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Citation

Mathews, J. Chesley. 1957. Emerson's translation of Dante's "Vita nuova". Harvard Library Bulletin XI (2), Spring 1957: 208-244.

Permanent link

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Emerson's Translation of Dante's *Vita Nuova*

THE translation of the *Vita Nuova* of Dante, made by Ralph Waldo Emerson about the time he reached his fortieth birthday, of increasing interest to scholarship since its discovery some years ago, has not hitherto been available in print. It is accordingly published in full herewith, as a contribution to the study of Emerson and of comparative literature.

Although Emerson referred to the 'amatory poetry . . . of Dante' in his essay on Michelangelo of 1835, he first became seriously interested in the *Vita Nuova* early in 1839. On January 18 of this year he wrote to Margaret Fuller: 'I read for the first time in the *Nuova Vita* a few pages the other day & will try it again'; and on February 15: 'I have already owed something to the *Nuova Vita* & think I shall beg it again next summer.'¹ In a review, published in 1841, of a book on Michelangelo, he wrote that the sonnets of Dante, 'from their mystic and subtle majesty,' would not bear translating into English.² On 16 or 17 June 1841, by a visit to Boston, he again obtained a copy of 'Dante's *Nuova Vita*.'³ Over a year later, in October 1842, he wrote to Miss Fuller again: 'In a year or two, I shall come for the translation of the *Nuova Vita*,'⁴ which implies an offer on her part to translate the work. This is made more explicit in a letter of hers of the following December:

When you were here, you seemed to think I might perhaps have done something on the *Vita Nuova*; and the next day I opened the book, and considered how I could do it. But you shall not expect that, either, for your present occasion. When I first mentioned it to you, it was only as a piece of Sunday work, which I thought of doing for you alone; and because it has never seemed to me you entered enough into the genius of the Italian to apprehend the mind, which has seemed so great to me, and a star unlike,

¹ *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Ralph L. Rusk (New York, 1939), II, 179-180, 184.

² *Dial*, I (January 1841), 401-402.

³ *Letters*, II, 406.

⁴ *Letters*, III, 91.

if not higher than all the others in our sky. Else, I should have given you the original, rather than any version of mine.⁵

She goes on to express doubts of her own competence to carry out such a delicate piece of work. Emerson's even more modest reply is dated the 12th of the same month:

I am sure it must be true what you say concerning the 'Nuova Vita,' & my omissions in respect to it; and in bright spring or summer days when you also want the book, you shall make good Saxon of it & add that to all your benefits to me.⁶

But he chose not to wait, stimulated, one may suppose, by her doubts of them both, as well as by his own impatience. He presents her with a *fait accompli* in his letter of 11 July 1843:

What think you I have done lately? Geo. Bancroft gave me Dante's Vita Nuova, & recalling what you said, that I could not have read it, I have turned it all into English, the ruggedest grammar English that can be, keeping lock step with the original. I showed the sheets to Ellery, & he turned my prose sonnets & canzoni into verse or ten or more of them so that if he continues we shall after some correcting & filing get that which you were to do for me. I do not often so help myself when I am promised help.⁷

There was, of course, no complete translation of the *Vita Nuova* into English available at the time. The first one published was by Joseph Garrow, Florence, 1846. Charles Lyell had published translations of the poems of the *Vita Nuova* in *The Canzoniere of Dante*, London, 1835, and in *The Poems of the Vita Nuova and Convito*, London, 1842, but Emerson did not make use of Lyell's work, as is obvious from a comparison of their respective versions. D. G. Rossetti's translation did not appear until 1861, and Theodore Martin's not until 1862. In America the first significant bit of *Vita Nuova* translation made and published was by Charles Eliot Norton in the *Atlantic Monthly*, January, February, and March 1859 (reissued, in expanded form, as *The New Life of Dante: An Essay, with Translations*, Cambridge, 1859); the first complete translation published was Norton's *The New Life of Dante Alighieri*, Boston, 1867.

⁵ *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli* (Boston, 1852), I, 240-241.

⁶ *Letters*, III, 102.

⁷ *Letters*, III, 183-184. She replied, 17 August 1843: 'How could I fail in answering your last to speak of the translations of Dante & their paraphrase. I am impatient to see these leaves. Where there is a will, there is a way surely' (*Letters*, III, 201, n. 339). The versions by Ellery Channing have not been located.

Emerson's version is of importance as a translation of the *Vita Nuova* made in America before any complete translation into English had been published either in America or in Europe, as a work of Emerson that was until recently unknown, as a further indication of the breadth of Emerson's interests, and finally as a contribution to literature. His abiding awareness and appreciation of the work are shown by references in his journals and letters ranging over a period of nearly thirty years — from January 1839 to October 1867.⁸ At a time when very few Americans knew Italian and were even slightly acquainted with, or had even heard of the *Vita Nuova*, Emerson read it with understanding, perceiving its inner aspects, its symbolism, and its revelation of Dante as a man full of humanity, who wrote from his heart, from first-hand experience, out of genuine inspiration, this 'Bible of Love.'

It is noteworthy that Emerson studied Italian by himself;⁹ undertook the translation at all; and aimed at an exact, literal translation into prose. Even more noteworthy, however, is the success of the venture. There are, to be sure, frequent awkwardnesses and inaccuracies, caused partly by Emerson's own imperfect knowledge of Italian, and partly by the very inadequate edition of the original that he largely depended on. But Emerson was a poet, and transcending all defects, informing the whole, there burns the searching, vital fire that marks his own compositions, in prose or verse. The very simplicity and directness of his 'ruggedest grammar English' convey, because of his general sense of language and his special sympathy for the subject matter, the unique form and spirit of Dante's work more tellingly than the studied, and conventionalized, 'standard' versions. One need only compare renderings of the *canzoni* 'Donna pietosa e di novella etate' and 'Li occhi dolenti per pietà del core.'

The Italian text that Emerson used in making all of his translation except a very few revisions was the *Vita nuova di Dante Alighieri*, Florence, Bartolomeo Sermartelli, 1576, the first edition to contain prose portions of the work. Emerson's own copy, given him by George

⁸ See *Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes (Boston, 1909-14), VI, 366, 418, VII, 329; *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Edward Waldo Emerson (Boston, 1903-04), VII, 205, 407; *Letters*, III, 397-398, V, 187, 531. In May 1847 (*Letters*, III, 397-398), Emerson offered his translation to Theodore Parker for publication, 'in two parts,' in a new periodical contemplated as successor to the *Dial*.

⁹ Modern languages were not regularly taught in the colleges of this country at the time when he was an undergraduate.

Bancroft, is now in the Harvard College Library. This copy, which Emerson later had rebound and gave to Samuel Gray Ward in 1857,¹⁰ was presented to the Library in April 1946 by a granddaughter of Mr Ward, Mrs Charles Bruen Perkins (nee Elizabeth Howard Ward), of Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. The flyleaf of the volume is inscribed in Emerson's hand: 'S. G. Ward from R.W.E.'

By the accident of gift, Emerson was presented with a very poor text from which to work. The Sermartelli edition is not even complete, since it omits the *divisioni*, or structural analyses of the poems. It does not number, or even separate, the sections, or chapters, of the work. In twelve places where a new section begins, there is not even a new paragraph. Words and expressions are frequently altered, sometimes in conformity with the wishes of the Inquisition. There are many peculiarities of reading, like 'truovava' for 'trova una' and 'libro' for 'libello' in the opening lines. Two words at times are printed as one, or one word is printed as two; and spellings are unusually misleading. Accents and apostrophes are often omitted, added, or confused; sentences are often badly punctuated. This corrupt text accounts for about two hundred of the anomalies, and for many (though by no means all) of the errors, in Emerson's translation.

For a few revisions, however, Emerson must have used a second text. Examples, clearly written in as afterthoughts, are 'glorious Lord who refused not himself to die' (section XXII, lines 1-2),¹¹ 'stone' (from 'pietra') for 'pity' (from 'pietà' — XXII, 37), 'Osanna in excelsis' (XXIII, 28), and 'How is the populous city become solitary and she is a widow who was queen of nations' (XXVIII [xxix], 1-2).¹² Twelve other revisions that likewise must derive from a second text are 'such form' (XII, 91), 'vile' (XIII, 6), 'Ladies who apprehend love' (XIX, 7), 'each saint' (XIX, 31), 'in energy' (XXI, 4), 'And on every' (XXI, 11), 'blessed' (XXI, 16), 'with a good child' (XXII, 6), 'expected' (XXII, 17), 'Her face bathed' (XXII, 39), the cancellation of 'The Canzone Recounts a vision . . .' (XXIII, three lines preceding line 70), and the insertion of a caret to indicate an omission in the first text

¹⁰ *Letters*, V, 78.

