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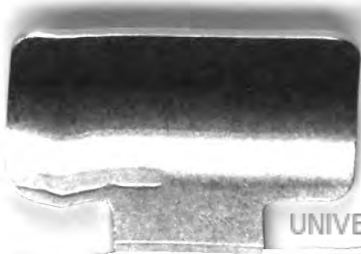


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THE CRYPTOGRAPHY OF DANTE

THE
CRYPTOGRAPHY
OF DANTE

BY
WALTER ARENSBERG

“Antiquam exquirite matrem”
—*Æneid iii.96*



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For a lost and at last recovered **Bella**
the mother of the divine
Commedia

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PREFACE

Except for the discussions, in various commentaries, of the *DXV* in *Purgatorio* xxxiii and of the acrostic *VOM* in *Purgatorio* xii, I know of no recognition of the existence of cryptograms in the *Divina Commedia*. For general information on the subject of cryptography I may refer to the article on *Akrostichis* in Pauly: *Encyclopædie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*; the article on *Acrostic* in Hastings: *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*; the article on *Ciphers* in Rees's *Encyclopædia*; C. W. King: *The Gnostics and Their Remains*; Francis Bacon: *Of the Advancement of Learning*; Walter Begley: *Biblia Cabalistica; Is it Shakespeare?*; and Bacon's *Nova Resuscitatio*; and W. S. Booth: *Some Acrostic Signatures of Francis Bacon and The Hidden Signatures of Francesco Colonna and Francis Bacon*. A widely recognized authority which I have been unable to consult is *Kryptographik*, by J. L. Klüber.

For general information concerning the life and works of Dante I have consulted principally, in addition to the commentaries of the *Divina Commedia* by Scartazzini, Casini, Torraca, Vernon, Longfellow, and Norton, and of the *Vita Nuova* by Witte and Scherillo, the following works: Boccaccio: *Vita di Dante*; Scartazzini: *Dizionario Critico*; E. Moore: *Textual Criticism of the Divina Commedia and Studies in Dante*; P. Toynbee: *Dante Dictionary; Dante Alighieri*; and *Dante Studies and Researches*; E. G. Gardner: *Dante's Ten Heavens and Dante and the Mystics*; P. H. Wicksteed: *Dante and Aquinas*; J. B. Fletcher: *Dante*; C. A.

Dinsmore: *Aids to the Study of Dante*; R. T. Holbrook: *Dante and the Animal Kingdom*; Ruggero della Torre: *Il Poeta Veltro*.

Except for della Torre's identification of the *dxv* and the *Veltro* with Dante I know of nothing in the literature on Dante that relates to the interpretation of the symbolism of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* which I have expressed in the present volume. I agree with della Torre in identifying the *dxv* and the *Veltro* with Dante; but my reasons for making the identification have little, if anything, to do with the reasons of della Torre, and I first learnt of his work when I was nearing the completion of my own. My agreement with della Torre is limited to the single detail of this identification.

My identification of Beatrice with Bella, the mother of Dante, has not, so far as I know, been made before. Several commentators, such as Scherillo and Fletcher, have alluded—to quote the words of Fletcher—to “Beatrice's instinctive motherliness”, in the sense that “every true maid is something of a mother to the man she loves”; and Scherillo has further surmised that Dante may have transferred to his characterization of Beatrice certain qualities which he remembered in his own mother. A similar idea, but from a point of view that is strictly limited to the Freudian, is developed by Alice Sperber in a study of *Dante's Unconscious Mental Life*, a study which I have not seen, but which, as I gather from the abstract in the *Psychoanalytic Review*, April, 1920, is “not concerned with the historical identity of Beatrice or the actual facts of her life.”

The view that Dante, by a process of idealization, may have transferred certain qualities which he remembered in his mother to his characterization of someone else, to a Beatrice who may or may not be identified with Beatrice Portinari, is not to be confused with the view, expressed in the following pages, that Beatrice and Bella, the mother of Dante, are, by Dante's conscious intention, identical.

I have found that the Dante literature with which I am acquainted is less helpful for the interpretation of the

Divina Commedia than certain studies in religion, myth, and dream. I may refer to J. G. Frazer: *The Golden Bough* and *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*; J. E. Harrison: *Themis*; Y. Hirn: *The Sacred Shrine*; E. B. Tylor: *Primitive Culture*; H. O. Taylor: *The Mediaeval Mind*; J. Hastings: *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*; S. Freud: *The Interpretation of Dreams*; C. G. Jung: *Psychology of the Unconscious*; F. Ricklin: *Wish Fulfillment and Symbolism in Fairy Tales*; O. Rank: *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*; K. Abraham: *Dreams and Myths*; Hans Schmidt: *Jona*; E. de Faye: *Introduction à l'étude du Gnosticisme*; W. K. Fleming: *Mysticism in Christianity*; Evelyn Underhill: *Mysticism*; A. E. Waite: *The Secret Doctrine of Israel*; W. B. Smith: *Ecce Deus*; and I. Myer: *The Qabbalah*.

For secretarial assistance in the collection of my material I am indebted to Miss Florence M. Poast. To Mr. John Covert I owe the suggestion of the possible cryptographic use of capital letters and especially the discovery of the signature in *di necessità* (p. 55). For assistance in editing my material I am indebted to Mr. John Macy, and I am further indebted to Mr. Macy for several valuable suggestions in deciphering.

To the memory of Dr. E. E. Southard I acknowledge my deepest debt. His ideas as to the oversimplifications of the Freudian psychology, and especially as to the pessimism inherent in the deterministic view of conduct which it expresses, helped to orient me in a wood where I was once in danger of losing my way. It was in the light of these ideas that I formed my belief that sex symbolism is not to be interpreted as symbolizing sex. The sex symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, for example, is, in the last analysis, a representation of the *mental processes*, in which the mind is conceived as a trinity of will, intellect, and emotion, and which is represented accordingly as a family, as in the Trinity of the Christian Godhead, of father, son and mother. The mutual relations of the three members of the family in a drama involving incest, death, and rebirth are to be understood as a representation of the individual mind in conflict or in harmony

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with itself. This interpretation of the sex symbolism not only of the *Divina Commedia* and of Christian theology but also of myths and dreams in general I will develop, together with a new definition of symbolism, in a volume now in preparation: *The Symbolism of the Divina Commedia*.

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CHAPTER I
THE GENERAL EVIDENCE

CHAPTER I

THE GENERAL EVIDENCE

THE *Divina Commedia* contains a large number of cryptograms which have never, so far as I know, been noticed. These cryptograms have a double value. First, they reveal a hitherto unsuspected phase of Dante's literary method. And second—and this is the more important—they reveal a hitherto unsuspected symbolism. As an allegory, the *Divina Commedia* has a hidden as well as a manifest meaning; and the cryptograms are the hidden proof of what the hidden meaning is. They prove, indeed, as fundamental in the *Divina Commedia*, the symbolism of an anthropomorphic universe, in which Beatrice is to be identified with Bella, the mother of Dante, conceived as an incarnation of the divine, or universal, mother, and in which the *DXV* and the *Veltro* are to be identified with Dante, conceived as an incarnation of the divine, or universal, son.

