

D. G. Rossetti as a Transpirator of Dante to Ezra Pound

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How deeply Pound was indebted to Rossetti is a well-known fact, and Pound himself admitted it: "In the matter of these [Cavalcanti's] translations and of my knowledge of Tuscan poetry, Rossetti is my mother and my father."¹⁾ Notwithstanding, Poundian critics prefer to regard Rossetti as "a kind of embarrassing prelude to their hero" rather than to intend it to be "a tribute to Pound," and Harold Bloom's opinion that "It is...far better to be called the Dante Gabriel Rossetti than the Edmund Waller..."²⁾ is perhaps exceptional or unusual. As the result of this negative situation, in fact, there has been almost no sincere effort to trace Rossetti's effect on Pound. I myself had a chance to publish in another place an essay on their relation,³⁾ and in continuation I would like to examine, mainly from a philological viewpoint, the above mentioned topics based on concrete data.

It is known that Pound read Rossetti's translation: *The Early Italian Poets* (1861) in the Temple classics edition (Dent, 1904) and that Pound's own volumes, heavily annotated, still exist.⁴⁾ In fact, Pound cites Rossetti's translation copiously in his own seminal essay on "Dante" in the VIIth chapter of *The Spirit of Romance* (1910, 1929).⁵⁾ Introducing Dante's "ivory book", *Vita Nuova*, Pound cites the beginning part §§ I-II:

I

In that part of the book of my memory, before which little can be read, is found a rubric, which saith, 'Beginneth the New Life.' Under the which rubric I find written the words which it is my intent to copy into this book, if not all, at least their meaning.

II

The heaven of light had revolved nine times in its orbit since my birth, when first appeared unto mine eyes the glorious lady of my mind, who was called Beatrice by many who did not really understand what they called her.⁶⁾

Rossetti's translation runs as follows:

In that part of the book of my memory before the which is little that can be read, there is a rubric, saying, *Incipit Vita Nova*.^{*} Under such rubric I find written many things; and among them the words which I purpose to copy into this little book; if not all of them, at the least their substance.

Nine times already since my birth had the heaven of light returned to the selfsame point almost, as concerns its own revolution, when first the glorious Lady of my mind was made manifest to mine eyes; even she who was called Beatrice by many who knew not wherefore.^{**}

* "Here beginneth the new life."

** In reference to the meaning of the name, "She who confers blessing." We learn from

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Boccaccio that this first meeting took place at a May Feast, given in the year 1274 by Folco Portinari, father of Beatrice, who ranked among the principal citizens of Florence: to which feast Dante accompanied his father, Alighiero Alighieri.⁷⁾

Though Pound does not mention Rossetti, it is clear that he mostly copies him at least in the first section of *Vita Nuova*, while the second section is newly translated by Pound, the meaning being briefer and more concise.

Pound then quotes the second sonnet which begins:

O voi, che per la via d'Amor passate,⁸⁾

Pound translates this verse as:

O ye that pass along love's way,⁹⁾

While in Rossetti:

ALL ye that pass along Love's trodden way,¹⁰⁾

In the above verse, Pound himself tries to translate more literally. See the fourth sonnet and Pound's citation of Rossetti's own translation:

Morte villana, di pietà nemica,
Di dolor madre antica,
Giudizio incontrastabile, gravoso,
Poich' hai data materia al cor dogliso,

Di te biasmar la lingua s'affatica,¹¹⁾
DEATH, alway cruel, Pity's foe in chief,
Mother who brought forth grief,
 Merciless judgment and without appeal!
 Since thou alone hast made my heart to feel
 This sadness and unweal,
My tongue upbraideth thee without relief.¹²⁾

Pound comments, "Even Rossetti is unable to continue in the strict rime scheme of the original." However, Rossetti actually conserves the original rhyme scheme(AA BBB A) perfectly.