¹¹ References to the text of the translation are by section and line as printed below.

¹² A double system of section numbering from XXVII to the end is necessitated by the fact that in the Moore-Toynbee edition (*Le opere di Dante Alighieri*, Oxford, 1924), C. E. Norton's translation, and elsewhere, section XXVI of the standard critical text (edited by Michele Barbi, *Le opere di Dante*, Florence, 1921), is divided into two sections, XXVI and XXVII.

(XXIV, 21). The only edition that would account for all of these revisions, including the change of 'pietà' to 'pictra,' is that of Odoardo Machirelli and Luigi Crisostomo Ferrucci, Pesaro, 1829, with variant readings in the margins. It is conceivable that the change to 'pietra' was a guess on Emerson's part, but this is unlikely, since the word is written into the margin with no question mark following.¹³

The manuscript of the translation was found in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1941, by Professor Ralph Leslie Rusk, among papers belonging to the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association, and at that time in the keeping of Mr Edward Waldo Forbes, a grandson of Emerson; and soon afterward it was deposited, by the Association, in the Harvard College Library. Professor Rusk generously called the present editor's attention to it. It is a translation of all of the *Vita Nuova* (without the *divisioni*) except eleven and one-half lines of one sonnet — the one beginning 'Color d' amore,' in section XXXVI (xxxvii); and it includes a second, revised draft of the first four and one-half pages (the first two sections). For brevity and convenience of reference, the nearly complete translation is herein referred to as MS 1, and the revised draft of the first two sections as the Fragment.

MS 1 is written on thirty-six half-sheets of paper measuring eight by ten inches, each folded once so as to form two leaves or four pages measuring five by eight inches. This bundle of thirty-six folded sheets is enclosed in a thirty-seventh folded sheet, on the outside or front of which is written, in Emerson's hand:

Dante's
Vita Nuova
R.W.E.

The folded sheets are numbered consecutively, in Emerson's writing, 1-36, in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of each sheet. Individual pages of the sheets, not numbered by Emerson, are designated hereafter 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, etc., for purposes of reference. All pages of all thirty-six sheets are written on with three exceptions: page 19d is blank, although nothing is omitted at that place; about one third of page 32b is blank, where most of the sonnet beginning 'Color d' amore'

¹³ Were it not for the change to 'pietra' other candidates for the second text would be that in Vol. IV, dated 1830, of *Le opere minori di Dante*, Florence, Ciardetti and Molini, 1830-41, or that edited by Pietro Fraticelli in Vol. III, dated 1839-40, of *Opere minori di Dante Alighieri*, Florence, 1834-40.

was left untranslated; and the latter half of page 36c and all of page 36d are blank because the translation ends on page 36c. It might also be mentioned that one of the sonnets ('Spesse fiato,' section XVI) is translated twice, on pages 13d and 14a, and that the version on 14a, which fills about two thirds of the page, is canceled. MS 1, then, fills 140½ pages of manuscript. The Fragment is written on one sheet of paper, ten by sixteen inches, folded once so as to make two leaves or four pages measuring eight by ten inches. The pages of the Fragment, then, are just twice the size of the pages of MS 1, and three and a half of the pages are filled.

Both MS 1 and the Fragment are written chiefly in ink, but pencil is occasionally employed for a word or a phrase, a correction, a mark of punctuation, a canceling line, or a marginal mark.¹⁴

MS 1 is apparently a first draft, for there are in it many cancellations, insertions, and substitutions of words — about three revisions per page on the average. But about three fourths of the revisions are in the first half of the manuscript (where the average number of revisions is about four and a half per page), so that the pages of the latter half present a much cleaner appearance. In the Fragment there are seventeen revisions, an average of about five per large page. Many of the revisions, in both versions, involve only a single word. A large majority of the revisions are in ink, the others are in pencil. One cannot say that all the revisions in ink were made at one time and all those in pencil at another, since some words of the original text, in both versions, are in pencil, and of alterations that clearly date later than the time of the initial composition of the pages involved, some are in ink and a few in pencil. Words originally written in ink were sometimes revised with pencil, and the small number of words originally written in pencil were usually revised with ink.

Moreover, it is impossible to ascertain just when all of the revisions were made. One can see that at least fifty-five of them were made at the very time of first writing the translation (for example, some revised readings were written immediately to the right of words canceled, and some words were canceled by being smeared while the ink was still wet), and it is highly probable that many more of the revisions were made during the time of initial composition. In fact, only two bits of evidence suggest that any revisions were made after the

¹⁴ Pencil marginal marks include an x-shaped cross, an asterisk, a few vertical lines about an inch long, and a few question marks.

original draft of the manuscript was completed. One is Emerson's words in his letter of 11 July 1843 to Margaret Fuller: 'We shall after some correcting & filing get that which you were to do for me.' But even this letter, which was written just after he had finished the first draft of the translation, seems to indicate that the revising had already been started, and there is no way to determine whether it was continued. The other bit of evidence is the fact that a very few revisions, as already noted, were based upon a text other than that of Sermartelli. It seems almost certain that Emerson did not have the second text (presumably Pesaro, 1829) when he was first writing the pages on which the revisions in question were made; nevertheless, these few revisions might have been made either before or after the first draft of the entire translation was completed. Equally indefinite is the date of the writing and of the revision of the Fragment; one can tell only that it was written after the corresponding part of MS 1. In any event, it is a reasonably safe guess that nearly all of the revisions were made either during the time the translation was first being written, or soon afterward.

The text of the translation presented herewith is intended as a faithful transcription of Emerson's work, within the framework of certain conventions that it seemed practical to adopt. The translation has been given in its revised form: cancellations have not been recorded. In the small number of places where Emerson made a revision without canceling what he first had written, or in effect left alternate readings, only the reading that seems to have been his later choice has been given. In other words, rejected alternate readings (uncanceled) have not been preserved in the transcript. Where Emerson unintentionally repeated a word, as he did a few times, the unnecessary word has not been preserved. In the very few places where it is obvious that he inadvertently omitted a letter or a word, the omitted letter or word has been supplied within square brackets. Capitalization has been regularized where, through revision or initial oversight, a capital or lower case letter was incorrectly allowed to stand in the manuscript; otherwise, Emerson's usage has been followed, although some latitude has inevitably been necessary in interpreting Emerson's intent with regard to certain letters. No mark of Emerson's punctuation has been deleted or changed, but periods, enclosed in square brackets, have been inserted in a very few places where their presence seemed necessary to prevent ambiguity.

For purposes of reference the lines of the printed text have been numbered, by sections. The section numbers (which are not given in

The New Life of Dante Alighieri.

In that part of the book of my dream
my, before which little could be read,
was found this little; the New Life began
When which tells I find written
the words which it is my business
to copy in this book, & if not
all, at least their sense.

~~Handy~~ mine lines since my
birth, was the name ^{of light} turned ~~from~~
~~rebright~~ back to the former print
in its former operation, when to
my eyes ^{first} appeared the process
body of my mind who was called

Because by many ~~that~~ ~~she~~ ~~was~~ ~~called~~
not known what ~~to~~ ~~call~~ ~~her~~
she ~~was~~ ~~had~~ ~~been~~ ~~so~~ ~~long~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~
life spent in her time the ~~flaming~~ ~~heart~~
was moved toward the part of the Earth

To each below soul & gentle heart,
To whose light come the personal want,
~~that~~ ^{to the end} that they may write again ^{though}
Greeting ^{in the name of} their love, that is, Love,

Already was it the third hour
Of the time when every star is most bright,
When Love appeared to me suddenly
Whose substance seem made me tremble.
Glad seemed Love, holding
my heart in his hand, the witness had
My lady asleep, rilled in a sacrament;
Then he waked her, and walle that bring heart
Fed he her love, trembling;
Then knowing it the second to go away.

from a piece, it would be
fair to describe (sincerely) of love,
I thinking that my friend should
be served, I proposed to speak
words in which I should treat
of love, then I found this
formed.

