

Dreaming in Dante's Purgatorio

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ABSTRACT

Three successive nights throughout Dante's ascent in Purgatorio, the pilgrim pauses to sleep and engages in dreaming. The dreams are prophetic in nature and foreshadow elements of Dante's journey. Though many Dante scholars have analyzed the various dreams and their meanings, connections between the dreams have rarely been studied. While some scholars have argued that the dreams serve a common purpose, the manner in which the dreams achieve this purpose has not been characterized. This project seeks to examine the three dreams as a unit. In this analysis, I will demonstrate the way in which language is used in the dreams and the ways in which their introductions and conclusions are unified. Additionally, I will characterize the ways that the dreams create various continuums, one continuum that represents a decrease in eroticism and an increase in maternal qualities and another that represents a move from disorder to order. I will show how these continuums fit within Dante's progression toward Paradise and the changes he undergoes to prepare for his divine experiences.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Three successive nights on the mountain of Purgatory, Dante pauses to rest, engaging in regenerative sleep. As he sleeps, he experiences three distinct morning-dreams, describing each in detail. These dreams occur at key points in Dante's journey through Purgatory, serving both as a form of mental rejuvenation and as prefiguration of things to come. The three morning-dreams of *Purgatorio* appear to stand as separate entities since they occur in *canti* IX, XIX, and XXVII, three very different moments in the structure of the narrative; thus, many scholars have approached them in this manner.

This approach can be seen in Dino Cervigni's analysis in his article "Dante's Poetry of Dreams." In characterizing the role of the dreams, Cervigni argues that "the three dream visions restate the degree of purification the Pilgrim has already achieved during the day, during the night extend such cleansing to the imaginary world, and reinforce the Pilgrim's achieved state of purification by anticipating his future condition."¹ He continues by describing the manner in which the three dreams meet these goals. According to Cervigni, the first dream illustrates "how man's imagination should be well disposed to divine interventions," the second dream indicates in "what manner evil fantasies ought to be overcome," and the third underscores "what perfections one should finally reach."² Though Cervigni establishes a

¹ Dino S. Cervigni, "Dante's Poetry of Dreams," *Pacific Coast Philology* Nov. 1982: 26

² Cervigni 26-27

common set of general roles that the three dreams fulfill, he does not establish a unified process through which this occurs.

Derek Traversi, who also analyzes dreaming in Purgatory, similarly assigns a common role to the dreams: "The three nights are matched by three dreams – one to correspond to each night – in a sequence that traces the progress by which the various faculties of the soul are integrated and in which what is originally human becomes the order of God."³ Describing the dreams as a "sequence," Traversi seems to connect them; however, as he goes on to analyze the content of the dreams, he does not describe the ways in which they function as a sequence. Instead, he maintains separation amongst the three.

Several other scholars have found ways to concretely link the three dreams. Norton argues in his "Retrospection and Prefiguration in the Dreams of Purgatorio" that the dreams "are not to be considered as three entirely unrelated psychic events, each bearing its own purely anagogical interpretation."⁴ He maintains that instead the dreams should be viewed as introductions that work to prepare both Dante and the reader for events to follow. In these examples of analysis, scholars are able to develop a unified purpose that each of the three dreams works to accomplish. Though a singular goal is at times proposed, scholars do not connect the dreams any further. The ways in which the three dreams accomplish their aims in relation to one another has not been explored.

In this thesis, I will connect the dreams and describe their relationship to one another as a series of continuums. Within the structure of a continuum, the dreams each represent a

³ Derek Traversi, *The Literary Imagination: Studies in Dante, Chaucer, and Shakespeare*, (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1982), 18.

⁴ Glyn Norton, "Retrospection and Prefiguration in the Dreams of Purgatorio." *Italica*, 1970: 351.

certain point along a progression from one concept to its apparent opposite. Dante's examination and unification of opposing ideas is present throughout the *Commedia* as he explores many concepts that appear to be mutually exclusive. During his journey, he addresses the concepts of the masculine and feminine, of the human and the divine, of the structured and the disordered. Olivia Holmes argues that Dante does not approach these issues as a "binary thinker" but rather as "Trinitarian" one.⁵ She states that "when he proposes a thesis and an antithesis he generally looks for a synthesis; the poem's aim is arguably to describe a larger Truth in which all differences including those between male and female, intellect and matter, and the creator and the creation, are reconciled."⁶ Other scholars have similarly noted this approach; Guy Raffa explores Dante's ability to "have it both ways" when dealing with issues that would typically require a single, definitive solution. Raffa attributes this quality to the logic of Incarnation; Christ is simultaneously fully human and fully divine and thus creates a contradiction that does not fit within a binary structure.⁷ Dante's intentional decision not to approach seemingly contrasting ideas as mutually exclusive is present in the dreams of *Purgatorio*. By establishing the dreams as a set of continuums, Dante demonstrates the ways in which a concept such as masculinity can progress toward its opposite, femininity, without considering the two concepts as mutually exclusive. Instead of establishing a clear barrier between opposing concepts, he creates a blend and shows the ways in which they can merge and overlap.

⁵Olivia Holmes, *Dante's Two Beloveds: Ethics and Erotics in The Divine Comedy*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 3.

⁶ Holmes, 3

⁷ Guy Raffa, *Divine Dialect: Dante's Incarnational Poetry*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 200): 3-16.

The second chapter of this thesis will provide background information on the dreams themselves and the concept of the prophetic morning-dream. I will discuss the ancient and biblical references to prophetic dreaming with which Dante would have been familiar; in addition, I will explore the beliefs of several of Dante's contemporaries.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I will analyze the introductions of the three dreams. Prior to each of the dreams, Dante describes the process by which he falls asleep. Comparing these descriptions to the beliefs on morning-dreams of both Dante's predecessors and contemporaries reveals many similarities. Additionally, the way in which Dante describes the process of falling asleep can be connected to the dreams themselves. Through the description of the timing of each dream, Dante's word choice unites the three. However, Dante also uses the introductions to establish important differences between the dreams.

The fourth and fifth chapters will focus on the dreams representing points along two distinct continuums. The first is a continuum in which eroticism and masculinity decrease and maternal imagery and femininity increase. Along this continuum, the first dream represents a highly masculine and erotic point; the second dream is both feminine and erotic; and the third dream takes on a feminine and maternal character. The other continuum presented is one that runs from a disordered to an ordered state. Within this continuum, the first dream represents disorder and chaos, and the final dream signifies order and awareness. This continuum follows Dante's own reordering of his relationship with the divine and the relationship between his body and soul as he realigns himself with God.

Following an analysis of these two continuums, the sixth chapter will deal with the conclusions of the dreams. The conclusions will be analyzed in relationship to one another and

in relationship to the continuums. I will discuss the ways in which the conclusions represent Dante's reaction to the dream and his relationship with his guide, Virgil.

By presenting an analysis of the dreams' introductions and conclusions and placing the dreams on two distinct continuums, I will demonstrate the importance of the dreams in Dante's progression through Purgatorio.

CHAPTER 2

Background Information

In order to establish a necessary foundation for the analysis of dreaming in *Purgatorio*, both brief descriptions of the dreams and a discussion of the historical ideology of prophetic dreaming are necessary. Dante's first dream occurs in canto IX, just before dawn as he sleeps outside the gates of Purgatory. This dream centers on a golden eagle that snatches him with its talons and soars upward. A variety of interpretations of the eagle have been proposed, and Norton addresses several: "That of Christ, his incarnation and ascension; that of the soul undergoing a purgation and separation from the flesh, and the 'contemplative ecstasy' leading to ultimate union with Christ."⁸ These levels of interpretation incorporate the theme of ascension, mirroring and foreshadowing the actual physical ascension that Dante must undertake to reach Paradise. As reaching Paradise correlates to an "ultimate union with Christ," this interpretation of Dante's flight with the eagle also serves as a prophecy. When Dante awakens from the first dream, he finds that he has been physically moved by Lucy while sleeping.

Similar to the first dream, the second dream occurs in the early morning hours. In this dream, the pilgrim encounters a siren. He begins by describing her as disfigured, unattractive woman. However, after fixating on her, his gaze transforms her appearance. While she sings, the hideous siren grows captivating in Dante's own eyes, sending him into a trance. He is freed

⁸ Norton, 354.

from this trance by an angelic woman who alerts Virgil. The holy woman commands Virgil to act, and he responds by tearing the siren's clothes, revealing her belly and a terrible stench. The inclusion of this dream in Canto XIX places it after Virgil's discourse on free will and just before Dante's encounters with those purging sins of love in excess. Within the dream, Dante must exercise free will to choose between the "femmina balba," the siren, and "donna angelicata," holy lady. The siren, attempting to lure Dante from his ultimate goal, is a clear representation of the sins on upcoming terraces. On the other hand, the "donna angelicata" embodies the spirit of Beatrice, indicating that in order to reach Beatrice, Dante must overcome sins of love in excess. Only by conquering these terraces will Dante be reunited with his own "donna angelicata." Because Virgil must rescue Dante, the dream shows that Dante is incapable of making this journey on his own, and still requires the guidance of Virgil.

The third and final dream of Purgatorio occurs in canto XXVII on the terrace of the lustful, just before Dante is able to enter the Earthly Paradise. Again, the dream happens just before dawn. During the dream, Dante encounters Leah walking in a meadow. She speaks to him briefly, describing the differences between herself and her sister Rachel; while Leah prefers to work with her hands and create garlands, Rachel spends her time peering into her mirror. This meeting and discussion with a heavenly woman prior to the arrival of Beatrice prefigures the upcoming reunion. Additionally, the feminine presence in the dream foreshadows a female figure adopting the role of Dante's guide. As Norton argues, the actions of the two sisters also serve prophetic roles: "Whereas Lia's [Leah's] garlands are suggestive of good works, Rachel's mirror is the light of God which she contemplates."⁹ When Dante moves into Paradise, the act

⁹ Norton, 361.

of contemplation becomes a fundamental force guiding his spiritual progress, matching the actions he has made thus far. This duality of action and contemplation are represented and prefigured by the pastimes of Leah and Rachel.