A cryptogram, or hidden writing, is a deliberate arrangement of words, letters, numbers, or other signs, which is intended to conceal as well as to express a meaning. The meaning of a cryptogram is concealed by a variety of devices, such as, first, by giving the signs employed a different meaning from the meaning which they usually possess; and, second, by arranging these signs in an order which is different from the conventional order of the language in which they are written. A common synonym for "cryptogram" is "cipher," and the use of this word is significant, as in various kinds of cabalas, of the substitution of letters by numbers. The word is also significant of the numerical schemes on which the arrangement of letters in some crypto-

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grams is based. Cryptograms are of many kinds. Among the cryptograms which I have discovered in the *Divina Commedia* are acrostics, telestics, interior sequences, anagrams, irregular letter clusters, string ciphers, and cabalistic spelling devices.

I am far from assuming that the cryptograms which I have discovered are all that Dante made. They are so widely scattered and so varied in form that I am convinced that I have missed many. Nor do I assume that all the cryptograms which I am here presenting are authentic. A decipherer is necessarily to some extent at the mercy of the very ingenuity which the act of deciphering requires. For instance, he may discover as actually existing in the text an unusual collocation of letters which may be interpreted as a cryptogram; and he may then assume that this collocation was intended by the author to be so interpreted, when, as a matter of fact, it was purely accidental. Or if, on the other hand, the collocation of letters was actually intended as a cryptogram by the author, the decipherer may lack the ingenuity to read it correctly, as when, for instance, the letters in question are capable of being rearranged in two ways, one intended by the author and one accidental. In such a case of variant readings the decipherer may make a wrong choice.

The essential in deciphering, therefore, is to remember that it is by the author's intention, and by the author's intention alone, that a cryptogram can be said to exist. The author's intention may, of course, not be easy to prove. But there are certain means by which the author's intention may be indicated. These means may be enumerated as follows: first, hints in the text that something is being concealed; second, a correspondence between the meaning of the cryptogram and the meaning of the text; third, the appearance of cryptograms in salient and symmetrical positions, such as the beginnings and the ends of the various parts, chapters, cantos, or other units of text; fourth, a repetition of cryptic readings identical or similar in meaning; and fifth, a repetition, in various cryptograms, of an identical cryptographic "frame," or structure.

In a series of cryptograms in connection with which it is

possible to point, first, to hints in the text, second, to correspondence between the meaning of the cryptograms and the meaning of the text, third, to the appearance of cryptograms in salient and symmetrical positions, fourth, to the repetition of identical or similar cryptographic readings, and, fifth, to the repetition of a cryptographic structure, the probability that the cryptograms were intended by the author is greater than that they were not intended. Acknowledging as I do the possibility of error in deciphering the cryptograms which I shall present, I am nevertheless confident that they show, as a series, unmistakable indications of intention, or design.

The announcement that the *Divina Commedia* is teeming with cryptograms is likely, I am aware, to be met with incredulity. For there is a common prejudice that cryptograms are too trivial a form of composition to have been employed by authors of works of literary importance. Some justification for this prejudice may be found in the fact that cryptograms have been "discovered" where they do not really exist. Many of the so-called discoveries in the Shakespeare plays, as, for instance, Donnelly's *Great Cryptogram*, are cases in point. They are not cryptograms at all, but merely arbitrary readings foisted into the text by mistaken ingenuity. Unfortunately, however, the contempt which such false readings have merited has not been confined to them alone, with the result that the whole subject of cryptography is almost taboo to the academic student of literature. In recent years, however, a few investigators have done much to establish the importance of the subject as an aspect of literary art.

A glance at the history of cryptography should dispel at once any prejudice against the possible existence of cryptograms in works of literature. The subject has received so little attention in the last century or two that the extent to which cryptograms have been used in the past and the variety of their forms are no longer generally known. The common opinion at present, indeed, is simply that cryptography is a subject of importance only for such practical purposes as military, diplomatic, and commercial codes, and

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that it has no literary value whatever. This opinion is contrary to the easily available evidence of centuries of literary use of cryptograms in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and English.

It is not within the scope of the present volume, however, to survey the history of cryptography. I will confine myself, for the historical background of my research, to the briefest reference to a few established facts. Let me first quote from the article on "Akrostichis" by E. Graf in Pauly: *Real-Encyclopædie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.

"Den älteren sibyllinischen Oraklen war die A. durchgehends eigen and zwar so, dass die A. sich mit dem ersten Vers des Orakels deckte, Cic. de div. II, 122 . . . bei längeren Oraklen fuhr die A. in zweiten Vers fort, doch so, dass dessen Anfang nicht mit einem Sinnabschnitt des Orakels zusammenfiel. Zweck der A. war, die Sammlung vor Interpolationen und Verkürzungen zu schützen . . . In unserer Sammlung der sibyllinischen Orakel ist die einzige A. viii, 217-50: 'Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ υἱὸς σωτὴρ σαυρὸς, welche selbst wiederum die A. 'ΙΧΘΥΣ enthält . . . Augustin de civ. d. xviii, 23 übersetzt sie ins Lateinische mit griechischer A.: *Jesucs Creistos Teud Uios Soter Staurus* . . . Bei den Römern finden wir zuerst die A. 'Q. Ennius fecit' in quibusdam Ennianis Cic. de div. ii, 112; . . . Der Grammatiker Opillius gab seinen Namen als A. seines Pinax (Suet. de gramm. 6), Silius Italicus wahrte seine Autorschaft am *Homerus latinus* durch die zwei A. *Italicus—scripsit* am Anfang und Ende des Gedichtes . . . Die akrostischen Argumente zu allen plautinische Stücken ausser den Bacchides werden von Ritschl op. ii, 404 und Opitz Lpz. Stud. vi 234.275 in die Antoninenzeit, von Seyffert Philol xvi, 448 u. Jahresber. xlvii, 22 ca. 100 Jahre nach Plautus Tod angesetzt. *Commodians* Instuctiones bestehen aus 80 Gedichten mit akrostischer Inhaltsangabe, zum Teil verbunden mit Telestichis. Die A. des letzten Stückes ergiebt, von unten lesen, *Commodianus mendicus Christi* . . . Aldhelmus leitet sein Gedicht *de laudibus virginum* . . . mit einer *Praefatio* ein, die den ersten Hexameter als A. vorwärts und als Telestichis rückwärts gelesen enthält; seine Rätselsammlung

. . . mit einem Prolog, dessen A. und Telestichis in gleicher Richtung den Vers *Aldhelmus cecent millenis versibus odas* ergiebt."