The fifth sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*, which Pound calls "the first flawless" one and which is to be found in Rossetti's translation of *The New Life* is as follows:¹³⁾

A DAY agone, as I rode sullenly
 Upon a certain path that liked me not,
 I met Love midway while the air was hot,
 Clothed lightly as a wayfarer might be.
And for the cheer he show'd, he seem'd to me
 As one who hath lost lordship he had got;
 Advancing tow'rds me full of sorrowful thought,
Bowing his forehead so that none should see.
Then as I went, he call'd me by name,
 Saying: "I journey since the morn was dim
 Thence where I made thy heart to be: which now
I needs must bear unto another dame."
 Wherewith so much pass'd into me of him

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That he was gone, and I discern'd not how.¹⁴⁾

Indeed, English readers must consult the above sonnet in Rossetti's volume, for Pound does not give the latter's translation here.

On the next page of his *Spirit of Romance*, Pound mentions "Maximus Guido", Guido Guinicelli, whom Dante had read, and cites the latter's tenth sonnet which begins:

Amore e 'l cor gentil sono una cosa,
Siccom'il Saggio in suo dittato pone;¹⁵⁾

Pound translates these verses as:

Love and the noble heart are both one thing;
E'en thus the sage in his "dittato" saith.¹⁶⁾

Compare Rossetti's:

Love and the gentle heart are one same thing,
Even as the wise man* in his ditty saith.¹⁷⁾

In the above case, too, Pound's translation is almost the same as that of Rossetti, where one can find detailed notes about "the wise man":

* Guido Guinicelli, in the canzone which begins, "Within the gentle heart Love shelters him."¹⁸⁾

Concerning the eleventh "philosophical" sonnet,¹⁹⁾ curiously enough,

Pound translates it himself without relying any more on Rossetti's translation:

Within her eyes my Lady beareth Love,
So making noble all she looketh on.
Where she passeth, straight turneth everyone toward her;
Her greeting putteth a trembling on the heart,
So that a man lowers his shaken visage
And sigheth for every fault he hath,
Pride and anger flee before her.
Aid me then, ladies, in her honoring!

All sweetness, every humble thought
Is born within the heart of whoever hears her speak;
Whence is he blest who first looketh on her;
What thing she is when she faintly smileth
Can not be said nor even held in mind,
It is so new and noble a miracle.²⁰⁾

Compare Rossetti's :

My lady carries love within her eyes;
All that she looks on is made pleasanter;
Upon her path men turn to gaze at her;
He whom she greeteth feels his heart to rise,
And droops his troubled visage, full of sighs,
And of his evil heart is then aware:
Hate loves, and pride becomes a worshipper.

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O women, help to praise her in somewise.
Humbleness, and the hope that hopeth well,
By speech of hers into the mind are brought,

And who beholds is blessed oftenwhiles.
The look she hath when she a little smiles
Cannot be said, nor holden in the thought;
'Tis such a new and gracious miracle.²¹⁾

Pound points out an interesting coincidence between the eleventh line of this sonnet and the first line of a poem of Sappho's (*φαίνεταί μοι κἄνος ἴσος θεοισιν*), translated by Catullus: "Ille mi par esse deo videtur" (He seems to me to be equal to a god) (Gai Valeri Catulli Veronensis Liber, LI).

This fact clearly reveals Pound's deeper interest in this sonnet, and furthermore, he says that *La Vita Nuova*, §XXXV²²⁾ can be regarded as Dante's prose version of it:

In that day, fulfilling the year wherein this lady was made citizen of the life eternal, I was sitting in a place, wherein remembering her, I was designing an angel upon certain tablets, and while I was at the drawing I turned my eyes and saw beside me men whom it was befitting to honor. They watched what I was making, and afterwards it was told me that they had been there some while without my being aware of it. Seeing them, I arose and said to them in greeting: "Another was with me, whence my thought."

When they were gone, I turned to my work, that is, the drawing of an angel's face, and doing this there came to me the thought of setting

certain words in rime, as for annual of her. Then spoke I the sonnet,
“Era Venuta.”²³⁾

In this citation, too, Pound is separated from Rossetti's rendering,
which runs as follows:

On that day which fulfilled the year since my lady had been made of
the citizens of eternal life, remembering me of her as I sat alone, I
betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets.
And while I did thus, chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some
were standing beside me to whom I should have given courteous welcome,
and that they were observing what I did : also I learned afterwards that
they had been there a while before I perceived them. Perceiving whom,
I arose for salutation, and said : “Another was with me.”