On a very basic level, the three dreams have two things in common: they each take place in the morning right before the dreamer awakens, and they each foreshadow events that will occur later. The use of the morning-dream to accomplish divination was well-established by Dante's predecessors. The concept of the prophetic morning-dream has both biblical and ancient origins.¹⁰ Thus, Dante's belief in divination through morning-dreams was founded in his knowledge of the Bible and ancient literature. In one biblical description of dreaming, it is evident that God speaks through dreams, providing counsel: "For God does speak... In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, he may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings."¹¹ This example touches on the ability of dreams to reveal the future while underscoring the message that prophecy in dreaming is direct guidance from God. The focus on "warnings" indicates that the prophecies experienced during dreaming may foreshadow difficult events; God warns the dreamer that he must prepare for what is to come.

In the ancient works of Moschus, the author stresses the connection between prophetic dreams and morning time: "The third watch of the night sets in, and near is the dawning; when sleep more sweet than honey rests on the eyelids, limb-loosening sleep, that binds the eyes

¹⁰ Charles Speroni, "Dante's Prophetic Morning-Dreams," *Studies in Philology*, 1948: 52.

¹¹ The Holy Bible: New International Version, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), Job 33:14-16. All Biblical quotations and citations will be taken from this translation unless otherwise noted.

with his soft bond, when the flock of truthful dreams fares wandering.”¹² Through the use of the words “near the dawning,” this citation exhibits a strong connection between the time a dream occurs and its prophetic nature. As dawn nears, the nature of dreams becomes more truthful. Ovid echoed this belief that prophecy was connect to the timing of the dream: “Near the dawn...when true dreams are wont to be seen.”¹³ These examples illustrate that the concept of a prophetic morning-dream was well-established by Dante’s time.

In fact, many of Dante’s medieval contemporaries commented on divination through morning dreams. Adelard of Bath argued that “in dreams the soul, as it is in some way then freer from the irritations of the senses, focuses its sight and sometimes apprehends the truth about the future or a resemblance of it; it is least deceived under the dawn.”¹⁴ Again, the timing of dream is emphasized, and Adelard of Bath provides a connection to the senses. During dreaming, the soul is not subject to an interaction with the senses and can focus elsewhere, on extrasensory vision. Though Adelard of Bath states that the soul is most capable “under the dawn,” he does not provide a clear reason why this may be case. Michael Scot, another of Dante’s contemporaries, does emphasize reasons that the dawn is a particularly good time for a prophetic dream. Forming a relationship between dreaming and digestion, Scot theorized that prophetic dreams occur after digestion is complete. Digestion was believed to purge the body of impurities, and the end of digestion would signify the moment that the body was purest and most prepared for a divine experience. Additionally, as digestion would be completed toward the end of a sleep cycle, Scot’s theory coincides with that of the morning-

¹² Moschus, *Idyls*, in *Theocritus Bion and Moschus Rendered into English Prose*, translated by Andrew Lang, (London: Macmillan, 1889), 2.1-5.

¹³ Ovid, *Heroides*, translated by Harold Isbell (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 19.195-196

¹⁴ Adelard of Bath, *De eodem et diverso*, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, edited by H. Willner, (1903): 4.

dream.¹⁵ When he applies the established concept of divination through morning-dreams to each of the three separate dreams in *Purgatorio*, Dante is utilizing conventions of the importance of dream timing to unify the visions under the rubric of prophecy.

¹⁵ Speroni, 56.

CHAPTER 3

Dream Introductions

An examination of the three dreams quickly reveals one way in which they are related: Dante uses a similar structure to introduce each of the dreams and he concludes each of them with Virgil's voice. This chapter serves to examine the introductions of the three dreams and analyze the way in which the three dreams and introductions function together. Not only do the introductions relate to each other but they also connect to many beliefs on prophecy and dreaming that were shared by both ancient and medieval writers. Through the introduction, Dante asserts many of his own beliefs concerning the morning-dream and its ability to foreshadow the future.

The first of Dante's three morning dreams in Purgatorio occurs in Canto IX just before he enters into Purgatory proper. Dante begins the canto by describing the nighttime:

La concubina di Titone antico
già s'imbiancava al balco d'oriente,
fuor de le braccia del suo dolce amico;

di gemme la sua fronte era lucente
poste in figura del freddo animale
che con la coda percuote la gente;

e la notte, de' passi con che sale,
fatti avea due nel loco ov' eravamo,
e 'l terzo già chinava in giuso l'ale (Purgatorio 9.1-9)¹⁶

¹⁶ Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, translated by Robert M. Durling, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). All following citations from *Purgatorio* will come from this publication.

[The concubine of ancient Tithonus was already turning white on the eastern balcony, having left the arms of her sweet lover; with gems her forehead was shining, set in the shape of the cold animal that strikes people with its tail; and night, in the place where we were, had made two of the steps with which it ascends, and the third was already lowering its wing]

In Greek mythology, the goddess of the dawn fell in love with Tithonus and requested that he be made immortal. Even though her request was granted, Tithonus continued to grow older which is reflected in the word choice “antico.” Because Tithonus’ wife was the sunrise, “la concubina di Titone” [The concubine of Tithonus] likely refers to the moonrise. The “gemme” [gems] that take the shape of the “freddo animale che coda percuote la gente” [cold animal that strikes people with its tail] has been identified by scholars to be the constellation Scorpio. Dante’s decision to focus on a constellation that conjures images of harming others precedes what will be a violent, masculine dream. The connection to the dream that will follow extends to use of the word wing (“ale”). The first dream contains a significant amount of references to birds and flight; in giving the night wings, Dante correlates his description of the night with what he will experience while sleeping.

In the next *terzina*, Dante reminds us of his mortality and thus his need to sleep:

Quand’io, che meco avea di quel d’Adamo
Vinto dal sonno, in su l’erba inchinai
là ‘ve già tutti e cinque sedavamo. (Purgatorio 9.10-12)

[When I, who had with me something of Adam, overcome by sleep, reclined on the grass where all five of us were sitting.]

Adam is referenced because the pilgrim’s mortality is a result of his fall from grace. This need to engage in regenerative sleep is important to note at this point because it is the first time during the *Divine Comedy* that Dante experiences this need. In *Inferno*, the pilgrim experienced the timelessness of Hell. That timelessness negated any need for sleep. With the return of

time in Purgatorio comes the return of the necessity of sleep and a welcome return to human rhythms. The mention of grass in these lines relates to a line from scripture: "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand for ever."¹⁷ In this verse the eventual death of grass and people is compared to the everlasting nature of God's word. Reclining in the grass, Dante's mortality is emphasized.

Introducing the first dream sequence, Dante emphasizes both timing and prophecy:

Ne l'ora che comincia i tristi lai
la rondinella presso a la mattina,
forse a memoria de' suo' primi guai,

e che la mente nostra, peregrina
più da la carne e men da' pensier presa,
a le sue vision quasi è divina (Purgatorio 9.13-18)

[In the hour near morning when the swallow begins her sad lays, perhaps in memory of her first woes, and when our mind, journeying further from the flesh and less taken by its cares, is almost a diviner in its visions]

The inclusion of "Ne l'ora che" is repeated in each of the three dream introductions, and indicates that the placement of the dream in time is significant. The introduction of this dream illustrates the concepts established by Dante's predecessors and contemporaries. Placing the dream near morning ("la mattina"), he links the timing of the dream with dawn. This emphasis on time indicates on its own that the dream will be prophetic, yet Dante goes on to state that the mind is separated from the flesh and capable of divine visions. His description of the mind journeying from the flesh is very similar to Adelard of Bath's description of a separation

¹⁷ Isaiah 40:6

between the soul and bodily senses. In addition, the final line of this introduction informs the reader that the upcoming dreams are forms of divination.

In the second morning-dream of Purgatorio, Dante encounters a siren who first appears ugly but becomes beautiful and alluring in his eyes. Though the dream itself takes place in Canto XIX, the description of Dante falling asleep takes place at the end of Canto XVIII:

Poi quando fuor da noi tanto divise
quell' ombre che veder più non potersi,
novo pensiero dentro a me si mise,

del qual più altri nacquero e diversi;
e tanto d'uno in altro vaneggiai
che li occhi per vaghezza ricopersi,

e 'l pensiero in sogno trasmutai. (Purgatorio 18.139-145)

[Then when those shades had gone so far from us as to be seen no more, a new thought came into me, from which a number of other, different ones were born; and from one to the other I so wandered on, that I closed my eyes in drowsiness and transmuted thinking into dream]

Several aspects of Dante's description of the sleep process relate to the dream that will follow.

Describing his thought as birthed from another, Dante alludes to the confusion and perversion of the maternal that will take place in the dream of siren. The conclusion of Canto XVIII focuses on the transmutation of thinking into dream. The process of transmutation is central to the image of the siren: the dreamer's view of the siren transforms her from ugly to beautiful and desirable. By focusing on his own ability to transform thinking to dreaming, Dante prefigures his ability to change the "femmina balba." The relationship between thinking and dreaming that is established as Dante falls asleep differs from the relationship that is characterized in the introduction of the first dream. In canto IX, Dante describes the process in which the mind journeys and separates from the thinking flesh to experience dreaming. In this canto, however,

he describes the way in which thinking results in the birth of thoughts that eventually transform and become dreaming. The emphasis on separation in the first dream may indicate that the pilgrim corporally is not prepared for the divine. In order for his soul to experience the divine dream, it must separate from his flesh. However, as Dante undergoes purgation, perhaps the need to create a separation between the body and soul before the divine can be experienced is lessened.