Cryptography has been associated from ancient times with serious religious works. There are cryptograms in the Bible, notably the abecedarian acrostics, in which the initial letters of lines or sections are the successive letters of the alphabet. The article on "Acrostic" in Hastings: *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* gives fourteen examples in *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Lamentations*, and *Nahum*. One of the most interesting is *Psalm* cxix, the structure of which is partly visible and partly lost in the English Bible, where we see the division of the psalm into twenty-two sections, each under a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and each consisting of eight verses. In the original each of the eight verses of each division begins with the same letter, eight with *aleph*, eight with *beth*, and so on. This alphabeticism is not meaningless; it is used, first, as an aid to memorizing, and, second, as a symbol of completeness, "as in *Proverbs* xxxi. 10-31, where the praises of virtuous woman exhaust the alphabet." And an abecedarian psalm in praise of God, beginning, as it does, with the first letter of the alphabet and ending with the last, is in effect a way of signing God's name as Alpha and Omega: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord."

Acrostics are found in other religious works, Jewish and Christian. According to the article on the abecedarian psalms and hymns in Pauly's *Real-Encyclopaedie*: "Das berühmteste Exemplar aus der christlichen Litteratur ist Augustins Psalmus contra partem Donati, gedichtet 393 . . . den er nach *Retract* 1,20 für die ganz Ungebildeten verfasst hat zum Auswendiglernen."

The Bible contains many examples of cabala, one of which, "the number of the beast" in *Revelation*, will prove of particular interest to us later. The interpretation of the Scriptures by cryptographic methods, especially cabalistic, continued through early and medieval Hebrew and Christian literature. As we shall see in Chapter IV, some knowledge of

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this cabalistic literature is essential to a correct interpretation of the *Divina Commedia*.

A few examples of the literary use of cryptograms in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance will suffice. Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* is a remarkable acrostic poem which we shall have occasion later to discuss at length. François Villon wrote his name down the initials of the third stanza of his ballade, *A S' Amye*, and he made other acrostic signatures. A cryptographic signature that was "lost" until later discovered is contained in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, published anonymously in Venice in 1499. The initial letters of the chapters of the book spell the sentence (in Latin): "Brother Francesco Colonna loved Polia."

The poetry of Elizabethan England is full of instances of acrostics and other devices which range from mere clever tricks in light verse to the serious religious poem of George Herbert: "Our Life is Hid With Christ In God." The poem is as follows:

My words and thoughts do both express this notion,
That *Life* hath with the sun a double motion.
The first *Is* straight, and our diurnall friend;
The other *Hid*, and doth obliquely bend.
One life is wrapt *In* flesh, and tends to earth:
The other winds towards *Him*, whose happy birth
Taught me to live here so *That* still one eye
Should aim and shoot at that which *Is* on high;
Quitting with daily labour all *My* pleasure,
To gain at harvest an eternal *Treasure*.

The cryptogram in this poem is a so called interior sequence. The words to be read in sequence are indicated by being printed in italic: MY LIFE IS HID IN HIM THAT IS MY TREASURE; these words paraphrase the sentence from the Bible used in the title. The meaning of Herbert's cryptogram is important for us; for just as "My life is hid in Him," so the cryptogram is hidden in the text. Herbert, as one of the "metaphysical" poets, was concerned with mystical meanings, and no reader who knows his spirit can doubt the reverence or the symbolic use of this verbal play.

A common form of cryptogram in literature is the anagram, and a common form of anagram is a pseudonym made by a rearrangement of the letters of the real name. A great man whose name was Arouet *le jeune* is said to have arranged the letters of his name and the initials of the words *le jeune* into the name by which the world knows him: VOLTAIRE. Notice that in this anagram the *v* is considered as *v*, and *j* as *i*. François Rabelais made of his name the anagram ALCOFRIBAS NASIER, under which pseudonym he published some of his works.

The reasons for the use of cryptograms are not, I believe, sufficiently appreciated. A signature or dedication or any other expression that an author sees fit to attach to his work by the devices of cryptography is apt to be regarded, if it is acknowledged to be there at all, as an example of misspent ingenuity, a bit of literary decoration of a trivial character. Such an opinion ignores the profoundly serious motives which underlay the use of cryptograms in the past.

Among the motives for the literary use of cryptograms may be mentioned, first, the motive of prudence. A hidden signature or dedication may be prudential in case the public announcement of authorship or dedication would be dangerous. Such a case exists in the *Hypnerotomachia*, mentioned above, in which the author, a monk, acknowledges his passion for a woman. Or it may be prudent to hide the meaning of a work when the meaning is an attack on some form of authority, political or religious. A case in point is the cabalistic "number of the beast" in *Revelation*, which, as is now generally thought, is a Christian reference to the hostile Emperor Nero.

A second motive may be found in the desire of an author to secure the authorship of his work to himself. Cryptographic signatures were customary for the simple reason that before the invention of printing, and even after, they were the only sure method of attaching a name to a literary work in such a way that it could not be removed or changed. Title pages may be displaced or falsified, but a structural signature in a literary work remains as long as the work itself. A crypto-

graphic signature thus prevents literary theft or the attribution of a work to someone not the author. At the same time it enables the author, while he establishes his proprietorship, to avoid the immodesty of proclaiming himself overtly. This idea derives from a convention, which existed not only in Dante's time but before and after, of literary anonymity. In conformity with such a convention, a hidden signature was often the only means of establishing authorship.

A third motive for the use of cryptograms in a work of literature is to derive the *form* of the work from the idea which it expresses. In any work of art, indeed, the idea is expressed by some sort of correspondence between that idea and a physical form. In the *Divina Commedia*, for instance, the division of the poem into three parts and the use of a three-line stanza express the idea of the Trinity which dominates the life of the author-hero and the form of the universe in which he lives. Many other literary, and especially metrical, forms which are now accepted as matters of tradition or convention must in the first place have been invented to express similar correspondences. In an analogous way, the presence of a cryptogram in a work of literature makes the form of that work derive from the idea of the cryptogram, or at least from the word or words of which the cryptogram is composed. In an acrostic poem, for example, which gives as its acrostic spelling the name of the lady to whom it is dedicated, the form, since it follows, line by line, the letters of the lady's name, may be said to be derived from the name, and so, most appropriately, from the lady herself.

For the mystic or the symbolist of the past a word had a closer relation with the thing which it names than that of a mere arbitrary association. It was regarded, indeed, as in some mysterious way derived from the very nature of the thing itself. Dante expresses this idea in *Vita Nuova*, xiii: *i nomi seguitino le nominate cose, siccome è scritto: Nomina sunt consequentia rerum*. An example of this conception appears, indeed, in the fancy, to which Dante himself alludes, that the form of the Italian word *omo*, "man," is written in the human face, the two o's represented by the eyes, and the m repre-

sented by the line of the nose and the outlines of the cheeks. A literary form that is derived from a cryptogram may be said, therefore, according to this conception, to be derived quite literally from the idea which the cryptogram expresses. Moreover, in a sense that is neither mystical nor symbolical, the form of a composition containing a cryptogram is based necessarily, as is apparent in any acrostic poem, on its cryptogram. It is a form based on an arrangement of letters arbitrarily chosen by the author, and, as such, is just as valid and interesting as a form based on an arbitrary arrangement of sounds, as in rhymes. Many cryptograms, and especially acrostics expressing ideas analogous to the idea of the text, were adopted by the author, I believe, simply as aids and novel conditions of composition. The difficulties of making a text with a cryptogram, over-rated as these difficulties usually are, assist the author to complicate his structure and so to create a higher beauty by virtue of the very necessity of creating a higher unity.

