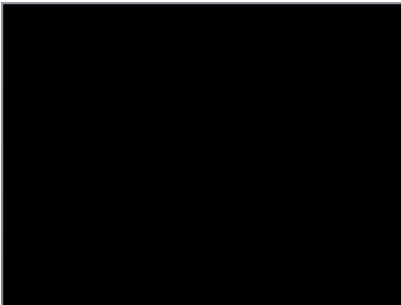


Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
che la diritta via era smarrita.

Midway in the journey of our life
I found myself in a dark wood, for
the straight way was lost.¹

Our “condition” may very well be the realization that we too are lost in the woods. Once there had been a path, a way through the dark places,

but suddenly it is gone; there is no exit. Many of us know what this feels like, especially those who have discovered, midway in what they might expect to be the full extent of their three score and ten, that what used to “work” no longer does. The death-to-us-part relationship dies, perfect health suddenly fails, the secure job is either no longer secure or no longer bearable, so that, as John Donne put it in one of his Holy Sonnets, “all my pleasures are like yesterday.” This emotional phenomenon is familiar to us as a “midlife crisis” – a term that gained popular currency in the 1970s. Somewhere along the way, Dante became its poet laureate.

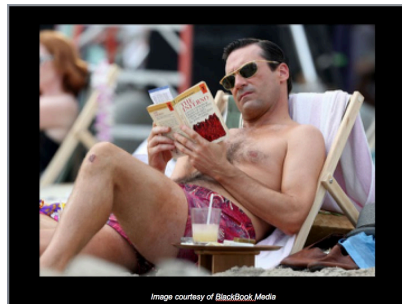


Let me offer some cases in point. A few years ago there was a Sunday *New York Times Magazine* article written by a woman in her early forties who went to extraordinary lengths to have a baby at a time when she was past the “mezzo del cammin.” The article began with a quote: “Midway in our life’s journey, I found myself in dark woods, the right way was lost.” The author then continued, “I’ve never actually read the *Inferno*, but I found that line in my mind every morning when I

woke to do my hormone injections, and especially on the darkest mornings – the ones when I went into the clinic to have my unpregnant blood drawn to confirm another IVF cycle’s failure.”²

Interesting: the writer of this first-person account allegedly had never read Dante but nonetheless somehow “found” the opening lines of the *Inferno* coming to mind. This is probably because even in English, “nel mezzo del cammin” is somehow a household phrase, one that is always already known – convenient shorthand (and let me count the ways) for expressing loss, disorientation, frustration, clinical depression, or simply for alluding to the vicissitudes of middle age.

Think of the importance of Dante in William Styron’s 1990 memoir of depression, *Darkness Visible*, where the *Commedia* served to describe the depth of Styron’s personal hell and, by virtue of the poet’s genius for making the darkness visible, gave him a sense that someone else had been there too, and then moved on. Styron was not alone or stuck forever.



Or recall *Mad Men's* season six from 2013, where in the opening scene of the first episode we observe Don Draper in apparent comfort on a Hawaiian beach, holding in his hands a paperback copy of John Ciardi's translation of the *Inferno* (hot off the press in 1964). This is what we see: a handsome man at ease, his beautiful younger wife about to enter the scene. What we hear, however, is the poem's opening lines in Jon Hamm's voiceover: "Midway in life's journey, I went astray/ from the straight road and woke to find myself/ alone in a dark wood." The poem takes us inside someone who seems to have it altogether. We discover that the handsome man comfortably on the beach is, despite appearances, lost, alone, gone astray from whatever path is straight, tangled in lies and deceptions, and on the edge of a crackup. We know from the very beginning of the series that Don Draper has spent a lifetime stumbling within his own private "selva oscura": his choice of beach-time reading, therefore, not only confirms what we already know about him, but also places him in a tradition of other middle-aged men scared and lonely in the dark. Given the book he's reading, we are reminded specifically that Dante was there before him.