As he introduces the second dream, Dante follows the pattern that he established in Canto IX:

Ne l'ora che non può 'l calor diurno
intepidar più 'l freddo de la luna,
vinto da terra, e talor da Saturno

quando i geomanti lor Maggior Fortuna
veggiono in oriente, innanzi a l'alba,
surger per via che poco le sta bruna (Purgatorio 19.1-6)

[At the hour when the heat of the day can no longer warm the cold of the moon, vanquished by earth and sometimes by Saturn, when the geomancers see their Greater Fortune in the east, before the dawn, rising along a path that stays dark for it but a short while]

Again, the placement of this dream in time proves crucial as evident by the repetition of “Ne l’ora che.” Robert Durling and Ronald Martinez comment on this introduction and the focus on cold: “The insistence on cold (the element earth and the moon and Saturn were regarded as cold) is connected with the urge toward lesser goods (metals, including gold and silver are forms of the element earth), and especially lust, traditionally due to the influence of Saturn and

associated with freezing, flooding, and winter.”¹⁸ Because a cold and Saturn are incorporated in this introduction, their correlation to lust is tied to the lustful nature of the siren.

In the second tercet of this introduction, Dante references geomancy, which Durling and Martinez define as the process of “divining from earth signs” through which one “associated random patterns of points (on the ground in sandy places or on paper, often cast just before dawn) with zodiacal asterisms.”¹⁹ “Greater Fortune” (“Maggior Fortuna”) was a geomantic figure, though its exact relevance to dreaming has not been determined by modern scholars. However, scholars have agreed that Aquarius comprises part of Greater Fortune. This is crucial because, according to Durling and Martinez, Aquarius was thought to represent Ganymede, a key figure in the first dream whose significance will be addressed in the chapter on the erotic continuum of the three dreams.

Dante’s final dream in *Purgatorio* occurs in Canto XXVII, as he ends his journey up the Mountain of Purgatory and prepares for his encounter with Beatrice. The introduction of this dream also reflects on many ideals of prophecy and dreaming. As the pilgrim prepares to sleep, Dante creates a comparison to goats and their shepherds:

Quali si stanno ruminando manse
le capre, state rapide e proterve
sopra le cime avante che sien pranse

tacite a l’ombra, mentre che ‘l sol ferve,
guardate dal pastor, che ‘n su la verga
poggiato s’è e lor di posa serve:

¹⁸ Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez, “Introduction and Notes” from *Purgatorio*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 316.

¹⁹ Durling and Martinez, 316.

e quale il mandrian che fòri alberga
lungo il pecuglio suo queto pernotta,
guardando perché fiera non lo sperga:

tali eravamo tutti e tre allotta,
io come capra ed ei come pastori
fasicati quinci e quindi d'altra grotta. (Purgatorio 27.76-87)

[As the she-goats are still and tame as they ruminate, though they were swift and wild on the hilltops before having fed, silent in the shade while the sun burns, guarded by the goatherd, who leans on his staff and provides them with rest: as the shepherd who dwells outdoors spends the night resting alongside his flock, taking care that no wild beast disperse them: so were all three of us then, I like a she-goat, they like shepherds, enclosed on this side and that by the high rock.]

The simile of the she-goats and the goatherd begins with a reference to goats ruminating following food consumption: "Quali si stanno ruminando manse le capre" [As the she-goats are still and tame as they ruminate]. Rumination is the initial stage of digestion in some mammals, by which an animal softens its food in preparation for full digestion. Dante places the action of food consumption and the following rumination in the day time, referencing the burning sun: "'I sol ferve.'" The focus on digestion before this particular dream is reminiscent of Michel Scot's beliefs. Scot professed that dreaming became prophetic near dawn because dawn marked the completion of digestion. Following the description of the goats, Dante indicates that he is like them: "io come capra." By connecting himself to the goats, Dante also connects himself to the process of consumption and rumination that the goats carry out during the daytime and ultimately the process of digestion that must occur overnight. In fact, Dante states that he experiences the rumination process as he is falling asleep: "Si ruminando e sì mirando in quelle, me prese il sonno" [Thus ruminating and gazing at them, sleep too me] (Purgatorio 27.91-92). Dante then emphasizes that sleep can be prophetic: "Il sonno che sovente, anzi che 'l fatto sia, sa le novella" [Sleep that often, before the event comes, knows the news]

(Purgatorio 27.92-93). Stating that he is undergoing rumination and then immediately referencing prophetic dreaming, Dante underscores the connection established by Michel Scot.

Several aspects of this introduction are related to the introductions of the first two dreams. This canto's reference to the prophetic nature of dreaming is significantly similar to the description of divine dream that precedes the dream of the eagle. The simile that Dante uses to compare himself to sheep is a reminder of Dante's mortality that recalls the mention of grass in the first dream. Additionally, this dream is preceded by the established introduction structure:

Ne l'ora, credo, che de l'oriente
prima raggiò nel monte Citerea,
che di foco d'amor par sempre ardente (Purgatorio 27.94-96)

[At the hour, I believe, when from the east Cytherea first shone on the mountain, she who seems always aflame with the fire of love]

By including "Ne l'ora...che" in this final introduction, Dante solidifies the unification of the three dreams.

The introduction of this third dream does differ from the first two in several notable ways. While the first two introductions do astronomically describe the hour of dreaming, they do not include any reflection of the celestial bodies by the pilgrim. In the third introduction, the pilgrim does focus on the stars themselves:

Poco parer potea lì del di fòri,
ma per quel poco vedea io le stelle
di lor solere e più chiare e maggiori (Purgatorio 27.88-90).

[Little could be seen there of outside things, but by that little, I saw the stars brighter and larger than their custom]

These lines indicate that the pilgrim is taking notice of the stars. Durling and Martinez posit that this reference to gazing at the stars, which was noticeably absent from the other two dreams, may indicate that Dante is more prepared for Paradiso: "In the first (dream) he sleeps because he is weighed down by flesh, in the second when thinking back on Virgil's expositions. Here his gazing at the stars, like their greater brightness and size, suggests a new openness to the celestial and foreshadows Paradiso."²⁰ This dream is also set apart by the way in which Dante chooses to establish the hour. In the first dream he uses the sorrowful nature of the swallow, and in the second dream he references the cold. These two descriptions are negative in nature whereas the third dream utilizes a more positive reference. Here, Dante describes warmth within the context of Venus' love: "che di foco d'amor par sempre ardente" [she who seems always aflame with the fire of love]. The description of both warmth and love contrast heavily with the previously utilized violent, lustful, and cold imagery.

The introductions of the three dreams, when viewed as a set, reveal Dante's concept of prophecy and the morning-dream. His references to timing, digestion, and the divine nature of his dreams fit well with the views of his predecessors and contemporaries. Moreover, the introductions of the dreams connect heavily to the imagery and action of the dreams themselves. The differences in these introductions help to define the changes that Dante experiences as he begins to reach order and recognition of the maternal. Additionally, these differences in introductions allude to distinctions present between the actual dreams.

²⁰ Durling and Martinez, 468.

CHAPTER 4

The Erotic to Maternal Continuum

The erotic, masculine nature of the first dream has been heavily commented on by scholars.²¹ However, this erotic nature has not been examined in relationship with the other two morning-dreams. Traversi argues that the first dream "has, as experienced by the poet, a fevered, almost erotic quality that differentiates it from the two visions to follow."²² Though the eroticism present in the first dream is unlike the second or third dreams, a connection between all three dreams can be made. In this chapter, I will argue that the dreams exist on a continuum in which the dreams begin as male and erotic and progress to feminine and maternal. I will also demonstrate the way in which the dreams exist on the related but distinct continuum of decreasing physicality and increasing spirituality. Examining the three dreams as a continuum in which eroticism and masculinity decrease and feminization and maternal qualities increase, I establish a connection between the erotic quality of the first dream and the two that follow can be established. This continuum begins with imagery that is both distinctly masculine and erotic. In the second dream, a progression to a feminine, erotic quality takes place. The continuum ends in the third dream, with imagery that is both feminine and maternal. The various divine beings and references to ancient myth establish the nature of each dream and dictate their position on the continuum.

²¹ See both Traversi and Kathryn Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988).

²² Traversi, 19.

In the first of the dreams, Dante recalls ancient tales to create masculine, erotic imagery. Using references to a swallow, Dante recalls the story of Philomela and Procne:

Ne l'ora che comincia i tristi lai
la rondinella presso a la mattina,
forse a memoria de' suo' primi guai (Purgatorio 9.13-15)

[In the hour near morning when the swallow begins her sad lays, perhaps in memory of her first woes]

Philomela was raped by Procne's husband Tereus; he subsequently cut out Philomela's tongue and imprisoned her. The three of them later morphed into birds, and Philomela became a swallow. Dante's use of a swallow or "rondinella" in establishing the timing of the dream reflects on the terrible acts that Philomela suffered. Recalling a story in which rape and bodily mutilation are central focuses, this imagery sets the standards that the rest of the dream will follow. This story also includes an attacker, Tereus, and a victim, Philomela. This theme is common throughout the dream and is connected to the way in which male eroticism is exhibited: the male erotic form actively pursues a passive form. In this activity, the attacker adopts a dominant, aggressive identity, while the one being pursued is unable to establish an effective defense.

This concept carries over into the next ancient reference in which Dante compares himself to Ganymede, who was captured by Zeus in the form of an eagle:

Ed esser mi pareva là dove fuoro
abbandonati i suoi da Ganimede,
quando fu ratto al sommo consistoro (Purgatorio 9.22-24)

[And I seemed to be where his people were abandoned by Ganymede, when he was carried off to the highest consistory]

Ganymede, as an attractive youth, was carried up by Zeus to serve him as a cup-bearer. Durling and Martinez note that this story was often used as an allegory for the ascent of the soul to Heaven, yet it still maintained its original violent and erotic nature.²³ Because Dante places himself in Ganymede's position, he becomes the victim, open and vulnerable to rapture. In Traversi's analysis of the reference to Ganymede and the eagle, he focuses on this rapture: "The dream, in fact, represents a kind of rape, and there is a violent, disquieting note about Dante's account of it. The eagle's descent is 'terrible as lightning' (9.29) and it comes to "rape" ("rapisce": 9.30) the sleeping poet, raising him to the sphere of fire."²⁴ The Italian verb rapire not only signifies the modern concept of rape but was also used to represent the idea of kidnapping. The "rape" or "kidnapping" of Dante signifies that he is a passive agent in relation to the divine eagle. At this point, he is surrendering control to the eagle. This is a reoccurring theme that is present in each of the other dreams; Dante is consistently placed in a position of passivity. However, this dream is distinct because the divine agent exerts its power over Dante in an overtly aggressive manner. Comparing this relationship between Dante and the divine agents of the second and third dreams, this one has a distinctly aggressive quality that relates to the masculine nature of the dream. Traversi goes on to describe the significance of the dream and argues that it focuses on "Dante's impression of personal helplessness, the sense of being emotionally – and indeed physically – assaulted, taken out of himself."²⁵ As a result of the eagle's rapture, Dante feels a forced sense of helplessness and surrender to the stronger, divine power. The disconnect and loss of the control over his own body that Dante experiences

²³ Durling and Martinez, 152.