The fourth motive for the literary use of cryptograms is at once the profoundest and the most ignored. It is the same motive, indeed, which leads to the production of allegory; the desire, that is, to express and solve, if solving be possible, the problem of appearance and reality. Allegory is a *genre* that has fallen into disfavor. It is apt to be underrated as a mere device for the exercise of powers of paraphrase. In saying one thing and meaning another, it seems, to the modern temper at least, to be playing with pointless duplicities. But the *raison d'être* both of allegory and of cryptographic literature is simply that their duplicities are a literal expression, a parallel, of the duplicities of the world in which we live; they are intended, in their deepest aspects, to express the difference between what things *are* and what things *seem*. Things are *not* what they seem, and life is a game of hide-and-seek in which we try to find out what things are. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honor of kings is to search out a matter."—*Prov.* xxv.2. In ancient and medieval symbolism, as well as in the modern theory of symbolism, the world of appearance is conceived as concealing the

fundamental reality; and hidden writings in symbolical or allegorical literature, as well as the hidden meaning in allegories, are intended to parallel in the texts which conceal them the reality which is concealed in natural phenomena, the reality which is concealed in appearance.

The examples cited of cryptographic literature, both ancient and medieval, and the consideration of the motives which produced it should be sufficient, I think, to allay any *a priori* prejudice against the likelihood of finding cryptograms in the *Divina Commedia*. And, indeed, the existence of at least one cryptogram in the *Divina Commedia* is generally recognized. I refer to what Dante himself calls the *enigma forte*, the strangely worded prophecy of Beatrice in the thirty-third canto of *Purgatorio*, in which she alludes to a coming saviour as "a five hundred, ten, and five."

It is supposed that these words are the cryptic designation of a particular person. The identity of this person has never, however, been satisfactorily established; it remains, in fact, one of the central mysteries of the poem. But the attempts to identify this person have commonly been based on some variation of the cryptographic device of substituting numbers for letters.

In addition to the cryptogram in the reference of Beatrice to *un cinquecento diece e cinque*, there is just one other passage in the *Divina Commedia* in which, as far as I am aware, the presence of a cryptogram has been recognized. I refer to *Purg.* xii. 25-63, which reads as follows:

Vedea colui che fu nobil creato	25
Più ch' altra creatura, giù dal cielo	
Folgoreggiando scender da un lato.	
Vedea Briareo, fitto dal telo	28
Celestial, giacer dall' altra parte,	
Grave alla terra per lo mortal gelo.	
Vedea Timbreo, vedea Pallade e Marte,	31
Armati ancora, intorno al padre loro,	
Mirar le membra de' Giganti sparte.	
Vedea Nembrot appiè del gran lavoro,	34
Quasi smarrito, e riguardar le genti	
Che in Sennaar con lui superbi foro.	

O Niobè, con che occhi dolenti Vedevo io te segnata in sulla strada Tra sette e sette tuoi figliuoli spenti!	37
O Saul, come in sulla propria spada Quivi parevi morto in Gelboè, Che poi non senti pioggia nè rugiada!	40
O folle Aragne, sì vedeo io te Già mezza aragna, trista in su gli stracci Dell' opera che mal per te si fe'.	43
O Roboam, già non par che minacci Quivi il tuo segno; ma pien di spavento Nel porta un carro prima che altri il cacci.	46
Mostrava ancor lo duro pavimento Come Almeon a sua madre fe' caro Parer lo sventurato adornamento.	49
Mostrava come i figli si gittaro Sopra Sennacherib dentro dal tempio, E come, morto lui, quivi il lasciaro.	52
Mostrava la ruina e il crudo scempio Che fe' Tamiri, quando disse a Ciro: 'Sangue sitisti, ed io di sangue t'empio.'	55
Mostrava come in rotta si fuggiro Gli Assiri, poi che fu morto Oloferne, Ed anche le reliquie del martiro.	58
Vedeo Troia in cenere e in caverne: O Ilion, come te basso e vile Mostrava il segno che lì si discerne!*	61

This passage shows a strikingly symmetrical arrangement of the first letters of the first lines of twelve *terzine* and of all the lines of the thirteenth *terzina*. Each of the first four *terzine* begins with the letter *v*, each of the second four with the letter *o*, and each of the third four with the letter *m*; and each of the three lines of the last *terzina* begins respectively with the same letters in the same order: *v*, *o*, *m*.

It is possible, but not at all probable, that this symmetrical arrangement of initials is accidental. The probability, indeed, is that the arrangement was intended by Dante as a means of calling attention to some special significance of the letters so consistently reiterated. The probability of the intention of the arrangement has not escaped the notice of Dante

*In the present study I have followed the text of Moore. In the several instances where I have adopted a variant reading I have cited my authority.

scholars, who, remembering that in medieval usage v and u are the same letter, have read the letters as an acrostic for vom, or "man."

The symmetrical arrangement of the letters is not, however, the only proof that the acrostic vom is intentional. The passage is both preceded and followed by words which are capable of being understood as hints that something is hidden in the passage. Preceding the passage, in line 23, are the words: *secondo l'artificio figurato*. These words may easily be taken as hinting that something is "figured" by the "artifice" of the symmetrical arrangement. And following the passage are the words, lines 64-66:

Qual di pannel fu maestro o di stile,
Che ritraesse l' ombre e i tratti, ch' ivi
Mirar farieno ogn' ingegno sottile?

Here again there is the possibility of a hinting double meaning in the reference to the strokes which would make every subtle wit wonder.

In addition to the symmetry of the arrangement of special letters and the hints of a hidden meaning there is further confirmation of the intention of the acrostic in the correspondence between the meaning of the acrostic and the meaning of the text. The acrostic vom, repeating in generic form as it does the expression, line 71, *figliuoli d' Eva*, corresponds to the meaning of the passage throughout, which is simply *man* in his fallen estate. The confirmations of intention which I have here applied to the acrostic vom have already been discussed in their general aspects, and they are the same that I shall apply to the cryptographic readings to be presented later.

Although the *cinquecento diece e cinque* and the acrostic vom are the only cryptograms in the *Divina Commedia* which, so far as I know, have been recognized, there are many passages and expressions in the poem which suggest very strongly the possibility of a cryptographic intention.

In *Par. xix. 115-141*, the nine *terzine* show a symmetrical arrangement of the initial letters of the *terzine* which is strikingly similar to the arrangement of the passage in which the acrostic vom is found. Each of the first three *terzine*

begins with the letter L, each of the second three with the letter v, and each of the third three with the letter E. I know of no reference in the commentaries on Dante to this passage as containing a cryptogram. Yet the similarity of the arrangement to that of the passage in which the acrostic vom is found makes it seem likely that a cryptogram is intended.

Another instance of a symmetry so unusual as to suggest a cryptic intention is *Par.* xx. 40-72, in which the first *terzina* and every second *terzina* thereafter begins with the same words: *Ora conosce*. Still another instance is *Par.* xv. 100-111, in which each of the four *terzine* begins with the same word: *Non*. And another instance is *Purg.* vi. 106-117, where each of the four *terzine* begins with *Vien*.