Afterwards, when they had left me, I set myself again to mine
occupation, to wit, to the drawing figures of angels: in doing which, I
conceived to write of this matter in rhyme, as for her anniversary, and
to address my rhymes unto those who had just left me.

It was then that I wrote the sonnet which saith, “That lady:”²⁴⁾

Strangely enough, immediately after the above passages, Pound
continues with the following text:²⁵⁾

Canzone II

A very pitiful lady, very young,
Exceeding rich in human sympathies,
Stood by what time I clamored upon death,

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And at the wild words wandering on my tongue,
And at the piteous look within mine eyes,
She was affrighted,...
Then saw I many broken hinted sights,
In the uncertain state I stepped into
Me seemed to be I know not in what place,
Where ladies through the streets, like mournful lights,
Ran with loose hair, and eyes that frighten'd you
By their own terror, and a pale amaze:
The while, little by little, as I thought,
The sun ceased, and the stars began to gather,
And each wept at the other;
And birds dropp'd in mid-flight out of the sky;
And earth shook suddenly;
And I was 'ware of one, hoarse and tired out,
Who ask'd of me: "Hast thou not heard it said?...
Thy lady, she that was so fair, is dead." ²⁶⁾

Canzone III

That she hath gone to Heaven suddenly,
And hath left love below to mourn with me.

Beatrice is gone up into high Heaven,
The kingdom where the angels are at peace:
And lives with them; and to her friends is dead.
Not by the frost of winter was she driven
Away, like others; nor by summer heats;

But through a perfect gentleness, instead.
For from the lamp of her meek lowlihead
Such an exceeding glory went up hence
That it woke wonder in the Eternal Sire,
Until a sweet desire
Enter'd Him for that lovely excellence,
So that He bade her to Himself aspire;
Counting this weary and most evil place
Unworthy of a thing so full of grace.²⁷⁾

These are all from Rossetti's translation, though Pound does not mention it. In this case, Pound obviously forgot the reference indication. Compare Rossetti's:

A very pitiful lady, very young,
Exceeding rich in human sympathies,
 Stood by, what time I clamour'd upon Death;
And at the wild words wandering on my tongue
And at the piteous look within mine eyes
 She was affrighted, that sobs choked her breath.²⁸⁾
"Then saw I many broken hinted sights
In the uncertain state I stepp'd into.
 Meseem'd to be I know not in what place,
Where ladies through the street, like mournful lights,
Ran with loose hair, and eyes that frighten'd you
 By their own terror, and a pale amaze:
 The while, little by little, as I thought,
The sun ceased, and the stars began to gather,

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And each wept at the other;

And birds dropp'd in mid-flight out of the sky;

And earth shook suddenly;

And I was 'ware of one, hoarse and tired out,
Who ask'd of me: 'Hast thou not heard it said?...
Thy lady, she that was so fair, is dead.'²⁹⁾

That she hath gone to Heaven suddenly,
And hath left Love below, to mourn with me.

Beatrice is gone up into high Heaven,
The kingdom where the angels are at peace;
And lives with them; and to her friends is dead.
Not by the frost of winter was she driven
Away, like others; nor by summer heats;
But through a perfect gentleness, instead.
For from the lamp of her meek lowlihead
Such an exceeding glory went up hence
That it woke wonder in the Eternal Sire,
Until a sweet desire
Enter'd Him for that lovely excellence,
So that He bade her to Himself aspire:
Counting this weary and most evil place
Unworthy of a thing so full of grace.³⁰⁾

As clearly seen, the difference is only due to Pound's careless copy.
In another passage, Pound cites Rossetti's rendering without

mentioning the latter's name, but supplying his own parenthesis:

Nevertheless, he who is not of with sufficient to understand it (Canzone prima) by these (explanations) which have already been made, is welcome to leave it alone.³¹⁾

Compare Moore's edition:

...ma tuttavia chi non e di tanto ingegno, che per queste che son fatte la possa intendere, a me non dispiace se la mi lascia stare:³²⁾

The conclusion of the *Vita Nuova* is, on the contrary, cited from and with the clear indication of "Rossetti's version." As these show Pound's truest colors, I will cite the whole corresponding pages of Rossetti's, indicating with square parenthesis the Poundian abbreviations:³³⁾

About this time, it happened that a great number of persons undertook a pilgrimage, to the end that they might behold that blessed portraiture bequeathed unto us by our Lord Jesus Christ as the image of his beautiful countenance,* (upon which countenance my dear lady now looketh continually.) And certain among these pilgrims, who seemed very thoughtful, passed by a path which is wellnigh in the midst of the city where my most gracious lady was born, and abode, and at last died.