²⁴ Traversi, 19.

²⁵ Traversi, 19-20.

at this point of the dream is a fevered reflection of the divine intervention that must take place to prepare him for journey toward grace.

The eroticism and masculine quality of the dream continues when Dante makes reference to Achilles:

Non altrimenti Achille si rescosse,
li occhi svegliati rivolgendo in giro
e non sappiendo là dove si fosse,

quando la madre da Chiròn a Schiro
trafuggò lui dormendo in le sue braccia,
là onde poi li Greci il dipartiro (Purgatorio 9.34-39)

[Not otherwise did Achilles shake himself, turning his awakened eyes about in a circle, not knowing where he was, when his mother fled with him sleeping in her arms from Chiron to Skyros, whence the Greeks later took him away]

These lines reference the tale in which Achilles' mother takes him to the island of Scyros to protect him during the Trojan War. The Greeks, acting as this tale's attackers, later took him from the island and killed him. The imagery of Achilles sleeping in his mother's arms and subsequently slain by Greek invokes the image of a passive victim and fuels the previously established physical nature of the dream. This story demonstrates an attempt by a maternal agent that ultimately fails. At this point in Dante's progression through purgatory, the maternal being is unable to achieve success.

Dante underscores the disorientation that Achilles experiences during the transportation process. The simile that Dante uses to describe his confusion in relation to Achilles' confusion is derived from Statius' Achilles:

When the boy, his sleep disturbed, feels the day
Filtering into his open eyes. First the air amazes him:
what's this place, these waves, where is Pelion? All is changed

and all unknown; he hesitates even to recognize his mother²⁶

The confusion is so extreme that Achilles fails to recognize his own mother. As Dante compares himself to Achilles, he experiences similar confusion:

che mi scoss' io, sì come da la faccia
mi fuggì 'l sonno, e diventa' ismorto,
come fa l'uom che spaventato agghiaccia. (Purgatorio 9.40-42)

[Then I shook myself, as soon as sleep from my face, and turned pale, as one does who freezes in terror]

Similar to Achilles, Dante is too confused and terrified to recognize the maternal. The mother that Dante fails to recognize, however, is not a literal one. Instead, due to the high level of masculine eroticism that he has experienced in this dream, he is too distanced from the maternal to recognize its presence. This comparison indicates that though the maternal exists, Dante is not prepared to accept it. The "rape" that he experiences in this dream is the first step in his progression toward accepting the maternal because it represents his starting point.

Though it is not entirely clear why Dante fails to identify the maternal, I hypothesize that this failure is in its own way a prophecy that correlates with Dante's conscious experience. The dream as a whole serves as prefiguration for Dante's ascent to the base of purgatory, and Dante's inability to recognize the maternal correlates with this ascent. When Dante wakes up and realizes that he is outside of Purgatory, Virgil recounts what had happened while he slept:

"Dianzi, ne l'alba che procede al giorno,
quando l'anima tua dentro dormia
sopra li fiori ond' è là giù addorno,

venne una donna, e disse: 'l' son Lucia;

²⁶ Statius, P. Papini Stati Thebais et Achilleis, edited by H. W. Garrod, (Oxford: Oxford Classical Texts, 1965), 247-250

Lasciatemi pigliar costui che dorme:
sì l'agevolerò per la sua via.'" (Purgatorio 9.52-57).

[Earlier, in the dawn that precedes the day, when your soul was asleep within you on the flowers that adorn the earth down there, a lady came and she said: "I am Lucia; let me take up this sleeper: so will I ease him on his way."]

The events that Virgil describes coincide significantly with aspects of the pilgrim's dream. Virgil indicates that Lucy arrived at dawn, just as the dream was beginning. Because the timing of Dante's physical movement correlates with the movement in his dream, the eagle may serve as a representation of Lucy ("Lucia"). In fact, Lucy carried Dante up the mountain just as the eagle had carried Dante in his dream. However, while the eagle represented a violent, masculine form of intervention, Lucy embodies a maternal form of intervention. While the eagle used his claws to transport Dante, Lucy presses him to her bosom. Using the word "agevolerò," she focuses on making Dante's transition an easy one. As Lucy moves the sleeper, he is not disturbed. These actions are in sharp contrast to the violent, "terrible" way in which Dante was moved during the dream. Virgil continued his description of Lucy's actions:

"Sordel rimase e l'altre genti forme;
ella ti tolse e, come 'l dì fu chiaro,
sen venne suso, e io per le sue orme.

Qui ti posò, ma pria mi dimostraro
Li occhi suoi belli quella intrata aperta;
poi ella e 'l sonno ad una se n'andaro." (Purgatorio 9.58-63)

[Sordello stayed behind, and the other noble forms; she took you and, when the day was bright, came on up here, and I in her footsteps. Here she put you down, but first her lovely eyes showed me that open entrance; then she and your sleep went away at the same moment."]

Lucy's helpful, caring nature is evident in her actions. After transporting Dante, she indicates to Virgil the way that he and the pilgrim must continue. Virgil also focuses on various aspects of Lucy's femininity, commenting on her beautiful eyes. This mention of a female attribute is

vastly different from the male imagery used throughout Dante's description of the dream. Similarly to the way in which Lucy's arrival coincides with the beginning of the dream, Lucy's departure happens just as Dante wakes up. As a result, Dante is entirely unaware of the female presence that actively comes to his aid. He sleeps throughout all of her intervention and thus cannot connect with Lucy, a representation of a maternal figure. The lack of awareness may be prefigured by Dante's lack of awareness in his dream.

Dante's inability to recognize the feminine presence may also reflect his journey up to the point of the dream. Travelling through *Inferno*, Dante had very little interaction with women. In canto V, he speaks to Francesca and Paolo in the circle of the lustful. Beyond this interaction, his encounters are with men and carry masculine, violent overtones. Leaving *Inferno* and progressing into *Purgatorio*, a significant amount of time without female interaction has lapsed. The lack of female presence in *Inferno* may contribute to the disorientation experience by Dante during the first dream. As his journey continues through *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, Dante's interaction with women steadily increases. This increase culminates in an interaction with the ultimate maternal figure, the Virgin Mary. Thus, the continuum of increasing femininity throughout the dreams correlates with the interactions that Dante has during his journey. Dante's guides follow a similar pattern. Throughout *Inferno*, Virgil serves as Dante's guide; this changes shortly after Dante's third dream. In the Earthly Paradise, Dante's love Beatrice takes over and becomes his guide. This change from a masculine leader to a feminine one follows the same pattern as the dreams themselves. Though Virgil acts in many ways as Dante's protector, his masculine presence may be a contributing factor in Dante's inability to connect with a maternal figure.

As he progresses toward the maternal, Dante's next dream maintains an erotic nature but moves away from a masculine and toward a feminine focus. The introduction to the dream begins with a description of the siren's body:

Mi venne in sogno una femmina balba,
ne li occhi guercia e sovra i piè distorta,
con le man monche, e di colore scialba. (Purgatorio 19.7-9)

[There came to me in dream a female, stuttering, cross-eyed, and crooked on her feet, with stunted hands, and pallid in color.]

This focus on the siren's physical appearance is maintained throughout the dream as Dante also references "la lingua" (Purgatorio 19.13) and "sua bocca" (Purgatorio 19.25). With each reference to the siren's body, Dante draws attention to her physicality. This distinguishes the eroticism of the siren from the eroticism seen in the first dream. While the dream of eagle focused on rape, rapture, and fire, this dream focuses on the female form and the male perception of it. Though Dante's original description of the siren indicates that she is cross-eyed, crooked, pallid, and has stunted hands, she quickly becomes beautiful to him:

Io la mirava; e come, 'l sol conforta
le fredde membra che la notte aggrava,
così lo sguardo mio le facea scorta

la lingua, e poscia tutta la drizzava
in poco d'ora, e lo smarrito volto,
com' amor vuol, così le colorava.

Poi ch'ell' avea 'l parlar così disciolto,
cominciava a cantar sì che con pena
da lei avrei mio intento rivolto. (Purgatorio 19.10-18)

[I was gazing at her; and, as the sun strengthens cold limbs that the night weighs down, so my gaze loosed her tongue, and then in short while it straightened her entirely and gave color to her wan face, just as love desires. Once her speech was loosened so, she began to sing in such a way that I could hardly have turned my attention from her.]

The transformation is so extreme that Dante fixates on the siren, unable to shift his gaze: “con pena da lei avrei mio intento rivolto” (Purgatorio 19.17-18). The action that sets off this transformation is Dante’s own gaze. The power of his gaze to accomplish this feat further illustrates that female eroticism depends on the male observer. Olivia Holmes comments heavily on this transformation, arguing that “imagination in absence of reason’s guidance, can exaggerate an object’s desirability.”²⁷ She goes on to make a connection between the power of Dante’s gaze and the idealization of women in courtly literature in which vision is paramount. Andreas Capellanus defined love as “an inborn suffering, which results from the sight of, and uncontrolled thinking about, the beauty of the other sex.” He went on to state that love “arises not from any action, but solely from the thought formed by the mind as a result of the thing seen.”²⁸ Dante’s focus on the transformative nature of vision in developing erotic attraction extends to the “Donna Gentile” episode in the *Vita nova*: “Io venni a tanto per la vista di questa donna, che li miei occhi si cominciaro a dilectare troppo di vederla” [the sight of this lady brought me to such a point by that my eyes began to delight too much in seeing her].²⁹ Giuseppina Mezzadrolì proposes that the siren’s metamorphosis through Dante’s gaze may also have been a suggestion derived from Boethius’ *Consolation* in which Philosophy states, “So it is not your nature that makes you appear fair, but the weakness of the eyes of those who look at you.”³⁰ Capellanus’ focus on the “thought formed by the mind,” Dante’s emphasis on vision through the use of “vista” and “occhi,” and Boethius’ description of the “weakness” of eyes all illustrate that it is not the women that incites love, but rather it is the male fixation on the

²⁷ Holmes, 59.