There may also be found in the *Divina Commedia* a number of instances of a cryptic use of separate letters. In *Par.* xviii. 77-78, the lights which are the visible forms of the spirits

faciensi
Or D, or I, or L, in sue figure.

These three letters, which are later discovered to be the beginning of a complete sentence, are presented at first apart from their context, exactly as if they had some hidden significance of their own. That they have indeed some hidden significance appears from the curious invocation in regard to them—and in regard to them alone, since the remaining letters of the sentence have not yet been mentioned—which Dante addresses to Pegasus. In this invocation, after making a reference to “wits,” Dante proceeds, *Par.* xviii. 85-86:

Illustrami di te, sì ch' io rilevi
Le lor figure com' io l'ho concette.

This surely has a suspicious sound. And even after the invocation is finished Dante does not proceed to give the remaining letters of the mystic sentence until he has said, as if the exact number of them also had a hidden significance, that the lights then showed themselves

in cinque volte sette
Vocali e consonanti.
—*Par.* xviii. 88-89.

Nor does Dante's preoccupation with the separate letters in this passage end here, for after he has given the sentence spelt by the lights of the spirits:

Diligite justitiam qui judicatis terram,

he describes a series of transformations of the letter *m* with which the sentence ends. This letter is transformed first into the shape of a lily and then into the shape of an eagle. The association of these shapes with the letter *m* is a mystery that has never been adequately explained.

The spirits within the lights which group themselves in such a way as to form the cryptic letters are likened by Dante, line 73, to birds. The idea of letters formed by birds goes back to the classic tradition of letter-making cranes, which was associated with the Roman custom of reading auguries in the flights of birds. This is a sort of cryptography in nature, which the augur deciphers. References to this tradition will be found in R. T. Holbrook's *Dante and the Animal Kingdom*.

In *Par.* xix. 127-129, there is a play on the letters *i* and *m*:

Vedrassi al Ciotto di Jerusalemme
Segnata con un *i* la sua bontate,
Quando il contrario segnerà un emme.

The *i* and the *m* in this passage are usually, and imperfectly, I believe, interpreted by the commentators in terms of their meaning in the Roman notation of numbers: "one" and "a thousand."

In *Purg.* xxiii. 32-33, there is an allusion to the idea that the word for "man," *omo*, is written on the human face: the two *o*'s, as I have already explained, represent the two eyes, and the letter *m* represents the nose and the outlines of the cheeks. The complete form of the word, and so of the face, appears, indeed, in the single letter *m*, when the *m* is so shaped, as often in medieval manuscripts, that the central line of the letter may be taken as representing the nose, the two curved lines at each side as representing the outlines of the cheeks, and the spaces circumscribed by these lines as representing the eyes.

Still another instance of the cryptographic use of a separate

letter in the *Divina Commedia* appears in the references in *Purgatorio* to the seven P's cut by the angel in the forehead of Dante. The accepted explanation of Dante's use of these letters as the initials of the seven cardinal *peccati*, inadequate as I believe it to be, is based on a recognition of their cryptographic character, as indicating a word by its initial.

Another unexplained play on letters appears in *Par.* vii. 13-15:

Ma quella riverenza che s'indonna
Di tutto me, pur per BE e per ICE,
Mi richinava come l'uom ch' assonna.

The reverence which is thus described as mistress of Dante even in the spelling of the diminutive form of BEATRICE suggests the possibility that there is some cryptographic play on the difference between the complete form, *Beatrice*, and the diminutive form, *Bice*.

And there is another mystery about Beatrice which seems cryptographic. In *Vita Nuova*, xxx, she is said to be a "nine;" and throughout the *Vita Nuova* the important dates of her life and death are made to conform to this number by what Moore calls a "curious juggling." What can this "curious juggling" signify?

In *Inferno* are two passages of a character different from anything I have yet cited: the line:

Pape Satan, pape Satan aleppe,
—*Inf.* vii. 1,

and the line:

Rafel mai amech izabi almi,
—*Inf.* xxxi. 67.

Does it not seem probable that these lines, which are usually considered as mere gibberish, have a cryptic meaning?

Analogous to the cryptic use of letters and numbers is the use of actual objects and their pictorial and literary representations as symbols of esoteric meanings. The *Divina Commedia* is full of such symbols. I need mention only a few of them: the eagle, the cross, the ladder, the crown, and the mystic rose in *Paradiso*; the four animals mentioned in the beginning of *Inferno*, the *lonza*, the *lupa*, the *leone*, and the

Veltro; and in *Purgatorio* the chariot, the griffon, and the mystic tree. All these things are symbols of meanings more or less arbitrarily attached to them, exactly as other than the ordinary meanings are more or less arbitrarily attached to letters and numbers in the making of cryptograms. An author as prone as Dante to the use of a symbolism of objects would hardly have been averse to the use of the symbolism on which cryptography is based.

In addition to the evidence already cited of the presence of cryptograms in the *Divina Commedia* are the numerous passages in which Dante refers to a meaning hidden behind a veil. This hidden meaning is usually supposed to be merely the allegorical meaning that is hidden behind the literal. It is not impossible to infer, however, that the reference is to a meaning hidden behind a veil of cryptographic devices, as in the following passage, *Inf.* ix. 61-63:

O voi che avete gl' intelletti sani,
Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
Sotto il velame degli versi strani.

The word *arte*, as in *Purg.* ix. 70-72, is frequently used by Dante in such a way as not to be inconsistent, to say the least, with a reference to the arts, or devices, of cryptography:

Lettor, tu vedi ben com' io innalzo
La mia materia, e però con più arte
Non ti maravigliar s' io la rinalzo.

And in Dante's use of the word *scrittura* there seems to be a similar duplicity, as referring not only to the manifest text but also to some sort of writing that is concealed. An instance occurs in *Par.* xix. 82-84:

Certo a colui che meco s'assottiglia,
Se la scrittura sopra voi non fosse,
Da dubitar sarebbe a meraviglia.

And may not the following passage, *Par.* xix. 43-45, be taken as a suggestion of the excess of meaning which a cryptogram reveals over the manifest meaning of a text? The lines are:

Non potè suo valor sì fare impresso
In tutto l'universo, che il suo verbo
Non rimanesse in infinito eccesso.

The line, *Par.* xviii. 130:

Ma tu, che sol per cancellare, scrivi,

is perhaps an allusion to the cryptographic method of deciphering by cancellation of non-significant letters.

The most interesting instance of Dante's double use of the word *scrittura* appears in the following passage, *Par.* xix. 130-135:

Vedrassi l'avarizia e la viltate
 Di quel che guarda l'isola del foco,
 Dove Anchise finì la lunga etate;
 Ed a dare ad intender quanto è poco,
 La sua scrittura fien lettere mozze,
 Che noteranno molto in parvo loco.

The last three lines of this passage have been extraordinarily mistranslated and misinterpreted. They are translated by Norton as follows: "And, to give to understand how paltry he is, the writing for him shall be in abridged letters which shall note much in little space." And in his comment Norton says that the reference here is to Frederick of Arragon, as "too worthless to have his many misdeeds written out in full." However close this translation and this comment may or may not be to the mere surface meaning of the text as an historical allusion, they miss entirely the literal meaning of the words and their important implications.