Love with gentle heart are one thing,
As the sage in his precept has it;
And you may here be one without the other,
As ^{the} rational soul without reason,
Of nature, when it is amorous, ^{infects}
Love the sense, the heart for his abode,
Within which sleeping ^{the} reason
As little and as long as I will,
Beauty then appears in wife or man,
Which pleases the eyes, so that within the heart
It soon desires of the pleasant object
And so abides in it,
That it causes the spirit of love to awake,
And the like does a valiant man, in a woman.

PLATE III

Sheet 16d (XX, 4-21)

will to speak words in
which I should give to understand
that her wonderful excel-
lent words both and that
not only such as could see
her with eyes, but also they
might know of her what
I could make known by
words when I said this
formed.

So gentle ^{is} she ^{is} appears
my lady when she smiles, then
That every tongue to praising becomes mute,
And the eyes dare not behold her,
She goes on hearing herself praised
Bemingly clothed with humility
And it ^{is} ^{that} she is something better
From heaven to show a miracle in earth,
She shows herself pleasing to those who love her.

PLATE IIb

Sheet 25d (XXVI, 17-29)

would appear in / one forth
distorted" peeping through the midst
of this painful city. Then I said
to my self, If I could retain
them a little I would make them
weep before they go forth of this
city because I would speak words
which should cause to weep
Moreover heard them. Then those
having peeped out of my sight, I
proposed to make a sermon in
which I should signify, that which
I had said to myself & to the
end that it should appear
more pitious. I proposed to
speak as if I had addressed
them, so I said this sermon;

Oh Pilgrims who go through
On things perhaps which are not happy,
Come ye from so distant a tribe
As you show a young aspect

That ye be not weep to go forth
Through the midst of the ^{morning} city,
As those persons who seem
To know nothing of its woe:
If you will stay & hear it

Nearly my heart with eyes tells me
That ye shall go forth of it with tears
It has left its Beatrice;
And the words which man can say
Have power to make others weep.

I said Pilgrims, in the large
Sense of the word as Pilgrims
May be understood in two senses
in a liberal & a strict one, in
the one, inasmuch as whosoever
goes out of his country is a
Pilgrim; in the other, the
is not a pilgrim unless he

The pilgrim soul beholds her;
Sees her face that when he tells me,
I understand him not; so feebly he speaks,
To the missing heart that he makes it speak.
I know that he speaks of that gentle one,
Because often he mentions Beatrice,
So that I understand him well, O Lady, Dear!

I hope to say of her that
which was never said of any
One else. Then may it please him
Who is the Lord of courtesy,
that my soul, if it be possible,
may go to see the glory of
Him who is blessed through
all ages.

After this faint, appeared to
me a wonderful vision, in which
I saw things which made me
determine to say no more of
this Blessed One, until I could
more worthily discourse of her,
and to come as that I study to
his utmost, as she verily knows.
So that, if it shall be the pleasure
of Him to whom all things
live, that my life should
continue for some years,

End of the New Life.

the text that Emerson used and hence are not in his translation) have been supplied; and the beginning of each section has been indented as a new paragraph, with the initial letter of each section capitalized — whether or not Emerson began a new paragraph and new sentence. In all other places Emerson's paragraphing has been followed. All numbers, letters, punctuation marks, and words that are in square brackets have been added to the text editorially. The Fragment is printed immediately beneath the corresponding portions of the first draft.

A number of pages of the first draft, namely sheets 1a, 3c, 16d, 25d, 35b and c, and 36b and c, have been reproduced in Plates I–IV, with corresponding section and line numbers given in the captions. These pages show, even in facsimile, some of the varietics of writing and revision that appear in the manuscript.

The editor wishes gratefully to acknowledge the permission to reproduce the *Vita Nuova* manuscript, granted by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association through Mr Edward Waldo Forbes, President, and by the Harvard Library; the advice and encouragement given by Professor Carl Swanson, of the University of Texas, and Professors Rudolph Altrocchi and Herbert H. Vaughan (both deceased), of the University of California; the courtesies extended by Mr William A. Jackson, Mr G. W. Cottrell, Jr, and Miss Carolyn Jakeman, of the Harvard College Library, and Mrs Howard W. Kent, of the Concord Antiquarian Society; the financial contribution of the University of California, rendered through the Research Committee of Santa Barbara College, toward expenses of travel and typing; and the assistance derived from the editions of the *Vita Nuova* by Kenneth McKenzie, Michele Scherillo, and Giovanni Melodia, and the translations by Henry Cochin, Charles Eliot Norton, and Thomas Okey.

J. CHESLEY MATHEWS

(The translation by Emerson follows overleaf.)

Dante's
Vita Nuova

R.W.E.

[MS 1]

The New Life of Dante Alighieri.

[I]

In that part of the book of my memory, before which little could be read, was found this title; *The New Life begins*. Under which title I find written the words which it is my purpose to copy in this book, & if not all, at least their sense.

[II]

Nine times since my birth, was the heaven of light turned back to the same point in its proper gyration, when to my eyes first appeared

[THE FRAGMENT]

The New Life of Dante Alighieri.

[I]

In that part of the book of my memory before which little could be read, is found this title, *The New Life begins*. Under which rubric, I find written the words which it is my purpose to copy in this book, and if not all, at least their sense.

[II]

Nine times already after my birth was the heaven of light returned to the same point in its proper gyration, when to my eyes first appeared

[MS 1]

the gracious lady of my mind who was called Beatrice by many who did not know what she was called. She had already been so long in this life that in her time the starry heaven was moved toward the part of the East one of the twelve parts of a degree, so that she appeared to me as at the beginning of her ninth year, & I saw her about the end of mine. And she appeared to me clothed with very noble humble colour, & becoming purple, girt & adorned in the guise which belonged to her very tender youth. In this moment I say truly that the spirit of life which dwells in the secretest chamber of the heart, begun to tremble so strongly that it appeared frightful in my least pulses, & trembling said these words,

Behold the god stronger than me coming to rule over me.

In this point, the animal spirit which dwells in the chamber, in which all the sensuous spirits carry their perceptions, began to marvel much and speaking specially to the spirits of sight said these words,

[THE FRAGMENT]

the gracious lady of my mind, who was called Beatrice by many who did not know her name. She had then been so long in this life that in her time the starry heaven had moved towards the East one of the twelve parts of a degree, so that she appeared to me as at the beginning of her ninth year, & I saw her about the end of mine and she appeared to me clothed in a very noble lowly colour and becoming red, girt & adorned in the mode which belonged to her tender youth. At that moment, I say verily the spirit of life which dwells in the secretest chamber of the heart did so quake that it appeared violently in my least pulses, and trembling said,

Ecce deus fortior me; veniens dominabitur mihi.

Behold a god stronger than I who cometh to rule me.

At that moment, the animal spirit which dwells in the chamber into which all the sensuous spirits carry their perceptions, began to marvel much, &, speaking specially to the spirits of sight, said,

[MS 1]

Now appears our bliss.

In this moment, the natural spirit which dwells in that part where our
 20 nourishment is administered, began to complain, & complaining, said
 these words,

Ah miserable I shall be so straitened henceforth.

From that hour onwards, I say that love ruled my soul, which was so
 suddenly disposed by him & begun to take so much security & so much
 lordship by the virtue that my imagination gave him, that it behoved
 me to do all his pleasure completely, and he commanded me many
 times that I should seek to see this youngest Angel; whence I in my
 boyhood many times went seeking her, & saw her with so new & so
 praiseworthy deportments, that truly might be spoken of her that

[THE FRAGMENT]

Now hath appeared our Supreme Good.

Apparuit jam Beatitudo nostra.

20 At that moment, the natural spirit which dwells in that part where
 our nourishment is supplied, began to weep & weeping said,

Heu miser, quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps.

Wo is me I am henceforth to have my way no longer.

From that hour forth, I say, that, Love ruled my soul, which was
 so much disposed by him & he began to take over me so much lordship
 & governance, through the strength which my imagination gave to him,
 that it behoved me to do all his pleasure to the utmost, & he commanded
 me many times that I should seek to see this youngest angel; wherefore
 I in my boyhood many times went seeking her, & I saw her with such
 30 new & such praiseworthy manners that certainly those words of the

[MS 1]

word of the poet Homer,

30

"She did not seem the daughter of a mortal, but of god."