Then I, beholding them, said within myself: "These pilgrims seem to be come from very far; and I think they cannot have heard speak of this lady, or know anything concerning her. Their thoughts are

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not of her, but of other things; it may be, of their

friends who are far distant, and whom we, in our turn, know not." [And I went on to say: " I know that if they were of a country near unto us, they would in some wise seem disturbed, passing through this city which is so full of grief." And I said also: " If I could speak with them a space, I am certain that I should make them weep before they went forth of this city; for those things that they would hear from me must needs beget weeping in any."]

And when the last of them had gone by me, I bethought me to write a sonnet, showing forth mine inward speech; (and that it might seem the more pitiful, I made as though I had spoken it indeed unto them.) And I wrote this sonnet, (which beginneth: " Ye pilgrim-folk." I made use of the word *pilgrim* for its general signification; for " pilgrim " may be understood in two senses, one general, and one special. General, so far as any man may be called a pilgrim who leaveth the place of his birth; whereas, more narrowly speaking, he only is a pilgrim who goeth towards or fowards the House of St. James. For there are three separate denominations proper unto those who undertake journeys to the glory of God. They are called Palmers who go beyond the seas eastward, whence often they bring palm-branches. And Pilgrims, as I have said, are they who journey unto the holy House of Gallicia; seeing that no other apostle was buried so far from his birth-place as was the blessed Saint James. And there is a

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third sort who are called Romers; in that they go whither these whom I have called pilgrims went: which is to say, unto Rome.

This sonnet is not divided, because its own words sufficiently declare it.]

Ye pilgrim-folk, advancing pensively
As if in thought of distant things, I pray,
Is your own land indeed so far away
As by your aspect it would seem to be,—
That nothing of our grief comes over ye
Though passing through the mournful town mid-
way ;
Like unto men that understand to-day
Nothing at all of her great misery ?
Yet if ye will but stay, whom I accost,
And listen to my words a little space,
At going ye shall mourn with a loud voice.
It is her Beatrice that she hath lost ;
Of whom the least word spoken holds such grace
That men weep hearing it, and have no choice.

[A while after these things, two gentle ladies sent
unto me, praying that I would bestow upon them
certain of these my rhymes.] And I [(taking into
account their worthiness and consideration,)] resolved
that I would write also a new thing, [and send it
them together with those others, to the end that their
wishes might be more honourably fulfilled.] There-
fore I made a sonnet, which narrates my condition,

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[*clearer ; but this division may pass, and therefore
I stay not to divide it further.*]

BEYOND the sphere which spreads to widest space
Now soars the sigh that my heart sends above :
A new perception born of grieving Love
Guideth it upward the untrodden ways.
When it hath reach'd unto the end, and stays,
It sees a lady round whom splendours move
In homage ; till, by the great light thereof
Abash'd, the pilgrim spirit stands at gaze.
It sees her such, that when it tells me this
Which it hath seen, I understand it not,

It hath a speech so subtile and so fine.
And yet I know its voice within my thought
Often remembereth me of Beatrice:
So that I understand it, ladies mine.

After writing this sonnet, it was given unto me to behold a very wonderful vision ;[*]wherein I saw things which determined me that I would say nothing further of this most blessed one, until such time as I could discourse more worthily concerning her. And to this end I labour all I can; as she well

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knoweth. Wherefore if it be His pleasure through whom is the life of all things, that my life continue with me a few years, it is my hope that I shall yet write concerning her what hath not before been written of any woman. After the which, may it seem good unto Him who is the Master of Grace, that my spirit should go hence to behold the glory of its lady: to wit, of that blessed Beatrice who now gazeth continually on His countenance *qui est per omnia sæcula benedictus*.*) *Laus Deo.*

[* " Who is blessed throughout all ages."]

Reading the above mentioned pages, we can clearly follow word for word the Poundian process of writing and/or of citing.