And then there are two books published in 2015 whose authors appropriate considerably more than the *Commedia's* opening lines, indeed even more than the *Inferno's* overall morass, in order to suggest a Dante-facilitated transformation of mind and heart. Both witness to the therapeutic value of the poem as a guide to moving from despair to hope: Dante finds them in one place, in other words, and then takes them somewhere else. I am thinking of both Rod Dreher's *How Dante Can Save Your Life* and Joseph Luzzi's *In a Dark Wood: What Dante Taught Me about Grief, Healing, and the Mysteries of Love*.³ Their titles in effect say it all. The poem teaches and saves; it can take you where you need to go. Thus, like the author of the *Commedia*—who writes a story about himself from the perspective of someone who has not only survived to tell the tale but been transformed in the process – Dreher and Luzzi (like Styron before them) bear first-person witness to a Dante rescue. Becoming protagonists within their own account, they tell their readers a story not so different from the one that John Newton

epitomized in “Amazing Grace.” Once Dreher and Luzzi were lost, but now are found; were blind, but now they see:

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

* * * *

For some earlier readers of the *Commedia*, however, neither Dante nor his poem were anything like an agent of grace. Horace Walpole dismissed him as “extravagant, absurd, disgusting, in short a Methodist parson in Bedlam”; for Nietzsche, he was “a hyena making poetry on tombs.”⁴ The tide of opinion turned dramatically in the nineteenth century, as Rachel Jacoff and I discovered in putting together a collection of first-person accounts, *The Poets’ Dante: Twentieth-Century Reflections* (2001). Appreciation has continued to grow stronger in our own time with each new translation of the poem and (to downshift in cultural value) with each successive video game and Dan Brown production, be it novel or film. Furthermore, admiration for the poet runs high not only as a consummate artist, but also as the author of a work that reputedly changes people’s lives. According to Charles Wright, US poet laureate in 2014-2015, “Dante makes you think

seriously about your own life. He makes you want to have your own life, and to make the best you can with it.”⁵

But how to make the best of it when your life is dramatically thrown off course, when all the props are knocked out from under you, all the lights turned off?



This was the challenge that Dante faced very shortly *after* Fortune’s wheel was in the ascendant and the thirty-five year old poet at the top of his game. In the summer of 1300, he took his position as one of the priors of Florence, a coveted civic position that marked his prominence in the commune’s political sphere just as the earlier appearance of his *Vita nuova* in 1295 had demonstrated his arrival on the literary scene.

But what goes up on Fortune’s wheel inevitably goes down. Not long after he served his term as prior, a shift in Florentine power politics led to the vilification of those who had recently held office. In January of 1301, Dante and three others were accused of trafficking in public offices, bribery, acts of vengeance against opponents, and other

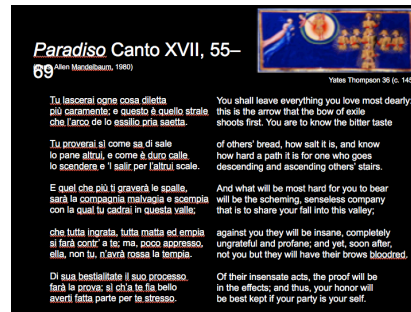
unsubstantiated crimes. His property was confiscated; he was exiled for a period of two years, and barred from ever again holding public office. Two months later, another decree condemned him to be burned at the stake should he ever return to the commune. Others who shared this sentence eventually made their way back to Florence, accepting the humiliating terms extended to them and, as best they could, picking up the wreckage of their lives. For complex reasons, no doubt a mixture of integrity and pride, Dante was not among them. For the rest of his life, until his death in 1321 – moving from place to place throughout north-central Italy – he suffered the indignity and alienation of exile.