And whereas her image which continually dwelled with me, (was it the boldness of Love to subdue me,) always was of so noble virtue that it never suffered Love to rule me without the faithful counsel of reason, in what things such counsel were good to hear; and yet since to subdue the passions and acts of such tender youth one may appear to speak fabulously, I will depart from these, and passing over many things which might be taken from the book where these things are found, I will come to those words which are written in my memory under greater par[a]graphs.

40

[THE FRAGMENT]

Poet Homer might be spoken of her,

"She seemed not the daughter of a mortal, but of a god."

And it was so that her image which continually abode with me, (was it the presumption of Love to subdue me) was always of so noble virtue that it never suffered Love to rule me without the faithful counsel of reason in matters wherein such counsel were good to hear. But since the controuling the passions & manners of so much youth may seem to some fabulous, I will quit these, & passing over many things which might be taken from the book where these lie hidden, I will come to those words which are written in my memory under longer paragraphs.

40

[END OF THE FRAGMENT]

[MS 1]

[III]

When so many days were past that nine years were exactly completed after the forewritten appearance of this most gentle maid, — in the last of these days, it happened, that this wonderful lady appeared to me clothed in the purest white, in the middle between two gentlewomen who were of maturer age; & passing through a road turned her eyes towards that part where I was, very fearful, and by her ineffable courtesy which is today requited in the other world, saluted me virtuously, so that it appeared to me then that I saw all the limits of happiness. The hour when her sweetest salute arrived at me, was
 10 precisely the ninth of that day, and inasmuch as it was the first time that her words turned to arrive at my ears, I took so much sweetness, that, like one intoxicated, I departed from the company & withdrew to a solitary place of my chamber, & set myself to think on this most courteous one. And thinking of her, there came to me a sweet sleep in which appeared to me a marvellous vision, wherein I seemed to see in my chamber a cloud of the colour of fire, within which I discerned a figure of a signor of aspect fearful to the beholder. And he appeared to have so much joy in himself, that it was wonderful, and he said many things, which I did not understand, except a few, among which
 20 I heard these words;

I am thy lord.

In his arms appeared to me to sleep a person naked save that she was lightly infolded in a blood-red cloth, whom I beholding very attentively knew that she was the lady of peace, who had the day before deigned to salute me, & in one of his hands it appeared that he held something which burned wholly, & it seemed to me that he said to me these words;

Vide cor tuum.

And when he had remained some time it appeared to me that he waked
 30 her who slept, and so prevailed by his genius that he made her eat that thing which burned in her hand which she eat doubtfully. After a little while his joy turned into bitterest lamentation, and thus complaining he took again this lady in his arms, and with her he seemed

to me to go towards heaven. Whence I suffered so great anguish that my weak sleep could not bear, so it broke, & I awaked. And immediately I began to reflect, & found that the hour in which this dream had appeared to me was the fourth of the night, so that it appeared plainly that it was the first hour of the nine last hours of the night. I thinking of this which had appeared to me proposed to make it known to many who were the famous poets (*trovatori*) in that time. And because I had already seen by myself the art of saying words in rhyme, I proposed to make a sonnet, in which I should salute all the faithful of love, & praying them that they would judge my vision, I should write them what I had seen in my dream, & I then begun this sonnet.

To each taken soul & gentle heart,
 To whose sight comes the present word,
 To the end that they may write again their thought
 Greeting in the name of their lord, that is, Love.
 Already was it the third hour
 Of the time when every star is most bright,
 When Love appeared to me suddenly
 Whose substance seen made me tremble.
 Glad seemed Love, holding
 My heart in his hand, & in his arms had
 My lady asleep rolled in a garment;
 Then he waked her, and with that burning heart
 Fed her lowly trembling;
 Then bewailing it, he seemed to go away.

This sonnet was answered by many & with different meanings; among which respondents was he whom I call first among my friends (*Guido Cavalcanti*). And he wrote this sonnet.

You have seen, in my judgment, every valour,
 And every game, & every good which man feels,
 As if you were in proof of a mighty lord
 Who ruled the world of honour.
 Then live in places where grief dies,
 And hold reason in your pious mind
 Yes go gently in dreams to the race
 Who carry their heart without pain.
 Seeing her carry the heart of you,
 Death demands your lady,
 Feeds on the living heart of her timid.
 When it appeared to you that she went away grieving

It was the sweet dream which was completed
That its contrary came conquering it.

And this was the beginning of the friendship between me & him, when he knew that it was I that had sent this to him. The true meaning of the said sonnet was not seen then by any one, but now is manifest to the most simple.

[IV]

And after this vision my natural spirit began to be impeded in its operation because the soul was all given up to thinking of this most gentle one, whence I became in a little time after, of so frail & weak a condition, that many friends grieved at my face, and many full of envy persisted to know of me that which I wished to conceal altogether, from others, and I becoming sensible of the evil demand which they made me, through the will of love which commanded me according to the counsel of reason, answered them, that love was that which had governed me thus. I spoke of love because I carried in my face so
10 many of his ensigns which could not be covered & when they asked on whose account this love had thus destroyed me I smiling looked at them & said nothing to them.

[V]

One day it happened that this most gentle one sat in a place where were heard words of the Queen of Glory, & I was in a place from whence I could see my chief joy, and in the midst between her & me in a right line sat a gentlewoman of very pleasant aspect who beheld many times with wonder my glances which appeared to terminate on her, whence many were informed of her looking. And so much was this regarded, that, on leaving that place I heard some one say near me, See how such a lady destroys the person of this man. And naming her, I heard that they spoke of her who was placed midway
10 in the right line which begun from the most gentle Beatrice & terminated in my eyes. Then I comforted myself much, assuring myself that my secret was not communicated to others that day by my face, & immediately I thought of making of this gentlewoman a screen of the truth, and I carried this so well in a little time that my secret was believed to be known by many persons who spoke to me of it. Through

this gentlewoman I concealed myself some years & months & to make it more credible to others, I made for her certain little pieces in rhyme, which it is not my purpose to write here, except insofar as they concern the most gentle Beatrice; and therefore I will leave them all, only I shall write one which appears to be in praise of her.

20

[VI]

I say that in the time when this gentlewoman was the screen of so much love, there arose on my part a wish to record the name of the most gentle, and to accompany it with many names of ladies, & specially with the name of this gentlewoman, and having taken the names of sixty the fairest women of the city, where my lady was placed by the most High Lord, I composed an epistle under the form of service, which I will not copy, & should not have mentioned except to say this, that composing it, it strangely happened that in no other number would the name of my lady stand, except in the *ninth*, among the names of these ladies.

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[VII]

The gentlewoman through whom I had for some time concealed my inclination, happened to quit the abovementioned city & went into a distant country; I as it were frightened from my fine defence, greatly discomfited myself more than I should have believed beforehand, & thinking that if I should not speak somewhat dolorously of her departure, people would very soon become aware of my secret, I proposed to make a lament, in a sonnet which I will copy, because my lady was the immediate cause of certain words which are in the sonnet as appears to whoso understands it; and then I wrote this sonnet;

O ye who pass by the way of Love,
Attend & behold,
If any sorrow be great as mine.
And I pray only that you will hear me
And then imagine
If I am the lodging & the key of every grief.
Love, not truly by my small goodness
But by his own nobility
Placed me in a life so sweet & gentle
That I heard myself say secretly many times

10

20

Ah! by what worth
 Does the heart so lightly possess this treasure?
 Now have I lost all my presumption
 Which arose out of the amorous treasure
 Wherefore I remain poor
 In a fashion, which to speak, breeds doubt.
 So that wishing to do as those
 Who through shame conceal their want,
 I outwardly show a gladness
 And within from the heart I pine & bewail.

[VIII]

After the departure of this gentlewoman, it was the pleasure of the Lord of the Angels to call to his glory a lady of very gentle countenance who was a great favourite in this city, whose body I saw lie without life in the midst of many ladies who lamented her. I also lamenting, proposed to myself to say some words of her death in guerdon of this, that I had once seen her with my lady; &, on that, I touched in the last part of the words which I wrote of her, as appears plainly to whoso understands it; and I said then these two sonnets; of which the first begins;

10

Lament lovers, since Love laments,
 Seeing what cause he had to weep.
 Love hears with pity ladies cry
 Showing bitter grief in their eyes,
 Because rough Death in gentle heart
 Hath wrought his cruel work,
 Spoiling that which the world praises
 In a gentle dame, out of honour.
 Hear how much horror Love felt,
 Since I saw him lament in true form
 Over the beautiful dead image;
 And I looked toward the Heaven often
 Where the gentle soul was already placed,
 Who was a lady of so gay an aspect.