Indeed, there is no need to doubt Pound's statement that "Rossetti is my mother and my father".

Finally, we have Pound's reference to the sonnet ending of Cino da Pistoia:

Sing on till thou redeem thy plighted word! * 34)

(d'opra non star, se di fé non se' sciolto.) 35)

This is also taken from Rossetti's version, where one can find the footnote:

* That is, the pledge given at the end of the *Vita Nuova*.

This may perhaps have been written in the early days of Dante's exile, before his resumption of the interrupted *Commedia*.³⁶⁾

Symbolically, Pound both concludes and introduces the *Vita Nuova* and *Commedia* with this verse.

Notes

- 1) Ezra Pound, *The Sonnets and Ballate of Guido Cavalcanti* (1912; rpt. Boston: Hyperion, 1983), pp. xv-xvi.
- 2) Harold Bloom, "Introduction" to *Modern Critical Views. Ezra Pound* (New York/New Haven/Philadelphia : Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), p. 2.
- 3) "Ezra Pound and Cavalcanti ", in *Ezra Pound Kenkyu*, ed. by R. Fukuda & A. Yasukawa (Kyoto: Yamaguchishoten, 1986), pp. 223-251. Regrettably, I do not have the Temple classics edition, and I use instead the original edition (London: Smith, Elder and co., 1861).
- 4) Louis L. Martz, "Pound's Early Poems ", in *Modern Critical Views. Ezra Pound, cit.*, p. 63.
- 5) There exist French (*Esprit des littératures romanes*, Paris: Union Générale d'Édition, 1966), Italian (*Lo spirito romanzo*, Firenze: Vallecchi, 1959/Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1970, 1981⁵) and Swedish (*Romansens sjal*, Be Cavefors Bokforlag, 1965) versions. I quote from A New Directions Book (New York, s. d.).
- 6) *The Spirit of Romance, cit.*, p. 120. Italian original (from: *Tutte le*

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opere di Dante Alighieri, ed. Moore, Oxford, 1904), p. 205:

§I. In quella parte del libro della mia memoria, dinanzi alla quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una rubrica, la quale dice: *Incipit Vita Nova*. Sotto la quale rubrica io trovo scritte le parole, le quali è mio intendimento d'assemprare in questo libello, e se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenza.

§II. Nove fiata già, appresso al mio nascimento, era tornato lo cielo della luce quasi ad un medesimo punto, quanto alla sua propria girazione, quando alli miei occhi apparve prima la gloriosa donna della mia mente, la quale fu chiamata da molti BEATRICE, i quali non sapeano che si chiamare.

7) D. G. Rossetti, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

8) ed. Moore, p. 208. Pound omits the comma after "voi".

9) *SR*, p. 121.

10) Rossetti, p. 231.

11) ed. Moore, p. 208.

12) Rossetti, p. 234.

13) The French version omits this passage, while the Italian version cites the original whole sonnet from the Moore edition, p. 209:

Cavalcando l'altr'ier per un cammino,

Pensoso dell'andar, che mi sgradia,

Trovai Amor in mezzo della via,

In abito leggier di peregrino.

Nella sembianza mi pareva meschino

Come avesse perduto signoria;

E sospirando pensoso venia,

Per non veder la gente, a capo chino.

Quando mi vide, mi chiamò per nome,

E disse: Io vegno di lontana parte,
Ov'era lo tuo cor per mio volere,
E recolo a servir nuovo piacere.
Allora presi di lui sì gran parte,
Ch'egli disparve, e non'm accorsi come.

14) Rossetti, pp. 236-237.

15) ed. Moore, p. 217.

16) *SR*, p. 122.

17) Rossetti, p. 260.

18) *Ibid.*

19) ed. Moore, pp. 217-218:

Negli occhi porta la mia donna Amore;
Per che si fa gentil ciò ch'ella mira:
Ov'ella passa, ogni uom ver lei si gira.
E cui saluta fa tremar lo core.

Sicchè, bassando il viso, tutto smuore,

Ed'ogni suo difetto allor sospira:
Fugge dinanzi a lei superbia ed ira:
Aiutatemi, donne, a farle onore.
Ogni dolcezza, ogni pensiero umile
Nasca nel core a chi parlar la sente;
Ond' è beato chi prima la vide.