²⁸ Andreas Capellanus, *On Love*, edited and translated by P. G. Walsh, (London: Duckworth, 1993), 1.1.1,8; 33-35.

²⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Vita nova*, edited by G. Gorni, (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), 26.1.

³⁰ Boethius, *The Theological Tractates: The Consolation of Philosophy*, revised, edited, and translated by S.J. Thester et al., (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 3.p.8.

women that generates it. Holmes states, "It is not beauty that arouses the lover's desire...but the lover's desiring gaze – and the excessive meditation upon the lady's image – that produces beauty."³¹

Connecting these ideas to the dream, the siren does not physically become different, yet Dante perceives her in a different manner. In describing his fascination with the siren, he mistakenly confuses his lust-filled perceptions with ones fueled by love. This mistake is similar to his failed recognition of the maternal in the dream of the eagle. Dante compares the sirens beauty to that which love desires because he is cannot, at this point, recognize the true nature of love. Traversi comments that following this dream, Dante will achieve a more complete concept of love and desire: "Dante, in terms of his journey, is ready to pass from the terraces devoted to essentially perverted forms of 'love' to those that call, not for final renunciation, but for incorporation into a more adequate understanding of the meaning and end of 'desire.'"³² Though the dream prefigures this pathway, he has not accomplished this aim and does not realize that his current concept of desire is perverted and inaccurate. Additionally in this dream, Dante again becomes passive in comparison to the divine being. He is unable to move and appears to be under the siren's control.

As the siren begins to sing, she tells of the manner in which she ruined Ulysses:

"Io son," cantava, "io son dolce serena,
che ' marinari in mezzo mar dismago,
tanto son di piacere a sentir piena.

Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin, vago
al canto mio, e qual meco s'ausa

³¹ Holmes, 60.

³² Traversi, 26.

rado sen parte, sì tutto l'appago!" (Purgatorio 19.22-24)

["I am," she was singing, "I am a sweet siren, who enchant the sailors on the deep sea, so full of pleasure am I to hear! I turned Ulysses from his course, desirous of my song, and whoever becomes used to me rarely leaves me, so wholly do I satisfy him!"]

The siren's ability to lure Ulysses from his course demonstrates her sexuality and appeal. Her statement "sì tutto l'appago" indicates that she leaves men satisfied and also has highly sexual and erotic connotations. Again a divergence is evident from the masculinity of the eagle dream. While the eagle dream focused on an attacker and a victim, the siren speaks of pleasing the opposite sex. Though she does ultimately harm the men that she speaks of, she does so in a covert manner. There is no aggression present in her mode of destruction, instead she charms the male agent and lures him to his demise. This separates the two forms of eroticism; there is an aggressive, male type and a deceptive, female. The eroticism of the second dream is thus distinctly female.

As the second dream progresses, a move toward the maternal is evident. With the appearance of the holy lady near the end of the second dream, a maternal female figure enters. She arrives to rescue Dante and immediately chastises Virgil: "'O Virgilio, Virgilio, chi è questa?' fieramente dicea" (Purgatorio 19.28-29). Her actions immediately convey a protective nature and are in stark contrast with the devious siren. The arrival of the holy lady who urges Virgil to act is reminiscent of the way in which Beatrice commands Virgil's participation in canto II of *Inferno*. This moment represents a departure from the obsession and fixation of the dream. In order for the holy lady to take part in the delivery of a message to Virgil, she must be connected to both the origin of the message and Virgil. Virgil, in turn, must form a link between the holy lady and Dante. During the transmission of the message, information must flow from the holy

lady to Dante through a third party. This flow is the opposite of the fixation of the dream.

Dante cannot focus on anything but the siren; he has temporarily lost the ability to participate in the linkage necessary for such a transmission to occur. Once the holy lady calls Virgil, he quickly takes action. Virgil tears open the siren's clothes, and a collision between the maternal and erotic occurs:

L'altra prendea, e dinanzi l'apria,
fendeno i drappi, e mostravami 'l ventre;
quel mi svegliò col puzzo che n'uscita (Purgatorio 19.31-33)

[The other he seized and opened in front, tearing her clothes, and showed me her belly, which awakened me with the stench that issued from it.]

Because Virgil exposes the siren by ripping her clothes, an action that has erotic connotations, this moment further illustrates the way in which female eroticism is present in the second dream. The imagery of tattered clothing corresponding to a woman's sexuality was defined by Alan of Lille; his Nature, as a female, states "many men arm themselves with vices to injure their own mother and establish between her and them the chaos of ultimate dissension, in their violence they lay violent hands on me, tear my clothes in shreds to have pieces for themselves, and as far as in them lies, compel me, whom they should clothes in honor and reverence, to be stripped of my clothes and to go like a harlot to a brothel."³³ Nature is an object of the man's actions; they create the tears in her dress. Likewise, the siren, representing the female erotic, is an object for man to pursue. Though she throughout the dream does incite erotic arousal, her eroticism depends on a male audience or agent to be present. Thus, it follows that a man is responsible for removing her clothing. Dante is a man, but he is placed in

³³ Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus or the Good and Perfect Man*, translated by J. Sheridan, (Toronto: P.I.M.S., 1980), 4.p.

a consistently passive role in relationship to divine agents, and thus Virgil must undertake this action.

Virgil's action further qualifies the distinction between the lustful, erotic siren and a maternal figure. The exposure of the siren's belly that issues a stench is a perversion of Mary's womb. In the final canto of *Paradiso*, Dante describes Mary's womb:

Nel ventre tuo si raccese l'amore,
per lo cui caldo ne l'eterna pace
così è germinato questo fiore. (*Paradiso* 33.7-9)

[That love whose warmth allowed this flower to bloom within the everlasting peace – was love rekindled in your womb; for us above]³⁴

Dante selects the word “ventre” both in this description and that of the siren. Using “uscita” to describe the movement of the stench is similar to the action that a baby takes during birth.

Thus, the movement of the stench is a distortion of the way in which Jesus was produced from Mary's womb. Mary, as the mother of God, serves as the standard maternal figure.

Additionally, Dante stresses in the final canto of *Paradiso* that she is a “Vergine Madre” (33.1).

She represents the concept of fertility in the purest and most proper sense. Her identity simultaneously rests on her sexless nature and her ability to reproduce. The siren, however, is both lustful and unable to produce anything viable; she only produces a terrible stench.

Dante's inability to recognize the contrast between proper fertility and lust without the help of Virgil shows that his concept of a correct maternal agent is still unformed.

Dante's awareness of a maternal, feminine presence is finally realized in the third prophetic dream. Before the dream even begins, Dante feminizes himself, calling himself a she-

³⁴ Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, translated by Allen Mandelbaum, (New York: Bantam Classic, 1984).

goat or a capra. Durling and Martinez conclude that the decision to reference she-goats rather than he-goats is driven by euphony: "In all nine lines there are only three words ending in -l in lines 76 and 82, but if capri had been used instead of capre, eight more would have been required, a total of eleven."³⁵ I believe that that Dante's decision to select a female animal extends beyond the way in which the words would sound and further indicates a movement away from the masculine end of the continuum. In Italian, the word for soul is *anima*, which is feminine. The "feminine" nature of the soul is constant, regardless of the beholder's gender. Thus, Dante's recognition of his own feminine nature may indicate that he is experiencing full recognition of his soul in preparation for his union with God.

Moving into the dream itself, there is a focus on femininity. The dream centers on two sisters, Leah and Rachel. According to the Bible, Jacob asked Leah and Rachel's father, Laban, for Rachel's hand in marriage. Laban agreed under the condition that Jacob gave him seven years of labor. On the marriage night, Laban substituted Leah for Rachel, arguing that the older daughter should be married first. He then agreed to allow Jacob to marry Rachel in exchange for seven more years of labor. Jacob agreed and ended with the both sisters as his wives. Augustine of Hippo discussed Leah and Rachel in his *Contra Faustum*: "Two lives are preached to us in the Church: one temporal, in which we labor; one eternal, in which we will delight in the contemplation of God. The former is declared by the Lord's Passion, the latter by his Resurrection...Thus the living of the mortal human life, in which we live by faith, doing many laborious works though uncertain whether they will be beneficial to those we wish to help, that is Leah, Jacob's first wife, and that is why she is said to have weak eyes, for the cogitations of

³⁵ Durling and Martinez, 468.

mortals are timid and our previsions are uncertain. But the hope of the eternal contemplation of God, with the certain and delectable knowledge of Truth, that is Rachel, and that is why she is said to be beautiful and of goodly features...For in the just training of a man the performing of what is just comes before the pleasure of understanding what is true."³⁶ Dante's dream of the sisters correlates to the roles established by Augustine.

Biblically, these ideals also were also represented by the sisters Martha and Mary: "Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving; and she went to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.'"³⁷ In his *Convivio*, Dante commented on this biblical story, concluding that both an active and contemplative life can lead to bliss but that a contemplative is better and closer to God.

The third dream correlates to the dual lives established by both Augustine and Dante in the *Convivio*. In this dream, he sees Leah walking through a meadow of flowers, gathering them as she goes:

Giovane e bella in sogno mi pareo
donna vedere andar per una landa
cogliendo fiori, e cantando dice:

"Sappia qualunque il mio nome dimanda
Ch'i' mi son Lia, e vo movenda intorno

³⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *De sermone Domini in monte libri duos post Maurinorum recensionem denuo editit* Almut Nutzenbecher, (Turnholt: Brepols, 1995), 22.52.