At the beginning of what was to be his life's "condition" for the rest of his days, he put it this way in his *Convivio*:

I have traveled like a stranger, almost like a beggar, through virtually all the regions to which this tongue of ours extends, displaying against my will the wound of fortune for which the wounded one is often unjustly accustomed to be held accountable. Truly I have been a ship without sail or rudder, brought to different ports, inlets, and shores by the dry wind that painful poverty blows[.]”⁶

Toward the end of his life, the self-described “homeless wanderer” adrift and at sea could not be more specific. Everywhere he went through all the regions where the Italian vernacular was spoken the local dialect and accent were different, the food “off,” his lodging

temporary and always belonging to someone else. He came to know only too well the fate that was prophesied for him after the fact in the *Paradiso* (17: 55-60):



You shall leave everything beloved most dearly; and this is the arrow that the bow of exile shoots first. You shall come to know how salt is the taste of another's bread, and how hard is the path to descend and mount by another man's stairs.

The *Commedia* opens with a perspective on the state of Dante's soul just months *before* his crisis. The poem is set during Holy Week, in the spring of 1300, when its author was on the upswing of Fortune's wheel and, as far as the eye could see, early in his prime. In the retrospective view of the poem's author, however, this was far from the case. He was in fact spiritually lost, in danger of drowning in a watery grave – the same *profundus* from which the Psalmist cries out; he faced an abyss, he says, “that never left anyone alive” (1. 26-27).

Understandably, the character Dante – let's call him “the pilgrim” – wants to escape this nightmare, which is imagined both as a trackless

forest and as the sea. He wants to go up rather than down, to climb out of darkness toward the light. Instead, he learns that there is no escape from what terrifies him; there is only a way through. The glory of heaven may well be the goal of a Christian's life pilgrimage, but to go that far distance requires a thorough exploration of the forces of darkness. Only afterward can a pilgrim hope for something more, and only later still experience the substance of that hope. The way up begins with the way down.

The *Inferno* charts this downward path. Significantly, it is clear from the opening canto that Dante cannot take the journey on his own. This is not simply because an epic requires characters, lots of them. Rather, the poem argues from the beginning against the illusion of self-help to insist on our need to be found in our lostness – to take hold of an extended hand and to follow in someone else's footsteps. Guidance is not optional; it is required.



On his own, the pilgrim can only “ruin down to the depth” (“i’ rovinava in basso loco,” 1.61); for this reason, the ancient poet Virgil appears at the midpoint of canto one, offering to set Dante on a path that will begin in hell but lead to heaven, that will explore despair but culminate in glory. But because Virgil is a pagan (albeit a virtuous and illustrious one), he too cannot operate alone. As a result, we have the intervention of a succession of guides. There is Dante’s earthly beloved, Beatrice, who appears at the end of *Purgatorio* to lead him into the mysteries of heaven. She in turn hands him over to Bernard of Clairvaux in *Paradiso* 31. Two cantos later, at the very end of the *Commedia*, Bernard entrusts him to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He prays that she would enable the pilgrim to complete the spiritual journey that she, in fact, initiated in the very first place, when, in a moment before the narrative actually begins, she prompted Beatrice to go to Virgil and rescue a certain middle-aged man hopelessly lost in the dark wood.

That rescue – timed to begin on Good Friday, when the crucified Christ descended into hell —begins with passage through the gates of the Inferno,



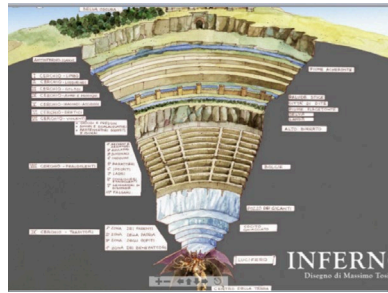
which famously declare, “LASCIA TE OGNE SPERANZA, VOI CH’INTRATE,” “ABANDON EVERY HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER” (III.9). The total loss of hope, the hard reality of despair, is what makes hell hell. So too is his era’s urban context. The *Inferno* is largely constructed of references to the wrongdoings of the Italian towns Dante knew from birth or from those he lived in throughout his exilic wanderings. From the vantage of his own vulnerability—moving from place to place, earning his keep from nobility he likely held in little esteem—he gathered the scandals and notorious sinners of his age, the legendary inhumanities, the infighting of city-states perpetually at one another’s throats, not to mention the evils of a church hierarchy he judged to be bent on turning the bride of Christ into a prostitute. His *Inferno*, in other words, is a withering portrait of our world if it were to be left to its worst devices. In it we see our lust for power when unalleviated by mercy, when the self is sovereign, frozen in obsessive monomania—always alone no matter how dense the crowd.