Other translations are to the same effect. *Lettere mozze* is translated by Wicksteed in the *Temple Classics* as "stunted letters;" by Longfellow as "contracted letters;" by Butler as "abbreviations." *La sua scrittura* is variously translated as "his record" or "the writing against him."

As a matter of fact, *la sua scrittura* means literally "his writing" or "his way of writing;" and *lettere mozze* means literally "letters cut off"—"cut off," that is, from the words in which they appear in the text. The ordinary mistranslation and misinterpretation may correspond, indeed, in a loose way, to the veil which Dante himself wishes to throw over his real meaning; but the meaning itself, in at once its profoundest and its most literal aspect, is simply a reference

to a cryptographic way of writing in which the letters to be read are to be cut off, as in acrostics, for instance, from the context. It is for this reason that they "shall signify much in little space," inasmuch as a cryptogram is restricted to a small part of the space occupied by the passage in which it is hidden. In *Par.* xxxiii. 121, in a passage that is full of implications of cryptic intention, there seems to be a similar allusion to the brevity of cryptographic expression:

O quanto è corto il dire, e come fioco
Al mio concetto!

Similarly, also, in the invocation to Pegasus to which I have already referred in connection with the cryptic letters: DIL, the reference to *questi versi brevi* is again, I believe, to the inherent brevity of cryptograms.

The evidence which I have given in the foregoing pages points unmistakably to the use of cryptograms in the *Divina Commedia*. But after six centuries of Dante scholarship we are still left to wonder where and what the cryptograms can be.

CHAPTER II
ACROSTICS

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ACROSTICS

THE cryptograms to be shown in the present chapter are acrostics. These acrostics are of two kinds, acrostics as acrostics are commonly defined and acrostics which I designate as anagrammatic acrostics. The anagrammatic acrostic form is not, so far as I know, defined in the histories of cryptography; it is possibly, therefore, especially in certain extensions of the form which I will show in Chapter IX, an invention of Dante's. In the present chapter I will illustrate with a number of examples the differences between the common acrostic form and the anagrammatic acrostic form; and in Chapter IX I will discuss the two forms in detail.

The first acrostics that I will show are to be considered as forming a group by themselves, in that they occur at the beginning and the end of each of the three main divisions of the *Divina Commedia: Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso*.

The fact that these acrostics occur in the initial and the terminal positions of the three main divisions of the poem, and that they are all, as I shall show, identical in structure, is a confirmation of their intentional character.

The identical structure of the acrostics of this group appears in the fact that they are all to be read on the initial, or the initial and contiguous, letters of the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth lines from the beginning or the end of a canto. I call this structure, to which all the acrostics of the group conform, a ten-line frame.

These acrostics can further be confirmed as intentional by the correspondence which they show to the meaning of the text and by expressions in the text which are capable of being

understood as having a double meaning hinting at the presence of cryptograms.

The first of this group of acrostics appears on the initials of the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth lines of *Inf.* i. These lines are the first lines of the first four *terzine* of the canto.

The passage reads as follows:

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita	
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,	
Che la diritta via era smarrita.	
Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura	4
Questa selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte,	
Che nel pensier rinnova la paura!	
Tanto è amara, che poco è più morte:	7
Ma per trattar del ben ch' i' vi trovai,	
Dirò dell' altre cose ch' io v' ho scorte.	
I' non so ben ridir com' io v' entrai;	10
Tant' era pien di sonno in su quel punto,	
Che la verace via abbandonai.	

The initials of the first lines of the four *terzine* are:

1	N
4	A
7	T
10	I

Read down on these initials the acrostic: NATI

NATI is not the only acrostic to be found in the passage. Consider the following marginal letters of the first four lines of the canto:

1	NE
2	MI
3	C
4	A

Read down on these letters the acrostic: NEMICA

These two acrostics entail a departure from the text of Moore, who reads the first word of the fourth line: *Eh*. I have adopted, instead, the reading of Torraca and others: *Ahi*. A reference to Moore's *Textual Criticism of the Divina*

Commedia will show that there is good manuscript authority for a reading which begins the line with the letter A.

It should be remembered that we have no manuscript in Dante's own hand or any that he could have revised. So that it may well be that cryptograms which he wrote into his work have been mutilated or obliterated by scribes and scholars. Variations from his wording or spelling might disfigure a cryptogram, and in the absence of the evidence of his own hand, it is fair to adopt any spelling for which there is good manuscript authority.

Of the two acrostics, NATI and NEMICA, NATI, as being read on the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth lines from the beginning of the canto, is identical in structure with the acrostics which I shall show at the end of *Inferno*, at the beginning and the end of *Purgatorio*, and at the beginning and the end of *Paradiso*. The acrostic NEMICA is subsidiary to NATI, the acrostic on the ten-line frame. Subsidiary acrostics will appear with all the ten-line acrostics of the group.

The acrostic NATI is an acrostic according to the commonly accepted definition, since it is read consecutively on the initials of definite units of the text, the units being here consecutive *terzine*. The acrostic NEMICA conforms to the same definition in that it is to be read consecutively on definite units of the text, consecutive lines. It departs, however, from the commonly accepted definition in that it is to be read, not on initials, but on initials and contiguous letters.

I will discuss the meaning of these acrostics and of the other acrostics of the group after I have shown them all.

The second of the acrostics at the beginnings and the ends of the three main divisions of the *Divina Commedia* is to be read on the initial and contiguous letters of the last line of *Inferno* and of the fourth, seventh, and tenth lines from the last. These lines are the last line of the canto and the first lines of the three preceding *terzine*. The passage reads as follows:

D' un ruscelletto che quivi discende 130
Per la buca d' un sasso, ch' egli ha roso
Col corso ch' egli avvolge, e poco pende.

Lo Duca ed io per quel cammino ascoso 133
 Entrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo:
 E senza cura aver d' alcun riposo
 Salimmo suso, ei primo ed io secondo, 136
 Tanto ch' io vidi delle cose belle
 Che porta il ciel, per un pertugio tondo,
 E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle. 139

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line and of the fourth, seventh, and tenth line from the last:

130 D
 133 LO
 136 S
 139 E

Read: SOL: D . . . E

The punctuation of this acrostic, and, indeed, any punctuation in the cryptograms which I shall show, is inserted arbitrarily, as a means of indicating an interpretation of the cryptographic words.

D and E are the first and last letters of DANTE, and, as I shall show later, they are constantly used in the *Divina Commedia* as a signature. The device of indicating a proper name by its initial and final letters survives in modern usage.

The acrostic: SOL: D . . . E, like the acrostic NATI, is constructed on the ten-line frame. It differs, however, from the acrostic NATI and also from the acrostic NEMICA in the fact that the letters which compose it are read not in the order in which they appear on the consecutive lines, but in a rearranged order, like the letters of an anagram. I have called this form of acrostic, therefore, which requires an anagrammatic rearrangement of the acrostic letters, an anagrammatic acrostic.