20

and the second;

Rough Death, enemy of pity,
 Ancient mother of grief,
 Indisputable heavy judgment
 Thou hast given matter of grief to the heart;
 Wherefore I go sad.

The tongue wearies of blaming thee 30
 And if thou wouldst make request for grace
 It behoves that I tell
 Your offence with every cruel injury;
 Not because it is hidden from people
 But to make angry at it
 Whoso nourishes himself with Love henceforth.
 From the world thou hast divided courtesy,
 And that which in a lady is virtue to prize.
 In gay youth
 Thou hast destroyed amorous beauty 40
 I will no more discover what dame she is
 Except by her known virtues.
 Whoso does not merit salvation
 Let her never hope to have her company.

[IX]

Some days after the death of this lady, something occurred which required me to leave the city abovementioned, & to go towards those parts where was the gentlewoman who had been my defence. It chanced that [my] journey did not reach so far as to where she was, and although I was in the company of many according to the appearance, the going displ[ac]ed me so that my sighs could not exhale the anguish which the heart felt, because I was departing from my felicity. And yet my sweetest lord who ruled me through the virtue of the most gentle lady, in my imagination appeared like a pilgrim lightly clad, & with coarse clothes, He seemed to me astonished & looked on 10
 the ground, except that sometimes his eyes turned to a beautiful running river, very clear, which ran along the road in which I walked. It seemed to me that Love called me, & said to me these words; "I come from that lady who has long been thy defence, & I know that her return will not be. And therefore this heart which I made thee to have from her, I have with me & I carry it to a lady who shall be thy defence as this one was, (and he named her to me so that I knew her well) but notwithstanding if of these words I have spoken to thee, thou speakest anything, tell it in a fashion that by them may not be discerned the feigned love which thou hast shown to this one, & which it will be- 20
 hove thee to show to others." And having said these words, this my imagination disappeared very suddenly through the large part which it appeared to me that Love had given me of himself. And, as if

changed in countenance, I rode that day very thoughtful, &, attended by many sighs, on the next day I began thus this sonnet.

30

Riding the other day through a road
 Sad at going where it displeased me
 I found Love in the midst of the way
 In the light dress of a pilgrim.
 His semblance appeared mean
 As if he had lost his lordship,
 And sighing thoughtful came
 So as not to see the people, his head down;
 When he saw me, he called me by name,
 And said, I come from the distant place
 Where was your heart by my will,
 And I bring it back to serve a new pleasure.
 Then I took of him so great part
 That he disappeared & I knew not how.

[X]

After my return I set myself to seek this lady whom my lord had named to me in the road of sighs &, that my story may be short, I say, that in a little time I made her my defence so much, that too many people spoke of her, beyond all the limits of courtesy, whereat I often was sorely grieved. And for this cause, that is, of this excessive fame, which appeared as if I had viciously defamed myself, that most gentle one who was the destroyer of all vices, & queen of the virtues, passing in some place, denied to me her sweetest salute, in which consisted all my peace. And digressing somewhat from the present argument, I
 10 wish to explain what her salutation operated virtuously in me.

[XI]

I say that when she appeared from any part, through the hope of her wonderful sweetness no enemy remained to me; also there was added to me a flame of charity, which made me pardon whoever had offended me. And if any one had demanded aught of me, my answer would have been only Love, with a face clothed in humility; and when she was at hand ready to salute, a spirit of Love destroying all the other sensuous spirits, advanced forth the weak spirits of sight and said to them, Go to honour your lady, & he remained in the place of them; and whoso had wished to know Love, could do so, beholding the tremor

of my eyes. And when this gentlest lady saluted me, not that Love was such a medium that he could shade from me the intolerable clearness, but he, as by excess of sweetness became such that my body, which now was all under his regiment, often moved itself as something heavily inanimate, so that it plainly appeared that in her salute dwelt my peace, which many times filled & overran my capacity. 10

[XII]

Now returning to the argument, I say, that when this joy was denied me, there came to me so much grief, that withdrawing from all company, I went into a lonely place to bathe the ground with bitterest tears. And, after some time, this weeping being stopped, I went into my chamber, where I could lament without being heard, and there calling pity from the Lady of all courtesy, & saying, O Love, aid thy faithful servant, — I slept like a beaten child worn out with crying. It happened in the midst of my sleep, that I seemed to see in my chamber beside me a youth clothed in whitest vestments & thinking much how much he looked at me there where I lay, & when he had looked at me some time, it seemed to me, that, sighing he called me; & he said to me these words. 10

Fili mi, tempus est ut pretermictantur simulacra nostra.

Then it appeared to me that I knew him who called me thus, as many times in my sighs he had called me and considering him I thought that he wept piteously & he seemed to expect some word from me, whence taking courage began to speak thus with him. Lord of nobleness, why weepest thou? and he said to me these words;

“I am, as it were, the centre of the circle, to whom all the parts of the circumference are alike. But not so, thou.” 20

Then thinking on his words, it seemed to me that he had spoken very obscurely, so that I forced myself to speak, & said these words to him, “What is that, my Lord, which you say with so much obscurity?” And he replied to me in the vulgar speech. “Do not ask more than is useful to you.” And yet I began to speak with him of the salute which had been denied me. And asking the cause, it was answered in this manner. “This our Beatrice heard from certain persons that the lady whom I named to thee in the road of sighs received some displeasure

from you. And therefore this most gentle one who is the contrary of all
 30 annoys, did not deign to salute your person, fearing lest it should be
 hurtful. Wherefore to the end that she may truly know something
 of the secret you have kept through so long a consuetude, I wish that
 you should say certain words, first, in which you comprise the power
 which I hold over you through her, & how you were hers, so early,
 from her infancy & of this call as witness him who knows it and pray
 him that he tell her it, & I who know this, willingly will converse with
 her of it, & by this she shall know your will, knowing which, she will
 understand the words of those deceived persons. Make these words
 as a means, so that thou shalt not speak to her immediately, which is
 40 not fit nor send them into any place without me where they can be
 heard by her, but adorn them with sweet harmony in which I will be in
 all parts where it behoves;" and, having said these words, he disap-
 peared, & my dream was broken. Wherefore recollecting myself I
 found that this vision had appeared to me in the ninth hour of the day.
 And before I went out of the chamber, I proposed to make a ballad in
 which that was done which my lord had imposed on me, and I made
 this Ballad;

Ballad, I wish that you should find Love
 And with him go before my lady
 50 So that my excuse which thou shalt sing
 My lord may reason with her,
 Thou ballad goest so courteously
 That without company
 Thou shouldest have courage in all parts;
 But if thou wouldst go securely,
 Find Love again first,
 Who perhaps it is not good sense to leave
 Because she who ought to hear thee
 If she is, as I believe, in truth angry with me
 60 If thou by him be not attended
 Easily may do you a dishonour.
 With sweet sound, when thou art with him,
 Begin these words;
 After thou hast sought pity,
 Lady, he who sent me to you
 If it please you
 If there be excuse would that you should hear it of me
 Love is here who through your beauty
 Makes him, as he will, change face,

Then because he made him look at another 70
 Think you not that his heart is changed.
 Tell her; lady his heart is set
 With such firm faith
 That to serve you he has every thought ready;
 Early was yours & he never swerved.
 If she do not believe you
 Tell her to ask Love whether it be true;
 And at last make to her a humble prayer
 (To pardon it if it were a trouble to her)
 That she would command me by mes[s]enger that I should die. 80
 And she shall see her good servant obey.
 And say to her who is the key of all pity
 Before I become free
 That I shall know how to tell my good reason
 Through the grace of my sweet notes;
 Remain thou here with her
 And tell of thy servant what you will.
 And if she by thy prayer pardon him,
 Cause that she announce to him a fair seeming peace.
 My gentle ballad, when it pleases thee 90
 Move in such form that you have honor.

Should any man confront me & say that he knew not to what purpose was this speaking in the second person, since the ballad is nothing else than these words which I speak, then I say, that this doubt I intend to solve & clear up in this little book, in part even more doubtful, and then he may here understand who doubts more than one who should confront me in the manner proposed.