³⁷ Luke 10.38-42

Le belle mani a farmi una ghirlanda." (Purgatorio 27.97-102)

[In dream I seemed to see a lady, young and beautiful, walking in a meadow gathering flowers, and singing she said: "Whoever asks my name, let him know that I myself am Leah, and I go moving my lovely hands about in order to make myself a garland."]

Leah serves as a representation of an active life. When she speaks, she describes the manner in which she makes garlands using her hands. Leah's efforts to produce something also set her apart from the siren. In contrast, throughout the second dream, the siren does not demonstrate an ability to produce anything valuable. Durling and Martinez states that one's ability to use their hands demonstrates "the operation of moral virtues" and the garlands that Leah creates "signify the merits she gains from her works."³⁸ Because the siren does not produce anything, she fails to demonstrate moral virtue or merit. Leah's creation ties to the concept of the maternal because the role of the mother is defined by the production of a child. As Leah continues talking to Dante, she describes her sister:

"Per piacermi a lo specchio qui m'addorno,
ma mia suora Rachel mai non si smaga
dal suo miraglio, e siede tutto giorno.

Ell' è d'i suoi belli occhi veder vaga
com'io de l'addornarmi con le mani:
lei lo vedere e me l'ovrare appaga." (Purgatorio, 27.103-109).

["To please myself at the mirror I here adorn myself, but my sister Rachel is never distracted from her looking-glass, and sits there all day long. She is as desirous to see her lovely eyes as I am to adorn myself: seeing satisfies her, doing satisfies me."]

Rachel, in turn, represents the contemplation. The mirror was a universal symbol of contemplation during the Middle Ages. As she takes in her own appearance, she realizes not

³⁸ Durling and Martinez, 470.

only her own ability for reflection and contemplative vision, but also she realizes the vision of God.

This dream illustrates a shift in the continuum from feminine erotic to feminine maternal. Though Dante does comment on Leah's appearance, his focus shifts from the erotic aspects of the female body to a more pure interpretation. His description of Leah lacks the desirous language used to describe the siren. Though Dante does perceive Leah as a beautiful woman, he does not fixate on her in the same manner as he did the siren. Instead, he merely listens to her speak. The lack of fascinated male observer leaves no room for female eroticism to be present in this dream. The shift away from eroticism is also supplemented by the repetition of the concepts of satisfaction and desire in a sexless way. Leah describes her desire to create and Rachel's desire to contemplate. This mention of desire recalls the dream of the siren, in which the siren describes Ulysses' desire, and Dante experiences desire. Additionally, Leah speaks about the satisfaction that she and Rachel receive from their tasks, using the verb *appagare*. This is the same verb that the siren uses when she sings about Ulysses: "*si tutto l'appago!*" (*Purgatorio* 19.24). Though the same verb is repeated, it carries highly varied connotations in the two cases. While the siren speaks about satisfying a man, Leah speaks about a personal, internal satisfaction. The latter usage eliminates the erotic nature of the first usage and illustrates the way in which the third dream abandons the eroticism of the others.

The maternal nature of the dream is supplemented by Dante's selection of Leah and Rachel as the two key figures. The Bible details the many children that the two women provided Jacob. In fact, the many ways in which the women defined themselves was through their ability to reproduce. Leah gave birth to six sons and one daughter; each time she had

another child, she commented on how the birth brought her closer to God and her husband: "And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, 'Because the LORD has looked upon my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.' She conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also'; and she called his name Simeon. Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, 'Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons'; therefore his name was called Levi."³⁹ The way in which she equates having children to receiving her husband's love and experiencing the love of God illustrates how important motherhood was to Leah. The ability to have Jacob's children also resulted in envy between the two sisters. Rachel expresses her jealousy that Leah has been fruitful: "When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or I shall die!'"⁴⁰ Rachel's emphasis on needing children to survive emphasizes the way in which her maternal ways defined her life.

In his final dream, Dante again reprises his passive role in relation to the divine agent. However, this role is markedly different from the other two. He listens to Leah speak and watches as she gathers flowers. Though he is passive, Dante is neither the object of an attack, nor is he fixated on Leah in a lustful manner; instead this interaction is devoid of both forms of erotic imagery. The relationship between Dante and each of the divine agents, along with the imagery and word choice utilized, allows for the placement of each the three dreams in the context of a continuum that progresses from erotic to maternal.

³⁹ Genesis 29:32-34

⁴⁰ Genesis 30:1

CHAPTER 5

The Disordered to Ordered Continuum

The continuum that begins with eroticism and progresses toward maternal femininity is not the only continuum seen amongst the three morning-dreams of Purgatorio. Many scholars have commented on the way in which the pilgrim's climb represents a type of reordering. Traversi defines purgation as the process in which one experiences "the turning of man's disorder into the order of God."⁴¹ In her analysis of Dante's dreams, Kathryn Lynch comments that in the third and final dream, Dante "achieves wholeness and order in both the intellectual and affective parts of his soul."⁴² Each of these arguments is founded on the concept of moving toward an ordered soul in preparation for unity with God. Thus, Dante must realign his own priorities with God's. He must also undergo a reordering that joins his soul and body so that the two move together. The process of becoming ordered is experienced by Dante throughout Purgatorio, and the three morning-dreams are closely related to the changes that he undergoes. As Dante experiences a "reordering," the dreams themselves become more ordered in nature. This chapter will analyze the three dreams within the context of a continuum that progresses from disordered and chaotic to highly structured. Moreover, I will also describe the way in which the arrival of the saintly woman in the second dream represents a significant turning point in this continuum.

⁴¹ Traversi, 20.

⁴² Lynch, 13.

Within the continuum of increasing order, the dream of the eagle represents disorder and chaos. Through this dream, Dante elicits the feelings of confusion and disorientation. When the dream begins, Dante believes to see an eagle: “in sogno mi pareva veder sospesa un’ aguglia” [in dream I seemed to see an eagle] (Purgatorio 9.19-20). This the first of four instances in which Dante uses the word “parea,” which is a conjugation of the verb *parere*, meaning to seem. He repeats it saying, “ed esser mi pareva” [and I seemed to be] (Purgatorio 9.22), “poi mi pareva che” [Then it seemed to me che] (Purgatorio 9.28), and “lvi pare ache” [There it seemed that] (Purgatorio 9.31). Using the verb “to seem” repetitively, Dante creates an aura of uncertainty in which he cannot derive conclusive observations; rather, everything “seems” to be a certain way. The lack of concrete statements about his surroundings conveys the pilgrim’s personal sense of disorientation. He is not able to definitively describe his experience.

The confusion created by Dante’s word choice is supplemented by the action during the dream itself. Standing on a mountain, Dante is grabbed by an eagle and carried to a burning fire. When the eagle physically grabs Dante, the startling, jarring nature of its descent is emphasized with the simile “terribil come fólgor discendesse” [it descended terrible as lightning] (Purgatorio 9.29). Lightning represents a phenomenon that cannot be traced or predicted; it is erratic and uncontrolled. By comparing the eagle’s movements to the action of lightning, Dante is able to emphasize the erratic nature of the bird. In the next tercet, Dante focuses on fire, another uncontrolled natural phenomenon:

lvi pare ache ella e io ardesse,
e sì lo ‘ncendio imaginato cosse
che convene che ‘l sonno si rompesse. (Purgatorio 9.31-33)

[There it seemed that it and I burned, and the imagined fire was so hot that my sleep to break.]

In these lines, Dante focuses on the burning fire that is so intense that it leads to disruption.

The effects of the fire reinforce the feeling of chaos that Dante experiences during the flight upward.

Following the description of the dream's action, the dreamer reinforces his disoriented state. He compares himself to Achilles, unable to identify his surroundings:

Non altrimenti Achille si riscosse,
li occhi svegliati rivolgendo in giro
e non sappiendo là do si fosse (Purgatorio 9.34-36)

[Not otherwise did Achilles shake himself, turning his awakened eyes about in a circle, not knowing where he was]

che mi scoss' io, sì come da la faccia
mi fuggì 'l sonno, e diventa' ismorto,
come fa l'uon che spaventato agghiaccia. (Purgatorio 9.40-42)

[Than as shook myself, as soon as sleep fled from my face, and turned pale, as one does who freezes in terror.]

Emphasizing that Achilles was unable to determine where he was, Dante describes the confusion that he feels throughout the dream. Achilles, during his flight, shakes himself ("si riscosse") and attempts to survey his surroundings. The use of the verb scuotere, meaning "to shake," is repeated by Dante as he awakens from the dream (mi scoss' io). The action of shaking or convulsing is an attempt to gain control and further conveys chaos and disorder. This response is similar to that of a person recovering from an intense shock, much like the flight and burning of the dream. Not only does Dante shake, but he also describes the pale nature of his complexion. The physical toll that this dream has taken on Dante is similar to that of a person who has undergone a significant stress. Once the dream is actually over, the feeling

of disorientation lingers. Attempting to determine where he is, Dante fixates on the ocean: “e ‘l viso m’ear a la marina torto” [and my eyes were turned toward the waters] (Purgatorio 9.45). Gazing out at the water, the confusion that Dante experienced during the dream resurfaces as he realizes that he does not recognize his surroundings.

In the dream of the siren, the pilgrim does experience confusion; however, it takes on a different form. Instead of chaos, Dante’s confusion stems from the trance-like state that overtakes him throughout the dream. When Dante first describes the siren, she is unattractive and significantly disfigured:

Mi venne in sogno una femmina balba,
ne li occhi guercia e sovra i piè distora,
con le ma monche, e di colore scialba. (Purgatorio 19.7-9)

[There came to me in a dream a female, stuttering, cross-eyed, and crooked on her feet, with stunted hands, and pallid in color.]

Even though Dante describes the siren in this manner, he still allows his gaze to shift her appearance. Within a few moments of focusing his attention on her, he becomes fully captivated. Staring at the siren, Dante is unable to take his eyes from her:

Poi ch’ell’ avea l’ parlar così disciolto,
cominciava a cantar sì che cona pena
da lei avrei mio intento rivolto. (Purgatorio 19.16-18)

[Once her speech was loosened so, she began to sing in such a way that I could hardly have turned my attention from her.]