The subsidiary acrostic which appears with this acrostic: SOL: D . . . E, is to be read on the following initial and contiguous letters of the last six lines of the canto:

134 E
 135 E
 136 S
 137 TA
 138 C
 139 E QUIND

Read: DANTE ESCE QUI

This acrostic, like the preceding, is an anagrammatic acrostic. Note that the letters for this reading are all either initials or contiguous letters; within the limits which they make of themselves not a single superfluous letter is contained.

The first four *terzine* of *Purgatorio*, in which I will show another acrostic on the ten-line frame, read as follows:

Per correr miglior acqua alza le vele
 Omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
 Che lascia retro a sè mar sì crudele.
 E canterò di quel secondo regno, 4
 Dove l' umano spirito si purga,
 E di salire al ciel diventa degno.
 Ma qui la morta poesì risurga, 7
 O sante Muse, poichè vostro sono,
 E qui Calliopè alquanto surga,
 Seguitando il mio canto con quel suono 10
 Di cui le Piche misere sentiro
 Lo colpo tal, che disperar perdono.

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*, lines 1, 4, 7, and 10:

1 PER
 4 E
 7 MA
 10 S

Read: PEREMAS

PEREMAS, "Do thou remove," is the second person, singular, present subjunctive of the Latin *peremo*.

Another acrostic may be read on the same lines; it appears on the initials of these lines:

1 P
4 E
7 M
10 S

Read: SPEM

The concurrence of the two acrostics, PEREMAS and SPEM, on the same lines is not accidental. For the remarkable associations which Dante establishes between the two words, PEREMAS and SPEM, see Chapter VII.

Subsidiary to the acrostics on the ten-line frame, PEREMAS and SPEM, is an acrostic on the first six lines of the canto. Consider on these lines the following initial and contiguous letters.

1 PE
2 OMA
3 C
4 E CANT
5 DO
6 E

Read: POEMA. ECCO DANTE

In this anagrammatic acrostic the word POEMA appears very plainly in the first two lines as a cluster of letters. Such a cluster of significant letters, all of which are contiguous, is a common form of cryptogram at the beginnings and the ends of poems and in other salient positions. I regard such cryptographic clusters of contiguous letters, which are indeed identical in form with the anagrammatic acrostic, as the form from which the anagrammatic acrostic is derived.

The last ten lines of *Purgatorio*, xxxiii. 136-145, in which I shall show an acrostic on the ten-line frame, read as follows:

S' io avessi, lettor, più lungo spazio	136
Da scrivere, io pur canterei in parte	
Lo dolce ber che mai non m' avria sazio;	
Ma perchè piene son tutte le carte	139
Ordite a questa Cantica seconda,	
Non mi lascia più ir lo fren dell' arte.	

Io ritornai dalla santissim' onda 142
 Rifatto sì, come piante novelle
 Rinnovellate di novella fronda,
 Puro e disposto a salire alle stelle. 145

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line and the fourth, seventh, and tenth from the last:

136 SI
 139 MA
 142 IO RI
 145 P

Read: PIO RIMASI

Subsidiary to this acrostic on the ten-line frame is an acrostic on the last four lines. Consider the following initial and contiguous letters of these lines:

142 I
 143 RI
 144 RI
 145 PU

Read: PURI RJI

The first four *terzine* of *Paradiso*, i. 1-12, in which I shall show an acrostic on the ten-line frame, read as follows:

La gloria di colui che tutto move
 Per l' universo penetra, e risplende
 In una parte più, e meno altrove.
 Nel ciel che più della sua luce prende 4
 Fu' io, e vidi cose che ridire
 Nè sa, nè può chi di lassù discende;
 Perchè, appressando sè al suo disire, 7
 Nostro intelletto si profonda tanto,
 Che retro la memoria non può ire.
 Veramente quant' io del regno santo 10
 Nella mia mente potei far tesoro,
 Sarà ora materia del mio canto.

Consider the following initial and contiguous letters of the first lines of these *terzine*, lines 1, 4, 7, and 10:

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1 LA
4 NE
7 PE
10 VE

Read: VELA PENE

Subsidiary to this acrostic on the ten-line frame is an acrostic on the first three lines of the canto. Consider on these lines the following initial and contiguous letters:

1 LA
2 PER
3 IN UNA

Read: IN UNA PERLA

The last ten lines of *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 136-145, in which I shall show an acrostic on the ten-line frame, read as follows:

Tale era io a quella vista nuova:	136
Veder voleva, come si convenne	
L' imago al cerchio, e come vi s' indova;	
Ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne,	139
Se non che la mia mente fu percossa	
Da un fulgore, in che sua voglia venne.	
All' alta fantasia qui mancò possa;	142
Ma già volgeva il mio disiro e il <i>velle</i> ,	
Sì come rota ch' egualmente è mossa,	
L' amor che move il sole e l' altre stelle.	145

Consider on the last line of the canto and the fourth, seventh, and tenth from the last, that is, the last line of the canto and the first lines of the three preceding *terzine*, the following initial and contiguous letters:

136 TA
139 MA
142 A
145 L'

Read: L'AMATA

Subsidiary to this acrostic on the ten-line frame is an

acrostic on the following initial and contiguous letters of the last four lines of the canto:

142	A
143	MA
144	S
145	L

Read: SALMA

I have now shown acrostics on the ten-line frame, each with a subsidiary acrostic, at the beginning and at the end of each of the three main divisions of the *Divina Commedia: Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso*. Let us now examine the meaning of these acrostics in relation to the meaning of the poem. The examination will be necessarily brief and incomplete; it will merely suggest, in the present chapter, certain aspects of the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* which will have to be developed in detail in the succeeding chapters.

Turn first to the acrostics, NATI and NEMICA, which appear at the beginning of *Inferno*. NATI is profoundly appropriate to the symbolism not only of the opening lines of the poem but also of the poem as a whole. The theme of the poem is mankind, the children who are born into the *selva oscura*, the moral obscurities of the life on earth.

The lives of the NATI are typified by the life of Dante himself, who, as the hero of an autobiographical dream, portrays himself as the representative man on the journey from birth to death. But the life of Dante, as he portrays it in his poem, is not merely a typical life. It is also, like the life of Christ, a model life. He proceeds on his journey from Hell to Heaven, from evil to good, from human to divine; he is morally regenerated. Regeneration is literally rebirth; and rebirth, or birth, in its physical aspects, has been universally used as a symbol of moral regeneration. An illustration from the Bible of moral regeneration expressed, or understood, in terms of physical birth, appears in the conversation between Nicodemus and Christ, *John* iii. 3-7:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

"Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

The same idea of moral rebirth as symbolized by physical birth is expressed in the familiar passages: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and "Suffer the little children to come unto me: and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

The idea of rebirth underlies the whole story of Christ himself, since he is first born—or reborn, if considered as previously existing in the Trinity—of the Virgin Mary, and is afterwards reborn—resurrected—from the grave to his divine life as God.