[XIII]

After the abovementioned vision, having already spoken the words which Love had charged me to say, many & diverse thoughts began to combat & to try me, each, as it were, irresistible; among which thoughts, four hindered most the repose of life. One of them was this. Good is the lordship of Love since it draws the mind of the faithful from all vile matters. Another was this. The lordship of love is not good, since by how much faith the faithful yields, by so much the more sharp & grievous crises it requires him to pass. Another was this; The name of love is so sweet to hear, that it appears to me impossible that its proper operation should be in most things other than sweet, because 10

names follow the things named, as it is written, Names are the consequences of things *Nomina sunt consequentia rerum*. The fourth was this; The lady through whom Love binds thee thus, is not like other ladies, that she may lightly be removed from the heart. — And each assaulted me so long, that it made me stand like one who knows not by what way he shall take his road, who wishes to go & knows not his path. And if I thought of wishing to seek a common passage for them, that is, one in which they should all agree, this was very displeasing to me, that is, to cry out & to throw myself into the arms of pity. And
 20 remaining in this state, there came to me a willingness to write rhymes and, I then said this sonnet;

All my thoughts speak of Love
 And have in them so great variety,
 That one makes me wish his power,
 Another foolish talks of his valour,
 Another hopeful brings me grief,
 Another makes me complain often,
 And they agree only in asking pity.
 Trembling with fear which is in the heart.
 30 Therefore I know not what theme to take.
 And I would speak; and I know not what to say;
 Thus I find myself in amorous error
 And if with all I would make agreement
 It would need that I should call my enemy
 My lady Pity who defends me

[XIV]

After the battle of these different thoughts it happened that this most gentle one was in a place where many gentle ladies were assembled, to which place I was conducted by a friendly person thinking to do me a great pleasure, inasmuch as he led me where so many ladies displayed their beauties, wherefore I, not knowing whither I was led, & confiding in the person who was one that had led his friend to the end of life, said to him, Why are we come to these ladies? Then he said, that he did thus that they should be worthily served. It is true that here they were gathered to the company of a gentlewoman who
 10 was that day married, and, therefore, according to the custom in that city, it behoved that they should give her their company in the first

sitting down at table in the house of her bridegroom. So that I, believing that I did this friend a pleasure, made myself ready to stand at the service of these ladies in his company; and in the end of my making ready, it appeared to me that I felt a strange tremor begin on the left side of my breast, & extend itself suddenly through all parts of my body. Then I say that I turned my person feignedly to a picture which surrounded this house, & fearing lest others should be aware of my trembling, I lifted my eyes, & beholding the ladies, I saw among them the most gentle Beatrice. Then were my spirits destroyed through the force with which Love took me, seeing himself in such nearness to the most gentle lady, that there did not remain in life any but the spirits of sight, & even these remained outside of their organs, because Love wished to stand in their most noble place to see the wonder of this lady. And as soon as I was other than at first, I was much grieved for these *little spirits* (spiritelli) who lamented aloud, & said, If this one had not dazzled us out of our places, we could have remained to see the marvel of this dame, as our peers also remain. I say that many of these ladies becoming aware of my transfiguration, began to wonder, & discoursing, bantered concerning me and that most gentle one. Therefore the friend of good faith took me by the hand & leading me out of the sight of these ladies, asked me what ailed me? Then I answered somewhat, & rallied my dead-like spirits, & these fugitives being returned to their seats, I said to my friend these words, — "I have had my feet in that part of the life beyond, from which there is no more power in the understanding to return." And having parted with him, I returned to my chamber of tears, where, weeping & ashamed, I said to myself, If this lady knew my condition, I do not believe that she would so mistake my person; rather would she surely have much pity on me. And remaining in this grief, I proposed to speak some words, in which, addressing her, I might signify to her the cause of my transfiguration; & I would say that I know well that she knows me not, & that if she knew me, I believe that pity of it would come to others, & I proposed to tell her them (the words or verses) desiring that they would come by chance into her audience, & then I said this sonnet;

With the other dames you deride my sight
 And do not know the lady who moves me
 That I assumed to you a strange face
 When I beheld your beauty.
 If you knew it, your compassion could not

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Hold out longer against me the accustomed trial
 That when Love found me so near to you
 He took courage & so much security
 That haughtily among my tremulous spirits,
 Some he slew, & some he drove out,
 So that he alone remained to see you.
 Wherefore I change myself into the form of another
 But not so that I do not well taste now
 The woes of the tormented fugitives.

[XV]

After the new transfiguration, there came to me a strong thought, which rarely left me, nay which was always with me; since you came to so ridiculous appearance, when you were near this lady, why then do you seek to see her? If you were asked anything by her, what wouldst thou have to answer? Granting that thou shouldst have each of thy powers liberated, in as much as thou shouldst answer her. And to this replied another humble thought, & said, I would tell her that so soon as I imagine her wonderful beauty, so soon have I the desire to behold her, which is of so much force that it kills & destroys in my
 10 memory all which can rise against it, & therefore these past sufferings do not restrain me from seeking the view of her. Therefore, I, moved by such thoughts, proposed to say certain words in which excusing myself to her with such passion, I described also how it was with me in her presence; & I said then this sonnet;

Whatever in the mind hinders dies
 When I come to behold you, o beautiful joy,
 And when I am near you, I hear Love
 Who says, Fly, if you are loath to die:
 The face shows the colour of the heart
 20 Fainting where it leans;
 And through the drunkenness of great fear
 The stones seem to cry, Die, die;
 It were a sin in whom should then see me
 If he should not comfort the astonished soul
 Only showing that he grieved for me
 For pity which shall kill your contempt
 Which cries in the sad expression
 Of the eyes which desire their own death

[XVI]

After that which I had said in this sonnet I had an inclination to say also words in which I might say the four things also abovementioned concerning my state, which it did not seem to me I had yet made known. The first of which is, that, often I grieved when my memory moved the fancy to imagine what Love had made me become. The second is, that, Love often suddenly assailed me so strongly that there remained no other life in me except the thought which spoke of this lady. The third; that, when this battle of love so assaulted me, I moved myself, as it were, all discoloured, to see this lady, believing that the sight of her would defend me from this array, forgetting all which had befallen me through approaching so much gentleness. The fourth is, how such a sight not only did not defend me, but finally discomfited the little life I had; and therefore I said this sonnet;

Often comes to mind
 The dark quality Love gives me
 And such pity rises, that often
 I say, Ah! Happened it so to another?
 For suddenly Love assaults me
 So that life almost leaves me
 A living spirit only remains
 (And this remains, because he speaks of you)
 Then I force myself to seek aid
 And thus dead-like & without strength
 I come to see you trusting to be healed
 And if I lift my eyes to look at you
 In the heart begins a quaking
 Which drives the soul from the pulses.

[XVII]

After I had said these three sonnets in which I addressed this lady, because they were, as it were, reporters of all my condition, believing that I should be silent & say no more, since I seemed to me to have expressed myself sufficiently. Since then I refrained from speaking to her. It behoved me to take new & nobler argument than the past, &, because the occasion of my new subject is delightful to hear, I will relate it as briefly as I can.

[XVIII]

Whereas many persons by my countenance had become acquainted with my secret, certain ladies who were met for their mutual entertainment, knew well my heart, because each of them had been present at my many discomfitures, & I passing near them as led by my chance, was called by one of these gentlewomen and she who spoke to me was a lady of very graceful speech, so that when I joined them, & saw well that my most gentle lady was not there, recollecting myself, I saluted them, & inquired their pleasure. The ladies were many, among whom were some who laughed among themselves: others of them looked
 10 at me, awaiting what I should say: others of them spoke apart, of whom one turning her eyes towards me, & calling me by name, said these words; "To what end lovest thou this lady of thine, since thou canst not sustain her presence? Tell us what is the end of such a love, which should be a thing wholly new." And when she had spoken these words, not only she but all the others began to listen for my reply. Then I said these words; Ladies, the end of my love was truly the salute (saluto) of this lady, of whom perhaps you have heard, and therein abides the happiness of the end of all my desires; but since it
 20 pleases her to deny it to me, my lord Love (I thank him for it) has placed all my firmness in that which cannot be taken away. Then these ladies began to speak among themselves, & if sometimes we see fall water mixed with beautiful snow, so seemed it to me to hear their words come forth mingled with sighs; and after they had spoken awhile apart, again said to me that lady who had first spoken, these words; "We pray thee that thou wouldest tell us where is thy felicity?" And I, answering her, said thus much; "In those words which praise my lady." Then answered me this one who spoke before, "If thou toldest me truly, those words which thou saidest describing thy condition, thou wouldest have turned with another intention." Whereupon, I
 30 thinking on these words, as one ashamed, departed from them, & came away speaking to myself; 'Since there is so much felicity in those words which praise my lady, why have I used others, ['] and therefore I proposed to take for the argument of my speaking evermore this which should be the praise of this most gentle one, & thinking much on that point it seemed to me that I had undertaken too high argument for me. So that I dared not begin, & so waited several days, with desire to speak & with fear to commence.