The dreamer’s inability to turn his attention from the siren indicates that he is under a sort of trance, in which he is blinded to the reality of the situation. Rather than recognizing the siren for what she truly is, Dante believes her to be a beautiful being. He does not look at her and see the stuttering woman or “una femmina balba” that he had described only nine lines before.

This distortion of his perceptions represents the type of confusion and disorder that is experienced by the pilgrim in this dream. Interestingly, this dream lacks any comment by the dreamer regarding a sense of confusion. In the dream of the eagle, Dante repeatedly commented on the chaos and uncertainty that he was experiencing. Contrastingly, he makes no mention of confused feelings while describing the siren. Even though it is evident that he is confused about her true nature, he lacks awareness of the situation.

With the arrival of the holy lady in this dream, there is a significant move toward order. She is the one who initiates awareness; by urging Virgil to act, the holy lady leads to the disruption of Dante's trance-like state:

Ancor non era sua bocca richiusa
quand' una donna apparve santa e presta
lunghesso me per far colei confusa.

"O Virgilio, Virgilio, chi è questa?"
fieramente dicea; ed el venia
con li occhi fitti pur in quella onesta. (Purgatorio 25-30).

[Here mouth had not yet closed when there appeared a lady, holy and quick, alongside me, to confound her. "O Virgil, Virgil, who is this?" she was saying fiercely; and he was approaching with his eyes fixed only on that virtuous one.]

The arrival of the holy lady sent from heaven who ultimately incites Virgil to act is reminiscent of the chain of women commented on in the second canto of *Inferno*:

"Io era tra color che son sospesi,
e donna mi chiamò beata e bella,
tal che di comandare io la richiesi" (*Inferno* 2.49-51)

[I was among those who are suspended, and a lady called me, so blessed and beautiful that I begged her to command me.]⁴³

⁴³ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, translated by Robert M. Durling, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). All following citations from *Inferno* will come from this publication.

Here, Virgil begins to describe the chain of women that ultimately led to his arrival. He begins by describing his interaction with Beatrice. Recounting their interaction, Virgil uses the verb *comandare* which means "to command." This is very similar to the action of saintly woman who arrives to help in the dream of the siren. Much like Beatrice, she urges Virgil to take action, and his decision to intervene is a direct result of her commands. Virgil goes on to detail exactly what Beatrice asked him to do:

'Or movi, e con la tua parola ornate
e con ciò c'ha mestieri al suo campare,
l'aiuta sì ch'i' ne sia consolata. (Inferno 2.67-69)

[Now go, and with your ornamented speech and whatever else is needed for his escape help him so that I may be consoled.]

Beatrice is ordering Virgil to do whatever is needed to ensure Dante's safety. Again, this is highly connected to the action of the dream in which Virgil tears open the siren's clothes and reveals her putrid belly. As the second canto of *Inferno* continues, even more is revealed about Beatrice's decision to seek Virgil:

Donna è gentil nel ciel che si compiangi
di questo 'mpedimento ov' io ti mando,
sì che duro giudicio là su frange.

Questa chiese Lucia in suo dimando
e disse: -Or ha bisogno il tuo fedele
di te, e io a te lo raccomando. -

Lucia, nimica di ciascun curredele,
si mosse e venne al loco dov' i' era,
che mi sedea con l'antica Rachele.

Disse:-Beatrice, loda di Dio vera,
ché non soccorri quei che t'amò tanto
ch'uscì per te de la volgare schiera? (Inferno 2.94-105)

[There is a noble lady in Heaven, who grieves for this impediment to which I send you, so that she vanquishes harsh judgment there on high. She called Lucia in her request and said: - Now your faithful one has need of you, and I put him in your hands. – Lucia, enemy of all cruelty, moved and came to the place where I was sitting with the ancient Rachel. She said: - Beatrice, true praise of God, why do you not help him who loved you so, who because of you came forth from the common herd?]

Based on Beatrice's story, Mary went to Lucy who went to Beatrice who ultimately went to Virgil. The chain of action that occurs between the identification of Dante's trouble and Virgil's enlistment as his guide reveals a significant amount of order. Though Dante does not recount the chain that ultimately led to the arrival of the saintly woman in canto XIX of Purgatorio, there are at least three participants, the holy lady, Virgil, and Dante. The very nature of delivering a message from one point to another typically leads to much confusion; aspects of the message are often "lost in translation." In these two cases, however, there is nothing lost in the process. As the message moves through the chain, it is not altered or muddled. The chain of delivery is both highly ordered and highly successful. Ultimately, this is a result of the message's divine origin. When the holy lady arrives at the end of the second dream, she represents the restoration of heavenly order in Dante's life. The way in which she triumphs over the siren indicates Dante's move toward spiritual readiness to surrender the disorder of sin in favor of the divine order of God. However, a disconnect between Dante and this maternal agent still exists. Rather than communicate directly with Dante, the holy lady uses Virgil as a third party and means of communication. Thus, Dante does not appear to be fully prepared for direct interaction with a maternal figure.

Examining the chain of heavenly women that led to Beatrice's encounter with Virgil, it is important to note that two key figures of the first and third dreams, Lucy and Rachel, were both

participants. Their activity in this chain illustrates the way in which they fit within the concept of divine order. The connection that two women have to Beatrice in this chain is highly relevant. As the first and last divine agents that Dante encounters while dreaming, they serve to represent important stages in his preparation to reunite with his beloved. Additionally, their connection to Mary, the mother of God, within the complex chain further illustrates their prominent position within the continuum of increasing maternal imagery that was established in the last chapter.

Throughout the third dream, any aspect of confusion present in either of the first two is eliminated. Dante simply watches and listens to Leah as she speaks about the actions of her and her sister. Their actions are in many ways ordered: they are repeated because they bring about a specific type of divine satisfaction. During the discussion with Leah, Dante experiences the successful transmission of information and full awareness of the situation that were absent from the dream of the siren. His ability to function at a high level of understanding in the final dream, indicates that Dante has experienced the “reordering” necessary to prepare him fully for his divine encounters.

CHAPTER 6

Dream conclusions

Similar to the way in which the three dream introductions are unifying, the cohesive nature of the three dreams continues to the moment in which Dante awakens. At the conclusion of each of the three morning-dreams, Virgil abruptly speaks to Dante. His words enhance the prophetic nature of each dream and relate to the two continuums that have been presented. This chapter serves to examine each of the conclusions and the ways in which they reflect on the dreams and continuums of erotic to maternal and disorder to order.

Throughout the dream of the eagle, Dante emphasizes his position as the victim of a rape-like attack. Waking from the dream, he seems shaken and fearful:

che mi scoss' io, sì come da la faccia
mi fuggì 'l sonno, e diventa' ismorto,
come fa l'uon che spaventato agghiaccia. (Purgatorio 9.40-42)

[Than as shook myself, as soon as sleep fled from my face, and turned pale, as one does who freezes in terror.]

Following the dream of the eagle, Virgil urges Dante to apply his strength to the task ahead:

"Non aver tema", disse il mio signore;
"fatti sicur, ché noi semo a buon punto;
non stringer, ma rallarga ognе vigore." (Purgatorio 9.46-48)

["Have no fear," said my lord; "be assured, for we are at a good point; do not pull back, but give free rein to every strength.]"

Virgil's reference to the upcoming journey confirms that Dante's dreaming was a prefiguration of the climb toward Paradise. Additionally, Virgil's recommendation that Dante gives his all to

the coming challenges forecasts the difficulties that Dante may come across. The way in which Virgil focuses on strength and tenacity indicates that Dante is in need of encouragement.

Although Virgil does not comment on the dream specifically, he is perceptive to the needs of Dante following the dream. He begins by focusing on the elimination of fear. The words “Non aver tema” are very similar to the “Nolite timere” used biblically by angels during the resurrection of Christ: “There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid.’”⁴⁴ The imagery used in this passage bears many similarities to Dante’s dream. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and lightning are used to indicate chaos. Additionally, the guards shake similar to the manner in which both Dante and Achilles shake in the description of the dream. Similar to Virgil, the angels attempt to restore order and comfort by insisting to the onlookers that they should not be afraid. In both cases, the insistence that one should not be afraid contrasts with the action prior to the statement. Virgil tells Dante that he should not be afraid and should not pull away; this encouragement is a reversal of the passive, victim-like position that Dante adopted throughout the dream. Ultimately, Virgil’s attempts appear to be successful:

A guise d’uom che ‘n dubbio si raccerta
E che muta in conforto sua paura
Poi che la verità li è scoperta,

mi cambia’ io; e come senza cura
vide me ‘l duca mio, su per lo balzo
si moss, e io di reitro inver’ l’altura. (Purgatorio 9.64-67)

⁴⁴ Matthew 28:3-5

[As one does who is reassured in his doubt and changes his fear into strength when the truth is revealed to him, so I changed; and when my leader saw me without care, up the bank he started, and I after him toward the height.]

The way in which Virgil attempts to comfort Dante and give him strength is similar to the way in which one would approach a scared, victimized person. At this point, Dante requires encouragement to continue.

Following the first dream, Virgil adopts a highly protective and encouraging attitude.

When Dante wakes from the dream of the siren, Virgil's tone is radically different:

Io mossi li occhi, e 'l buon maestro: "Almen tre
voci t'ho messe!", dicea, "Surgi e vieni;
troviam l'aperta per la qual tu entre". (Purgatorio 19.34-36)

[I turned my eyes, and my good master was saying: "At least three times I have called you! Arise and come: let us find the opening through which you may enter."]

Locked in a gaze on the siren during the dream, Dante is unable to correctly utilize free will and avoid sinful temptation. Although Dante is passive in relation to the siren, his relationship to her is very different from the victim-like relationship between Dante and the eagle in the first dream. While Dante was attacked by the eagle, in this dream it is his own gaze that shifts his perception of the siren. Virgil's statement that he was forced to call Dante three separate times indicates that Dante was swayed away from the correct path and toward sin. Virgil's scolding supports the idea that only with his help, will Dante successfully overcome the terraces of love in excess.