Early on in his exploration, one of the damned presents the prevailing sins of the *earthly* body politic, from which, of course, Hell gains its inhabitants: “Pride, envy, and avarice are the three sparks that have inflamed their hearts” (VI. 74-75). Along with this trio of vices he might also have characterized the bitter partisanship that Dante suffered from in Florence and that he dramatizes everywhere across the *Inferno*.



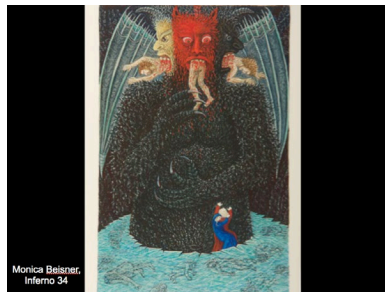
In Canto 10, for instance, we encounter two shades, Farinata and Cavalcanti, who in life were united by ties that would seem strong enough to link them forever: Florentine citizenship, a common upper class, the same religion, and a betrothal of a son and a daughter. In the *Inferno* they are neighbors yet have no contact with one another, never acknowledge that their partner in close quarters even exists. Why? The men with everything in common belonged to different political factions—they represented two warring sides of the same Florentine coin. This turns out to be enough to make their division eternal. Dante

speaks with each individually but never together. Despite the fact of their shared incarceration in the tomb they will forever call home, they have “nothing” in common.



In the course of his journey through hell the pilgrim descends gradually into what turns out to be a succession of concentric cityscapes that evoke ancient Babel, Troy, and Thebes as well as the city-states of central and northern Italy that Dante knew for himself. In canto after canto we move through gates and within walls, over bridges and around cemeteries, all of which remind him of this or that place on earth. Sometimes Dante encounters figures he recognizes from history and literature, but more often he keeps company with near contemporaries, even with people he knows personally. He is aghast to discover souls in Hell he never expected to find there (the reverse will be true in Purgatory). Some of them he treats with an affection and civility strangely out of place in the “dolorous kingdom.”

Dante descends into Hell along a proverbially slippery slope where bad steadily leads to worst. Sins of the appetite are encountered first, and through them the corruption of the flesh, gathered into what we might think of as the outlying suburbs of the damned. Once inside the City of Dis, he witnesses the corruption of a higher human faculty, the will, as it turns in various ways toward violence (against God, against others, against one's own self). Another descent takes the pilgrim down to Malebolge, a city within a city, where fraud provides examples of intelligence and ingenuity— *ingegno* or genius—that have been brought into the service of evil. Finally, Dante is lowered to the “bottom of the entire universe” (*Inf.* 32.8), where he finds the many permutations of treachery that erode human connection, whether to kin, to those joined in covenant, to guests, or to a superior—ultimately, to God.



This realm of Cocytus is the *Comedy's* concentration camp of purest evil, which the poet depicts as a realm not of fire, but of ice. It is

“the center/ to which all weight is drawn” (*Inf.* 32.73-74). Among the many things lost at this depth is the notion of *e pluribus unum*, one out of many. Instead, for a few almost unbearable cantos we witness the relentless desire of the radically private ego and the absolute refusal of partnership.