[XIX]

It then chanced that passing through a road along which ran a very clear brook, I felt such willingness to speak that I began to think of the manner I used and I thought that to speak of her, was not fit; but that I ought to speak to ladies in the second person, and not to every lady, but only to those who are gentle, & who are not merely women. Then I say, that my tongue spoke as if moved by itself, & I said then "Ladies who apprehend love." These words I laid up in my mind with great joy thinking to take them for my beginning; therefore being afterwards returned to the afovenamed City, & thinking for some days, I began the regular ode in the usual manner, as follows.

10

Ladies, who have heard of Love,
 I wish to speak with you of my Lady,
 Not because I think I can perfect her praise
 But to discourse that I may relieve my mind;
 I say, that thinking on her worth
 Love so gently taught me to feel
 That if I then did not lose my fire
 I would put all men in love by my speech.
 And I do not wish to speak so proudly
 That I might become vile through fear,
 But I will treat of her gentle estate
 For her sake lightly,
 Ladies & amorous maidens with you,
 Since it is not fit to speak to others of her.

20

An Angel calls in the divine intellect,
 And says, Sire, in the world is seen
 A living wonder, which issues
 From a soul which even up hither shines.
 Heaven which has no other defect
 Than wanting her, asks her of the Lord.
 And each saint asks Mercy
 Only pity pleads on our part.
 That the Lord says who understands it of my lady;
 Dear children now suffer me in peace;
 Pleases me that your hope is so great,
 There is one who expects to lose her
 And who will say in Hell to the Ill-born,
 I have seen the hope of the Blessed.
 My Lady is desired in highest heaven.
 Now I proceed to make you know her virtue:

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I say, that whoso would seem a gentle lady,
 Go with her; since when she goes in the road
 Love casts in evil hearts a frost
 So that every thought of theirs freezes,
 And whatever can stand there to see,
 Must become a noble thing, or die.
 And when any one finds that he is worthy
 To see her, he proves his virtue,
 For that happens to him that imparts health
 50 And so humbles him that he forgets all sin.
 Yet has God, through greater grace, given,
 That he cannot end ill, who has spoken to her.
 Love said of her; A mortal thing —
 How can it be so adorned, & so pure?
 Then he beheld her & swore by himself
 That God did not mean to make a new thing.
 Color of pearl in her form, as
 It befits a lady to have, not out of measure,
 She has as much goodness as nature can;
 60 By her pattern beauty is tried;
 From her eyes, as she moves them,
 Proceed spirits of love inflamed,
 Which enkindle the eyes of whoso watches her,
 And pass through, so that each finds the heart.
 You see Love painted in the face
 So that none can behold her steadily.
Canzone! I know that you will go speaking
 To many dames, when I shall send you forth.
 Now I warn you, since I have trained you up
 70 For the daughter of Love, young & smooth,
 That where you go, you say praying,
 'Direct me to go, since I am sent
 To her for whose praise I am adorned';
 And if you will not go as a vain one,
 Nor remain where are mean people,
 Endeavour if you can to be made known
 Alone to a lady, or to a courteous man,
 Who shall swiftly deserve thee.
 Thou wilt find Love; with him, her;
 80 Commend me to him as you ought.

[XX]

After this sonnet had got abroad a little, because a friend had heard it, his desire moved him to pray me that I would tell him what is Love,

having, perhaps, through the words he had heard, a hope of me beyond what was due. Then I thinking that after such a piece, it would be fine to discourse somewhat, of love, & thinking that my friend should be served, I proposed to speak words in which I should treat of love, & then I said this sonnet.

Love & the gentle heart are one thing;
 As the Sage in his precept has it;
 And you may dare be one without the other, 10
 As well as a rational soul without reason.
 Nature, when it is amorous, makes
 Love the Sire, the heart for his abode
 Within which sleeping he reposes
 As little and as long as he will.
 Beauty then appears in wise woman,
 Which pleases the eyes, so that within the heart
 Is born desire of the pleasant object,
 And so abides in it,
 That it causes the spirit of Love to awake. 20
 And the like does a valiant man, in a woman.

[XXI]

After I had treated of Love in the rhyme aforesaid, there came to me the wish to speak words also in praise of this most gentle one, by which I might show how, through her, this love awoke, & how not only it awoke where it had slept, but where it is not in energy & there working wonderfully, made it appear; and then I said;

In her eyes my Lady carries Love,
 Because she makes that noble which she looks upon.
 Where she passes, every man turns to see her,
 And whom she salutes, his heart quakes,
 So that looking down, his whole countenance is changed, 10
 And on every fault of his sighs.
 Flees before her, all anger, & pride.
 Aid me, Ladies, to do her honour,
 Every sweetness, every lowly thought
 Is born in the heart of him who hears her speak,
 Therefore is he blessed who first sees her.
 How she looks when she smiles a little,
 Cannot be told, nor held in the mind,
 So new & so gentle a miracle is it.

[XXII]

Not many days after this, it pleased that glorious Lord who refused not himself to die, that he who was the father of so great a marvel as this most noble Beatrice, departing out of this life should ascend to the eternal glory. Therefore, because such departure is woeful to those who remain, and were his friends, and there is no friendship so close as that of a good father with a good child, and this lady was at the summit of goodness, and her father, as many believed, and as was true, was good in a high degree, it is manifest that this lady was bitterly full of grief, & when, according to the custom of the city, ladies with ladies
 10 & men with men assembled there, where this Beatrice piteously lamented, — I seeing so many ladies return from her, heard them speak their words of this most gentle one, how she lamented, among which words I heard them say, "Indeed she wept so that whoever saw her might die with pity." Then these ladies passed by, & I remained in so great sadness that some tears then bathed my face; which I concealed, covering my eyes often with my hands; and if I had not expected to hear again of her, since I was in place where most of those ladies passed who came from her, I should have concealed myself immediately when my tears came, & yet tarrying longer in the same place, ladies also passed
 20 near me conversing together in these words, "Which of us can ever be glad, who have heard this lady speak so piteously?" After these came others, saying, "This one weeps neither more nor less than if he had seen her as we saw her." Others then said of me, "You shall see this one so changed that he does not appear to be himself." And thus these ladies passing, I heard their words of her & of me (in this manner I have set down), thinking whereupon, I proposed to say such words as I might worthily find occasion, in which words I comprised all which I had heard from these ladies, and, since I should willingly have questioned them, if it had not been blameable, I took occasion to speak as
 30 if I had, & as if they had answered me, and I made two sonnets; and in the first I ask whatever I had to ask, & in the other I report their answer, taking that which I heard from them as they would have said to me in reply; & I began the first;

Ye who wear a lowly semblance
 With downcast eyes showing grief,
 Whence come you that your colour
 Appears like that of stone?

Saw ye our gentle Lady,
 Her face bathed in the pity of Love?
 Tell me, ladies, what the heart says 40
 Since I see you go with honest action,
 And if ye come from so great piety,
 Please you to stay here with me a little,
 And hide nothing of her from me.
 I see tears in your eyes,
 And I see you come so disfigured
 That my heart quakes to see you so.

The second;

Art thou he who has discoursed with us often
 Of our lady, alone speaking to us? 50
 Thy voice resembles him well
 But thy sad form appears of quite another.
 Ah! why weepest thou so cordially,
 That you compel others to pity thee?
 Hast thou seen her weep, that thou canst not
 Conceal at all thy woful mind?
 Leave us to weep, & to go disconsolate,
 (And it were sin, if we should not,)
 Who in her sorrow have heard her speak.
 She has in her face sorrow so wise 60
 That who would have beheld her
 Would fall dead before her.