Several aspects of Virgil's reprimand recall aspects of the dream. His insistence that he called Dante three times is a parallel to the holy lady, who called Virgil himself twice. Durling and Martinez suggest that the third time that Virgil called Dante may correspond to the

exposure of the siren's belly in the dream: "His third call would seem to be simultaneous with the perception of stench within it."⁴⁵ This indicates that Dante's awakening physically corresponds to his "awakening" or return to awareness during the course of the dream. The use of the word "aperta" or opening also recalls the erotic, feminine imagery of the dream. Virgil tells Dante that they must find the opening through which he can enter. This word choice elicits the image of male penetration, relating to the eroticism of the siren. In discussing the ventre of the siren, Holmes comments on a parallel between the imagined ventre of Jerusalem and the openness of the Catholic Church: "Christian exegetes drew a parallel between Jerusalem-the-harlot, who gave herself to every passer-by, and the ventre of the Catholic Church, which is open to receive all who come to her."⁴⁶ Focusing on an opening through which Dante is free to enter, Virgil recalls the use of the word ventre to describe the siren.

As Virgil and Dante climb up the mountain, Virgil reflects on the dream that Dante had:

"Vedesti," disse, "quell'antica strega
che sola sovr' a noi ormai si piagne;
vedesti come 'l uom da lei si slega.

Bastiti, e batti a terra le calcagne;
li occhi rivolgi al logoro che gira
lo rege eterno con le rote magne." (Purgatorio 19.58-63)

[“You saw,” he said, “that ancient witch who is the only thing lamented here above us; you have seen how one frees oneself from her. Let it be enough for you, and strike the earth with your heels, turn your eyes to the lure that the eternal King keeps turning with the great wheels”]

This quotation repeats the emphasis on vision utilized through the dream. During the dream, Dante's eyes and gaze were focused on the siren. In his description of the dream and his

⁴⁵ Durling and Martinez, 319.

⁴⁶ Holmes, 62.

directions to Dante, Virgil tells the pilgrim to turn his eyes and attention to the end goal. These directions seem to correct the mistakes that Dante made during the dream. Facing the siren, Dante focused his attention on her, fixating lustfully on his perception of her beauty. Now, Virgil is directing Dante's eyes and attention back to the task at hand.

Virgil's responses to both the dream of the eagle and the dream of the siren are connected in many ways. Though it is unclear how he is aware of Dante's dreaming, he does demonstrate an understanding of the action of the dreams. Immediately after the discomfiting, jarring dream of the eagle, Virgil steps up to comfort Dante. His awareness of the second dream is even more profound, as he is able to recall exactly what Dante saw in the dream. A comparison of the first two dreams also illustrates the complexities of the relationship between Virgil and Dante. After the first dream, Virgil acts a comforter and protector. After the second dream, he chides Dante's wavering attention and orders him to action. In each role, Virgil becomes a sort of parent to Dante, keeping him on track and focused on his ultimate goal.

In canto XXVII, following the final dream of Purgatorio, Virgil offers words of comfort and congratulations:

"Quel dolce pome che per tanti rami
cercando va la cura de' mortali,
oggi porrà in pace le tue fami." (Purgatorio 27.115-117)

["That sweet apple which the zeal of mortals goes seeking along so many branches, today will bring peace to your hungers"]

In this expression, "Quel dolce pome" refers to the idea of happiness, which for Dante, takes form in Beatrice. With Virgil's promise that some form of happiness awaits that can quell Dante's hunger, he is prefiguring her appearance. This builds on the dream encounter with

Leah, and adds a layer of significance to Beatrice; not only does she fulfill the role of Dante's donna angelicata, but she also serves as the pinnacle of Dante's earthly happiness. After Virgil offers his congratulations, Dante comments on his feelings:

Virgilio inverso me queste cotali
parole usò, e mai non furo strenne
che fosser di piacere a queste iguali.

Tanto voler sopra voler mi venne
de l'esser sù ch'ad ogne passo poi
al volo mi sentia crescer le penne. (Purgatorio 27.118-123)

[Virgil used toward me these very words, and never were there gifts that were equal in pleasure to them. So much did desire upon desire grow in me to be above that at every step I felt my wings grow for flight.]

Here Dante applies the concepts of pleasure and desire to non-erotic ideas. This is similar to Leah's use of desire and satisfaction to describe the pleasure that she and sister receive through their virtuous actions. Dante's ability to apply these concepts without the eroticism present in the second dream illustrates that his perception of pleasure and satisfaction have matured. Dante's description of his desire in terms of growing wings for flight also recalls the flight of the first dream. In that dream, Dante was subject to the eagle; he was simply a passenger in the flight process. Now, however, Dante is his own agent of movement. This distinction also marks a positive change that the pilgrim has undergone.

The conclusions of the three dreams, when viewed as a set, reveal both Dante and Virgil's reactions to each of the dreams. These reactions in turn characterize the relationship between the pilgrim and his guide, and they indicate Dante's progression in the process of "re-ordering."

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

Following an examination of the dreams and their placement on two different continuums, one question remains: how do these continuums fit within the larger structure of the *Commedia*? Examining the *Commedia* as a whole, the two continuums proposed in this study extend far beyond the dreams on Purgatorio.

The continuum of erotic and masculine to maternal and feminine has its ends firmly rooted in Dante's interactions in *Inferno* and *Paradiso*. As has previously been discussed, Dante's interactions throughout *Inferno* are limited primarily to men. Though he does speak to Francesca toward the beginning of the work, this conversation marks the single significant one that he has with a woman until he reaches Purgatorio. Additionally, Dante's conversation with Francesca is extremely erotic in nature. Francesca describes the lustful desire that ultimately led to her eternal placement. Thus, it would follow that Dante's frame of mind is predominately preoccupied with masculine imagery and that when feminine imagery is finally introduced during a dream, it is highly erotic in nature. At the opposite end of the spectrum are Dante's interactions with maternal figures. In *Paradiso*, Dante encounters the most maternal of all figures: the Virgin Mary.

Similarly, the continuum that increases from disordered to ordered fits well within the rest of the continuum. Many scholars have commented on the way in which *Inferno* is a highly chaotic in comparison to Purgatorio. Traversi states, "Since Purgatory, unlike Hell, is a state

where logic prevails, where things hang together and are sustained in their approximation to the reality that embraces and sustains them all, the process of [poetry's] recovery will correspond to the stages of the traveler's advance toward the right, the natural ordering of his human experience."⁴⁷ With hell highly disordered, purgatory provides the opportunity for reordering that will ultimately be necessary for successful entry into heaven, which is highly ordered. The dreams indicate Dante's progress in the process of reordering. He must realign himself with God in order to reject sin and prepare for his entrance into heaven. Additionally, he must reorder the relationship between his body and soul so that the two can move and operate as one. The positions of the dreams on this continuum correspond to the point that Dante has reached.

As Dante's dreams become more feminine, ordered, and maternal in nature, they also prefigure the arrival of the Beatrice. The female figures throughout the three dreams are connected to Beatrice by their language choice. In Virgil's retelling of Lucy's introduction, she states: "I' son Lucia" [I am Lucia (Lucy)] (Purgatorio 9.55). The siren echoes this form of introduction: "'Io son,' cantava, 'io son dolce sirena'" ["I am," she was singing, "I am a sweet siren"] (Purgatorio 19.19). Though she may not be perceived as a divine figure, I would argue that the siren does fulfill this role. Ultimately, she is a part of the trajectory that propels Dante toward heaven and God. Of the three divine female figures who introduce themselves, the siren is the most tenacious in her self-affirmation. She repeats the word "son" three times, indicating perhaps that she has the most to prove. Leah's introduction follows a similar pattern: "Sappia qualunque il mio nome dimanda ch'i' mi son Lia" [Whoever asks my name, let

⁴⁷ Traversi, 12.

him know that I myself am Leah] (Purgatorio 27.100-101). Finally, Beatrice also utilizes this emphasis: "Guardaci ben! Ben son, ben son Beatrice" [Truly I am, I am Beatrice] (Purgatorio 30.73). The incorporation of this pattern into each of the three dreams and to Beatrice's introduction illustrates the connection between Beatrice and the three female divine agents. In her examination of this repetition, Holmes comments on Dante's experimentation with an "insistence upon self-definition."⁴⁸ Ultimately, each of the women is eager to define herself, and Dante's progress is marked in part by his ability to recognize and interpret these definitions.

In this thesis, I have introduced the dreams and explained their relationship to ancient texts and the views of Dante's contemporaries. The introductions and conclusions of the dreams have been explored. Comparing the introductions revealed the ways in which Dante's views on the morning-dream aligned with the views of the ancients and his contemporaries. The introductions also showed the way in which Dante's concept of dreaming and thinking evolves throughout Purgatorio. The conclusions of the dreams serve to illustrate Dante's reaction to each dream as well as his relationship with Virgil.

Additionally, this analysis included the proposal of two different continuums that connect the dreams. The first continuum explored is one that runs from erotic to maternal and masculine to feminine. The dreams were analyzed, and the reference to ancient and biblical texts in addition to word choice and imagery illustrated their positions on the continuum. The second continuum that was characterized progresses from a disordered state to an ordered

⁴⁸ Holmes, 59.

one. In order to place the dreams on this continuum, the levels of chaos, confusion, and awareness that the pilgrim experiences in each dream were examined.

The two continuums explored in this thesis are likely not the only two that exist. As an avenue of further study, I would suggest analyzing the additional continuums. For example, there is much evidence that the dreams lie on a continuum of decreasing physicality and increasing spirituality. In addition, many scholars have also commented on the way in the *Divine Comedy* as a whole is representative of the continuum of medieval thought in which *Inferno* focuses on physical thought, while *Purgatorio* is centered on imagination, and *Paradiso* on intellect. The three dreams themselves may illustrate this continuum, with the first dream eliciting corporal knowledge and the last dream preparing Dante for the transition to intellectual knowledge. Examining these continuums or others may allow for further characterization of the dreams in relationship to one another and may reveal more about the remarkable power of dreaming in Dante's *Purgatorio*.

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