Does all of this sound uncomfortably familiar? I must confess that it does to me in the present political hour. It has proved impossible to think of the poem, for all its medieval alterity, as written for another age. Dante’s Florence was torn apart first by two rival parties, the Ghibellines and the Guelphs, and then by internal warfare between two kinds of Guelphs – the conflict that led to his ouster and lifelong exile. Those Guelph factions were called the Neri and the Bianchi, the Blacks and the Whites: we have our Reds and Blues. The Psalmist comes to mind: “They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one” (Ps. 14: 3).

Have some gone further astray than others? In the summer of 2016, Michiko Kakutani, reviewing a stack of new and reissued books about Donald Trump, argued that there are. Immersed in this literature she found herself, she said, “in a kind of Bizarro World version of Dante’s *Inferno*”:

"It's a Darwinian, dog-eat-dog, zero-sum world where greed is good, insults are the lingua franca, and winning is everything . . . where arrogance, acquisitiveness and the sowing of discord are not sins, but attributes of leadership; a place where lies, contradictions and outrageous remarks spring up on such thickets that the sort of moral exhaustion associated with bad soap operas quickly threatens to ensue."

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* * * *

How to leave the "Bizarro World" behind? The *Inferno's* descent into Hell deposits us at the bottom of the universe, confronting the monstrous image of Satan. He is a parody of Trinity and Incarnation, engaged in an eternal act of cannibalism – an inversion of Christ's Last Supper: "Take, eat, this is my body given for you." But it is precisely by making use of Satan's gross body that Dante pilgrim and Virgil make their way out of the Inferno and onto the shores of Mount Purgatory. The pilgrim arrives there just before dawn, when the planet Venus is said to make the whole sapphire-hued east "smile." From this first starry moment onward, his journey takes place *en plein air*. His path is illumined during the day by a sun that rises and sets in great beauty. At

night, when the sun is “silent,” there are stars. Freed from the claustrophobia of hell, we find ourselves not only newly-risen from the grave but part of a cosmological pull toward the heavens that in every sense draws the penitent souls upward.

Dante constructs his purgatory to be hell’s mirror opposite, as if in *Purgatorio*, the *Comedy*’s second canticle, he was programmatically developing the dark negative of the first. Whereas the pilgrim descends into hell, moving to the sinister left, he climbs the mountain always according to the right hand. In hell he moves from the sins of the flesh to those of the will and the intellect as he goes from bad to worst.

Conversely, the purgatorial pilgrim starts out with the most grievous disorders of intellect and will before passing on to those of the flesh.

While the gravitational pull of hell is strongest at the bottom, the pilgrim finds himself almost in flight as he approaches the mountain’s summit.

The contrasts continue. Rather than being as Catholic tradition would have had it, a temporary subterranean hell, Dante’s purgatory is as systematically unlike hell as possible. From a hole in the ground he gives us a mountain skyscraper; from a descent into darkness, a rising up into light.



The mountain presents a series of terraces, one for each of the Seven Deadly Sins. The terraces lie just inside a massive gateway, with an angel guardian and an elaborate entry rite that involves the inscription on the pilgrim's forehead of seven Ps. Each is a sign of the residue of a *peccatum*, a trace of sin that penance will erase. Once within the Gate, repentance begins in earnest with painful self-confrontation and arduous acts of contrition. Yet as the poet counsels his readers on the first of the terraces, the point of the process is not pain but gain: "Don't dwell upon the form of punishment," he says, "consider what comes after that" (10.109–110).

To see each penance enacted, moreover, is to foresee its eventual termination. Hope everywhere holds sway. The proud will cast off their dead weights, the blinded envious will see, the lustful will step out of the refining fire and into the Edenic garden that blooms verdant and welcoming on the other side of lust's "burning path" (26.28). Rather than being a penitentiary, in other words, Purgatory is a hospital for the

healing of brokenness. It is a school for the learning of truth, an incubator in which worms grow up to be butterflies, a conservatory where soloists become a chorus, and where speakers develop a use for “we” and “us” instead of only “I” and “me.” Life sentences are not served here so much as lives are rewritten.