[XXIII]

After this, in a few days, it chanced that in (some) part of my body there fell on me a grievous infirmity, from which I suffered for many days the bitterest pain, which brought me to such debility, that I was forced to remain like those who cannot move themselves. In the ninth day, feeling my pain as it were intolerable, there came to me a thought of my lady. And when I had thought a little of her, & I returned to think of my debilitated life, and seeing how frail was its duration, even if I were well, I began to bewail myself of so much misery, and, deeply sighing, I said to myself, Of necessity, it must be that the most gentle Beatrice will some time die; and then I felt such an amazement of fear 10 that I closed my eyes, and began to work like a raving person, & to imagine in this manner. In the commencement of the wandering which my fancy made, appeared to me certain faces of ladies dishevelled,

who said to me, "Thou too shalt die;" and after these ladies appeared certain different faces horrible to see, who said to me, "Thou art dead." Thus my fancy beginning to wander, I came to that pass, that I knew not where I was, & I seemed to see ladies go dishevelled, weeping in a manner wonderfully sad, & it appeared to me that I saw the sun darkened, so that the stars showed themselves in such a colour that I thought they also wept, & very great earthquakes, & I, admiring in such a fancy, & greatly afraid, imagined that some friend came & said to me, "Now knowest thou not thy wonderful lady is departed from this world?" Then began I to weep very piteously, & not only wept in fancy, but I wept with my eyes, bathing them with real tears. I imagined that I looked towards the heaven & I seemed to see a multitude of angels who returned upward, & had before them a very white little cloud, & I thought these angels sang gloriously, and the words of their song I seemed to hear were these, *Osanna in excelsis*. And others heard I none. Then it seemed to me that the heart, where so much love was, said to me, True it is that our lady lies dead; and through this I seemed to go to see the body in which that most noble soul had been, & so strong was the erroneous fancy that it showed me this lady lying dead, & I thought that ladies dressed her, her head, namely, with a white veil; And I thought her face had such an aspect of humility, that it seemed to me that it said, "I am to see the beginning of peace." In this imagination I felt such humility from beholding her, that I called Death, & said, "Sweetest Death, come to me, and be not rough with me, since thou oughtest to be gentle, seeing where thou hast been. Now come to me who desire thee much. Thou seest that I already wear thy complexion. And when I had seen fulfilled all the dolciful mysteries which are used towards the bodies of the dead, I thought I returned to my chamber, & here I looked towards Heaven, & so strong was my fancy, that weeping I began to say with true voice, "Oh beautiful soul, how happy is he who sees thee!" And I saying these words with dolorous sobs, and calling death that he should come to me, a young & gentle lady who was by my bedside believing that my weeping & my words were only for the pain of my infirmity, began to lament with fear, and other ladies who were near the chamber, having compassion of me who wept, & of the lamentation which they saw this lady make, causing her to depart from me, (she who was my nearest blood-relation,) they came towards me to wake me, believing that I was dreaming, & they bade me sleep no more, & not to disorder myself, & on their

thus speaking to me the strong fantasy ceased at the moment when I would say, "O Beatrice! blessed mayest thou be!", and I had already said, "O Beatrice!" And recovering myself, I opened my eyes & saw that I was deceived, and as soon as I had called this name, my voice was so broken with the sob of grief, that these ladies could not understand me, (as I believe.) Add, that I waked, and was much ashamed, although through some admonition of love I turned myself from them, and when they saw me, they began to say, He appears as dead, & to say apart, 60
 Let us devise how to comfort him. Then they said many things to comfort me, & sometimes they inquired whereof I had had fear; Then I being somewhat reassured, and the imaginary disaster understood by me, I answered them, I will tell you what I have suffered. Then I began from the beginning, & told them unto the end what I had seen, suppressing the name of this most gentle one. Then afterwards, being healed of this infirmity, I proposed to speak words of this which had befallen me, since it seemed to me an amorous thing to hear, & so I said it in this canzone.

A gentle dame & young 70
 Well adorned with human gentleness
 Who was there where I often invoked death
 Seeing my eyes full of sorrow
 And hearing my vain words
 Was moved with fear to tears.
 And other ladies who were apprised by me
 For what she lamented with me
 Made her depart
 And approached to make me hear
 One said Do not sleep 80
 And one said Why do you grieve
 Then I left my new fancy
 Invoking the name of my lady
 My voice was so mournful
 So broken with anguish & tears
 That I alone heard the name in my heart
 And with looks of shame
 That overspread my face
 Love made me turn towards them
 And such was my colour 90
 As the speaking of the death of others brings.
 Ah let us comfort this one
 Said one to the other softly

And they said often
 What seest thou that thou faintest
 And when I was a little recovered
 I said, Ladies I will tell it you.
 While I thought on my frail life
 And saw how short its term is,
 100 Love pitied me in the heart where he dwells,
 Because my soul was so sad
 That sighing I said in my thought
 It will befall that my lady will die.
 Thence I took such dismay
 That my eyes closed, being weighed down
 And my spirits were so discouraged
 That they went wandering each his way
 Then given up to imagination
 Out of knowledge, out of truth,
 110 Faces of afflicted ladies appeared to me
 Who said to me, Thou wilt die, thou wilt die,
 Then I saw many vague forms
 In the vain imagination in which I was
 And I seemed to be I know not where
 And to see ladies go dishevelled
 Weeping & lamenting
 Who shot up flames of sadness
 Then methought gradually
 The sun was darkened & the moon appeared
 120 And they wept, he and she.
 The birds fell flying thro the air
 And the earth quaked
 And a man appeared to me pale & faint
 Saying What dost thou knowest thou not
 Thy lady is dead who was so fair?
 I lifted my eyes bathed in tears
 And saw what seemed a shower of manna
 Angels who returned up into heaven
 And they bore a little cloud before them
 130 After which they cried Hosanna
 And if they had said more I would tell you
 Then said Love I hide it from you no more
 Come & see thy lady who lies dead.
 The fallacious imagination
 Led me to see my dead lady
 And when I had seen her
 Methought ladies covered her with a veil
 And she bore in her looks true lowliness

Which seemed to say I am in peace,
 I became in grief so humble
 Seeing in her such finished humility
 That I said Death I hold thee very gentle
 Thou shouldst ever be a delicate thing
 Since thou dwellest in my lady
 And thou oughtest to have pity & not disdain.
 See I come to thee with such desire
 To be of thine that I resemble thee in faith
 Come since the heart seeks thee
 Then I departed every grief being fulfilled
 And when I was alone
 I said looking towards the other kingdom
 Blessed, o beautiful soul, is whoever sees thee.
 Ladies, you called me then, I thank you.

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[XXIV]

After this vain imagination, it happened one day that I sitting thoughtful in some place, felt a quaking commence in my heart as if I had been in the presence of this lady, then I say that there came to me an imagination of Love, who appeared to come from that place where my lady stood, & I thought that he said in my heart, "See thou bless the day when I took thee, since thou oughtest to do it," and certainly my heart seemed so glad that it did not appear to me to be my heart, through its new condition; and a little after, these words which my heart said to me with the tongue of love, I saw come towards me a gentle lady who was of famous beauty, and was long since the wife of my first friend (Guido Cavalcanti). The name of this lady was Giovanna, save that through her beauty, as some believe, the name of Primavera (The Spring) was bestowed on her, & so was she called. And looking near her, I saw come the wonderful Beatrice. These ladies came near me, one after the other, and I thought that Love spoke in my heart & said, "This first one is named Primavera, only for this coming of today, since I moved the bestower of her name to call her also Primavera, because *prima verra* (she shall first see) the day when Beatrice shall show herself according to the imagination of her faithful servant; and if I also wish to consider her name to signify that she is what (the Spring) Primavera is." And then I thought that I said other words to myself, that "whoever wishes to consider subtilly this Beatrice, would call her Love, through the strong resemblance which she has

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to me," whereupon I afterwards musing, proposed to write in rhyme to my first friend, suppressing certain words which it seemed fit to omit, I thinking that also his heart would admire the beauty of that gentle primavera (spring), and I said this sonnet;

30 I felt awaken within my heart
An amorous spirit which slept,
Then saw I Love come from far
So cheerful that hardly I knew him
Saying, Bethink thee to do me honour;
And at each word, he smiled;
And my lord remaining with me a little while,
I looking in that quarter whence he came,
Saw Mona Vanna and Mona Bice
Come towards that place where I was,
The one marvel after the other;
40 It is as if my mind said to me again,
Love said to me, This is Primavera,
And this is called Love, who so resembles me.

(To be concluded)

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