Quel ch'ella par quand' un poco sorride,

Non si può dicer, nè tener a mente,
Sì è nuovo miracolo gentile.

20) *SR*, p. 122.

21) Rossetti, p. 261.

22) ed. Moore, p. 228:

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§ XXXV. In quel giorno, nel quale si compiva l'anno, che questa donna era fatta de' cittadini di vita eterna, io mi sedea in parte, nella quale ricordandomi di lei, disegnava un angelo sopra certe tavolette: e mentre io 'l disegnava, volsi gli occhi, e vidi lungo me uomini a' quali si convenia di fare onore. E' riguardavano quello ch'io facea; e secondo che mi fu detto poi, egli erano stati già alquanto, anzi che io me n'accorgessi. Quando li vidi, mi levai, e salutando loro dissi: Altri era testè meco, e perciò pensava. Onde partiti costoro, ritornaimi alla mia opera, cioè del disegnare figure d'angeli: facendo ciò, mi venne un pensiero di dire parole per rima, quasi per annovale di lei, e scrivere a costoro, li quali erano venuti a me: e dissi allora questo sonetto, che comincia *Era venuta*.

23) *SR*, p. 123.

24) Rossetti, p. 294.

25) ed. Moore, pp. 220-221, 226-227:

Donna pietosa e di novella etate,

Adorna assai di gentilezze umane,

Ch' era dov'io chiamava spesso Morte,

Veggendo gli occhi miei pien di pietate,

Ed ascoltando le parole vane,

Si mosse con paura a pianger forte;

.....

Poi vidi cose dubitose molte

Nel vano immaginare, ov'io entrai;

Ed esser mi pareva non so in qual loco,

E veder donne andar per via disciolte,

Qual lagrimando, e qual traendo guai,

Che di tristizia saettavan foco.

Poi mi parve vedere appoco appoco
Turbar lo Sole ed apparir la stella,
E pianger egli ed ella;
Cader gli augelli volando per l'a're,
E la terra tremare;
Ed uom m'apparve scolorito e fioco,
Dicendomi: Che fai? non sai novella?
Morta e la donna tua, ch'era si bella.
Che se n'è gita in ciel subitamente,
Ed ha lasciato Amor meco dolente.

Ita n'è Beatrice in l'alto cielo,
Nel reame ove gli angeli hanno pace,
E sta con loro; e voi, donne, ha lasciate.
Non la ci tolse qualità di gelo,
Nè di calor, siccome l'altre face;
Ma sola fu sua gran benignitate.
Chè luce della sua umilitate
Passò li cieli con tanta virtute,
Chè fe' maravigliar l'eterno Sire,
Sì che dolce desire
Lo giunse dichiarar tanta salute,
E fella di quaggiuso a sò venire;
Perchè vedea ch'esta vita noiosa
Non era degna di sì gentil cosa.

26) *SR*, p. 123.

27) *SR*, p. 124.

28) Rossetti, p. 269.

29) *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.

30) *Ibid.*, pp. 288-289.

31) *SR*, p. 126. *Cf.* Rossetti, p. 259:

...nevertheless he who is not of wit enough to understand it by these
which have been already made is welcome to leave it alone;

32) ed. Moore, p. 217. "queste" = queste spiegazioni.

33) ed. Moore, pp. 231-233:

§ XLI. Dopo questa tribolazione avvenne (in quel tempo che molta gente va per vedere quella imagine benedetta, la quale Gesù Cristo lasciò a noi per esempio della sua bellissima figura, la quale vede la mia donna gloriosamente), che alquanti peregrini passavano per una via, la quale è quasi mezzo della cittade, ove nacque, vivette e morio la gentilissima donna, e andavano, secondo che mi parve, molto pensosi. Ond' io pensando a loro, dissi fra me medesimo: Questi peregrini mi paiono di lontana parte, e non credo che anche udissero parlare di questa donna, e non ne sanno niente; anzi i loro pensieri sono d' altre cose che di queste qui; che forse pensano delli loro amici lontani, li quali noi non conosciamo. Poi dicea fra me medesimo: Io so che se questi fossero di propinquo paese, in alcuna vista parrebbero turbati, passando per lo mezzo della dolorosa cittade. Poi dicea fra me stesso: S' io li potessi tenere alquanto, io pur gli farei piangere anzi ch' egli uscissero di questa cittade, perocché io direi parole, che farebbero piangere chiunque le intendesse. Onde, passati costoro dalla mia veduta, proposi di fare un sonetto, nel quale manifestassi ciò ch' io avea detto fra me medesimo; ed acciocchè più paresse pietoso, proposi di dire come se io avessi parlato loro; e dissi questo sonetto, lo quale comincia: *Deh peregrini ec.*