Whereas hell was all about the compulsion to repeat, an endless replay of the sinner’s “song of myself,” purgatory by contrast is dynamic, dedicated to change and transformation. It concerns the rebirth of a self that is free at last to be interested in other souls and other things. It is all about renewal, about the experience of becoming new.

On each of the terraces, a particular failure in love is suffered, rectified, and transformed into a new virtue that corresponds to the old vice.



The proud, for instance, suffer the heavy burden of their egos, which are represented by the rock under which each one is bowed. Their punishment is to carry this increasingly oppressive false persona until

they can willingly let go of it. When they are able to do so, they stand tall—which is to say, stand humbly—free at last of what they mistakenly thought to be their true self. The imprisonment of the vice is transformed into the freedom of the virtue. The self-important worm becomes the angelic butterfly which it was always meant to be.

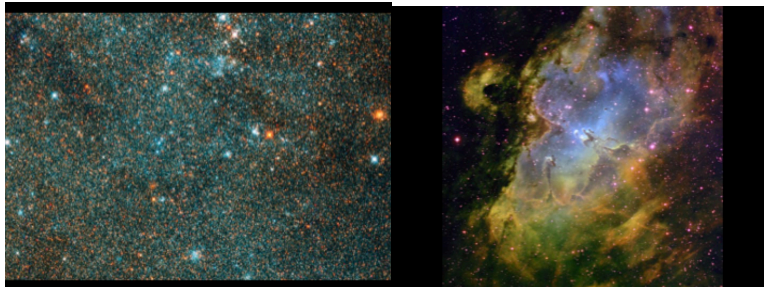
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If *Purgatorio* is the *Commedia*'s region of hope, *Paradiso* is the fulfillment of everything hoped for, a realm of glory that has only light and love as its boundaries.



The pilgrim journeys there by gradually ascending through the nine material heavens of the pre-Copernican universe: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the Fixed Stars. Sweeping the whole structure along is the Primum Mobile, the ninth heaven and outermost skin of the material world. At the core of this concentric universe stands the immobile earth while around it circle the nine celestial spheres, each one governed by a different order of angels, each whirling at a different speed, all orchestrated in a cosmic dance.

From the perspective of our black holes and sense of limitless outer space, such a notion of the beyond may appear tiny and enclosed—the spheres like Russian dolls, one snugly tucked inside the other. With its greater capacity for mystery and awe, however, Dante’s age might well be better at celebrating what we (rather than they) can actually see thanks to the far sight of the Hubble telescope. Behold the wonder: star bursts in astonishing color (STAR PICS), galaxies and nebulae (Star pics), swirls of light (Star pics), a celestial eye (Star pic).





In order to prepare the pilgrim for his vision of God “face to face,” to share with him the beatific vision of the Trinity, the blessed beam themselves down to appear in the successive material heavens. We see them in their star power, either as individual flames or as constellations of light in various symbolic formations.

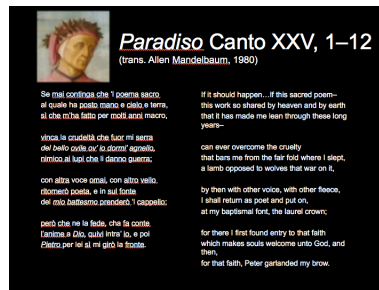
Once Dante arrives in the Empyrean, or tenth heaven, he beholds the blessed in the glorified bodies they will have at the end of time, after the general resurrection of the dead. Whereas *Paradiso* had been all in motion until now, the Empyrean shows the blessed sitting still in the round, higher or lower depending on their spiritual “size place,” in a hierarchy that Dante believed to be fundamental to existence. Arranged in the shape of a white rose whose petals extend upward from a vast golden center, the blessed contemplate God, love God to the capacity of

their vision, and shine with corresponding ardor.



It is at the heart of this “eternal rose” that the pilgrim experiences his own contemplative moment, the vision that was the goal of the journey from the beginning even as it is the fixed aim of all rational creation, angelic as well as human. What we find in the end is a synthesis of the theocentric and the social. The blessed find their places among one another, but all look up together to behold the “eternal fountain,” the common source that fills each to capacity forever.

The poet struggled to present that glorious vision at a time when he was an exile, homeless, tasting the saltiness of another man's bread, facing each night the steepness of another man's stairs. Delivered from his dark wood in part by the vocation of his monumental poem, he lived in hope imagining what it would be like to be at home in glory. And in the first-person he tells us about it.



Toward the end of the *Paradiso*, there is a moment when the poet breaks through the narrative fourth wall to disclose to the reader precisely what it feels like to live in the author's liminal space. The moment occurs in the midst of a theological examination of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, just before Dante pilgrim holds forth on hope. He says:

If it should happen...If this sacred poem-
 this work so shared by heaven and by earth
 that it has made me lean through these long years-
 can ever overcome the cruelty
 that bars me from the fair fold where I slept,
 a lamb opposed to wolves that war on it,
 by then with other voice, with other fleece,

I shall return as poet and put on,
at my baptismal font, the laurel crown;
for there I first found entry to that faith
which makes souls welcome unto God, and then,
for that faith, Peter garlanded my brow.

For me, there are no lines in the whole of the *Commedia* that quite match the poignancy of these. Composing them in Ravenna toward the end of his life, Dante thinks back to his Florentine point of origin, to the city where he “slept as a lamb.” He admits to the ravages of time and experience between then and now – he is thinner and grayer than he used to be – but by the grace of God he is who he is: a defender of the sheep, an enemy of the wolves that surround the sheepfold, and more than willing to wage war against them. If only Florence would relent: the city is like a spiteful lover who keeps saying “No.” If only it would open its gates to him and allow him to come home.

And yet I find nothing desperate or whining here; there is pathos but the poet is not pathetic. In fact, like St. Paul in his moments of loss, he is willing to boast about what he has been given. His poem is *sacro*, sacred, and like the authors of Scripture he also claims that his work is only partly his own doing. There are two writers at stake in the

enterprise of the *Commedia*, he would have it, one human and one divine.

If only Florence would welcome him back, would recognize him for what he has become in the course of writing this poem – a “*poeta*.” Until now this word has been reserved for poets of antiquity like his epic predecessors, Homer and Virgil. Here, close both to the end of the *Commedia* and of his life, he goes for broke. If he could go home, he would have a different voice than the one he had back in the Florentine day. He would return as a *poeta* and claim the laurel crown from Florentine hands in recognition both of the literary gift he’d been given

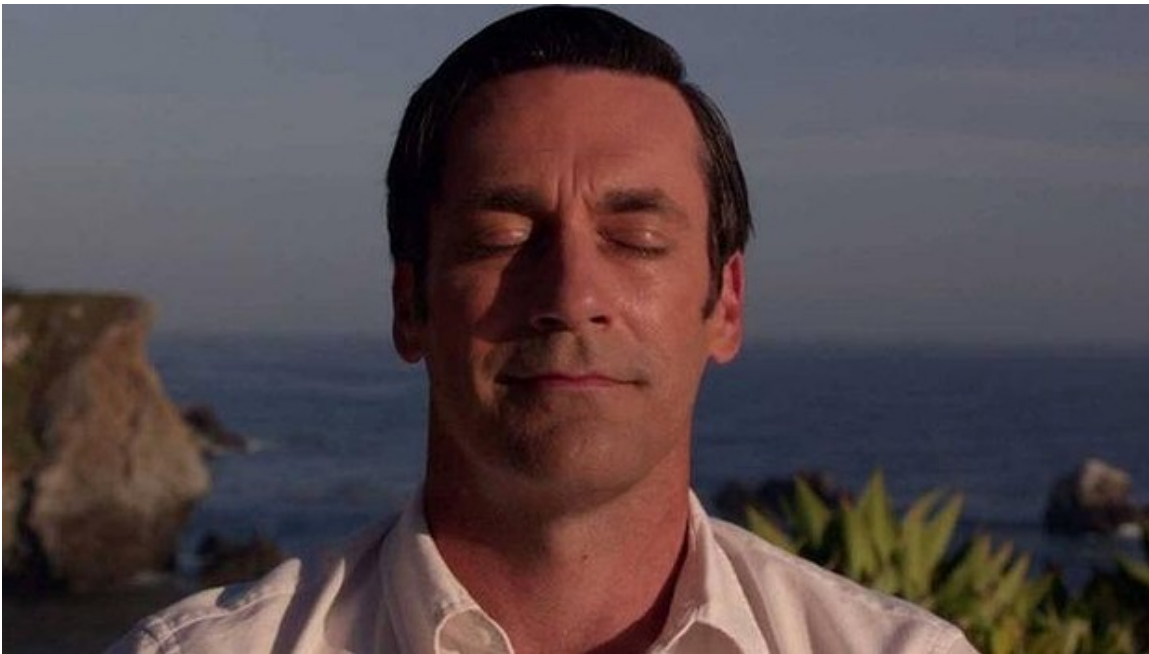
and the gift he had written for them.