Dissi *peregrini*, secondo la larga significazione del vocabolo: chè peregrini si

possono intendere in due modi, in uno largo ed in l'altro stretto. In largo, in quanto è peregrino chiunque è fuori della sua patria; in modo stretto non s'intende peregrino, se non chi va verso la casa di santo Jacopo, o riede: e però è da sapere, che in tre modi si chiamano propriamente le genti, che vanno al servizio dell' Altissimo. Chiamansi *Palmieri* in quanto vanno ultramare là onde molte volte recano la palma; chiamansi *Peregrini* in quanto vanno alla casa di Galizia, però che la sepoltura di santo Jacopo fu più lontana dalla sua patria, che d'alcuno altro Apostolo; chiamansi *Romei* in quanto vanno a Roma, là ove questi ch'io chiamo *peregrini* andavano.

Questo sonetto non si divide, però ch'assai il manifesta la sua ragione.

SONETTO VIGESIMOQUARTO.

Deh peregrini, che pensosi andate
Forse di cosa che non v'è presente,
Venite voi di sì lontana gente,
Come alla vista voi ne dimostrate?
Che non piangete, quando voi passate
Per lo suo mezzo la città dolente,
Come quelle persone, che neente
Par che intendesser la sua gravitate.
Se voi restate, per volerla udire,
Certo lo core ne' sospir mi dice,
Che lagrimando n'uscirete pui.
Ella ha perduta la sua Beatrice;
E le parole, ch' uom di lei può dire,
Hanno virtù di far piangere altrui.

§ XLII. Poi mandaro due donne gentili a me pregandomi che mandassi loro di queste mie parole rimate; ond'io, pensando la loro nobiltà, proposi di mandar loro e di fare una cosa nuova, la quale io mandassi loro con esse, acciocchè più onorevolmente adempiessi li loro preghi. E dissi allora un sonetto, il quale narra il mio stato, e mandailo loro col precedente

SONETTO VIGESIMOQUINTO.

Oltre la spera, che più larga gira,
Passa il sospiro ch' esce del mio core:
Intelligenza nuova, che l' Amore
Piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira.
Quand' egli è giunto là, dov' el desira,
Vede una donna, che riceve onore,
E luce sì, che per lo suo splendore
Lo peregrino spirito la mira.

Vedela tal, che, quando il mi ridice,
Io non lo intendo, sì parla sottile
Al cor dolente, che lo fa parlare.
So io ch' el parla di quella gentile,
Perocchè spesso ricorda Beatrice,
Sicch' io lo intendo ben, donne mie care.

§ XLIII. Appresso a questo sonetto apparve a me una mirabil visione, nella quale vidi cose, che mi fecero proporre di non dir più di questa benedetta, infino a tanto che io non potessi più degnamente trattare di lei. E di venire a ciò io studio quanto posso, sì com' ella sa veracemente. Sicchè, se piacere sarà di Colui, per cui tutte le cose vivono, che la mia vita per alquanti anni duri, spero di dire di lei quello che mai non fu detto d' alcuna.

E poi piaccia a Colui, ch' è Sire della cortesia, che la mia anima se ne possa gire a vedere la gloria della sua donna, cioè di quella benedetta Beatrice, la quale gloriosamente mira nella faccia di Colui, *qui est per omnia saecula benedictus*.

34) Rossetti, p. 322: Cino da Pistoia to Dante Alighieri.

35) "Cino a Dante" (CXXVI), in *Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo*, a cura di Mario Marti (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1969), p. 729. Paraphrase: "Non cessare dall'operare per il bene, se sei sempre sostenuto dalla fede."

36) Rossetti, p. 322.

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