I think it is significant that when he imagines this scene, this crowning with laurel, it is meant to take place in none other than the Florentine baptistery, at the font where on one Holy Saturday he was made, all at once, “Durante Alighieri” – a citizen of Florence *and* a Christian soul “known to God.” The circle of the font, the “capello” or crown of his baptism, the laurel crown of his artistic achievement, the Florentine sheepfold of his youth and of his fifty-something yearning in exile: all these circles come together in the “now” of this passage.

* * * *

It is a sorrow for Dante scholars that the only leg of the pilgrim's journey most people follow is the one that leads them into hell – a region we know about all too well, if not in the full horror of the poet's presentation. For such readers, alas, the *Commedia* is only the *Inferno*, the abandonment of hope Dante's abiding message. If despair, however, is the place where he begins – entangled in a dark wood with no apparent way out – it is definitely not the place where he ends up; nor does the reader who keeps reading, risking hope rather than giving it up. Who knows, after all, what Don Draper might discover were he to exchange his *Inferno* for the *Paradiso*?



¹ All citations of the *Commedia* are from Singleton's version of the Petrocchi text as published in *The Divine Comedy*, translation and commentary by Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970-75).

² Melanie Thernstrom, "Meet the Twiblings" (December 29, 2010) http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/02/magazine/02babymaking-t.html?_r=0. (Accessed September 9, 2016).

³ Ron Dreher, *How Dante Can Save Your Life. The Life-Changing Wisdom of History's Greatest Poem* (New York: Regan Arts, 2015), Joseph Luzzi, *In a Dark Wood: What Dante Taught Me About Grief, Healing, and the Mysteries of Love* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015).

⁴ Horace Walpole, *Dante in English Literature*. ed. Paget Toynbee, 2 Vols. (London: Methuen, 1909), vol. 1, p. 340; Frederick Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, par. 1, "My Impossible Ones,"

http://www.lexido.com/EBOOK_TEXTS/TWILIGHT_OF_THE_IDOLS_.aspx?S=10

⁵ Charles Wright, "Dante Mio," *The Poets' Dante: Twentieth-Century Responses*, eds. Peter S. Hawkins and Rachel Jacoff (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), p. 263.

⁶ Dante, *The Banquet [Il Convivio]*, trans. Christopher Ryan, *Stanford French and Italian Studies* 61 (Saratoga, CA: ANMA LIBRI, 1989), I,iii, 4, p. 18.

⁷ Michiko Kakutani, "A Tower of Trump Books, at High Volume" (August 26, 2016) http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/26/books/in-books-on-donald-trump-consistent-portraits-of-a-high-decibel-narcissist.html?_r=0