The rebirth symbolism so literally expressed in the Gospels pervades the *Divina Commedia* to a degree, I believe, hitherto unsuspected; and it implies necessarily, for the man who is reborn, either a mother who bears him twice, or else the existence of two mothers, one the mother of his human life and one the mother of the divine life. The first is evil, since she delivers her child into the evil life of the flesh. The second is good, since she delivers her child into the divine life of the spirit. The symbolism of the dual mother, or of two mothers, is inherent in the symbolism of moral rebirth, and it is expressed in the *Divina Commedia*. The evil mother of Dante is she who has delivered him into the evil life in which he has *lost* himself at the beginning of the poem. The good mother of Dante is she who delivers him into the divine life in which he *finds* himself at the end of the poem; she is no other, in fact,

than Beatrice, who delivers Dante into the life of the spirit by virtue of his love for her and her love for him.

Now there is a passage in the conversation between Christ and Nicodemus about rebirth which is of the highest importance for the interpretation of all myths and allegories of rebirth; it is the question of Nicodemus: "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" The idea of entering the mother's womb a second time as the means of rebirth is common to the mythologies and religions of many—I might even venture to say of all—peoples; and it is an idea which implies an act of incest, whether disguised or overt, since the only way of reentering the womb from which a man is born is by the act of sexual union. Sometimes, indeed, the incestuous element in myths and allegories of rebirth is disguised by the fact that the man to be reborn is represented as having, as I have already suggested, two mothers. But these two mothers must be understood, in the last analysis, as representing simply the *two functions* of motherhood which the one mother possesses: the function of conceiving the child, as from sexual union, and the function of delivering the child, as in childbirth. In myths and allegories of rebirth, therefore, in which there are two mothers, these two mothers refer to the one mother who first bore her child and then received him back into her womb, as by sexual union, in order that she might again give him life. Incest in myth and religion is a universal symbol of the means of rebirth; and it is necessary to recognize this symbolism in order to understand the meaning of the *Divina Commedia*. Throughout the present volume I will show that the *Divina Commedia* is based on a conscious and highly rationalized symbolism of incest as the means by which the rebirth of the hero Dante is accomplished.

In connection with the symbolism thus suggested of the acrostic NATI, it becomes evident that the acrostic NEMICA is the cryptographic expression, just as the *selva oscura* is the symbolic expression, of the evil mother, from whom the NATI are born. Indeed, as a detail of the cryptographic form, the NEMICA, an acrostic on four lines, suggests the mother in the

sense that the NATI, an acrostic on the ten-line frame, is formed in part of the very body of the NEMICA, the letters N, line 1, and A, line 4, and also, in extending beyond the four-line frame of the NEMICA, grows out of it.

Let us now consider the meaning of the two acrostics: SOL: D . . . E and DANTE ESCE QUI, which appear at the conclusion of *Inferno*. The acrostic: DANTE ESCE QUI, has an obvious correspondence to the text, which actually describes how Dante issues from Hell. The acrostic: SOL: D . . . E, points to the association of Dante, as the hero of the poem, with the sun as his symbol. The sun symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* has never been sufficiently understood; in the course of the present volume I shall have occasion to develop it in detail, and I shall be able to confirm it with abundant cryptographic proof. I will confine myself at present, therefore, to indicating that the sun, which has universally been used as the symbol of God and which constantly appears, in Christian symbolism, as the symbol of Christ, is consistently used throughout the *Divina Commedia* as the symbol of Dante. Dante's use of the sun as the symbol for himself is very apparent in the fact that his descent into Hell is synchronized with the descent of the sun, and that his ascent to Purgatory is synchronized with the rising sun. Other correspondences between Dante's journey and the course of the sun will be developed later; they prove that the theme of the poem might well be considered as a self-conscious variation of the sun myth. The two acrostics at the end of *Inferno*: DANTE ESCE QUI and SOL: D . . . E, confirm this idea, for the hour at which Dante issues from Hell is sunrise of Easter.

Now the common feature of all sun myths, with which the theme of the *Divina Commedia* is thus suggested as analogous, is the idea of *rebirth*. The sun that in the evening sinks back in death into the mother earth from whom it was born in the morning is to be born again in the morning to follow. This idea of the rebirth of the sun from the mother who had given birth to it in the first place involves the idea of incest—an idea which, as I have already suggested, is fundamental in the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*.

The three acrostic readings which I show on the opening lines of *Purgatorio* are: PEREMAS and SPEM, on the ten-line frame, and the subsidiary: POEMA: ECCO DANTE. The PEREMAS is the most remarkable single word that I have discovered among the cryptograms of the *Divina Commedia*, and it appears very often. The use which Dante makes of this word is extremely complicated; for the detailed discussion of its meaning I shall have to refer the reader, therefore, to Chapter VII. For our present purposes it is sufficient to surmise that, as the Latin for "Do thou remove," PEREMAS instructs the reader of the *Divina Commedia* to remove the veil that covers the secret meaning of the poem.

The acrostic SPEM, which appears on the same lines which give PEREMAS, has a meaning which is obviously related to the meaning of *Purgatorio*, in which hope is the prevailing mood. Hope in Purgatory contrasts with despair in Hell, as appears, indeed, in the inscription written over the gate of Hell:

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi, ch' entrate.

The appropriateness of the acrostic: POEMA: ECCO DANTE, to the text is self-evident, since it signs *Purgatorio* at its beginning with the author's name. Cryptographic signatures are common at the beginning or the end of a main division of a work. Notice that the acrostic POEMA is echoed in the text, line 7, in the word *poesi*. In the first line of the passage note the word *vele*, or "sails." This word suggests a pun on the word for "veil," *vel*, the presence of which in the text of the *Divina Commedia* is almost invariably associated with some cryptographic device. Another word which Dante constantly associates with his cryptograms is *ingegno*, a reference to wit or cunning, which appears in the present passage in line 2. I ask the reader to bear in mind these associations until I confirm them by further examples.

The acrostics which I have shown at the end of *Purgatorio* are: PIO RIMASI and PURI RII. The PURI RII correspond obviously to the two streams Eunoe and Lethe, both of which are discussed in the concluding cantos of *Purgatorio* and in both of which Dante is bathed. These streams, as I

shall develop later, are symbols of the two mothers, or of the dual mother, who constantly appears in myths of rebirth. I shall have to defer to a later chapter the discussion of Dante's bathing in these two mother images as symbolizing the physical relations of birth and sexual union.

I shall likewise have to defer the discussion of the meaning of the acrostic: PIO RIMASI. Let it suffice for the present to suggest that Dante has "slept" with Beatrice, *Purg.* xxxii. The description of this sleep expresses in symbolism which has not, I believe, been recognized, the idea that the two lovers have repeated in the Terrestrial Paradise, the Garden of Eden, the act for which Adam and Eve were expelled from it. The difference, however, between Dante and Adam is simply this, that where Adam sinned by disobedience to God, Dante remained "pious," or respectful of the divine conditions for such intercourse.

The acrostics at the beginning of *Paradiso* are: VELA PENE and IN UNA PERLA. The meaning of these acrostics is appropriate to the text. In the symbolism of the sun as God the light of the sun is his phallic symbol. The phallic light which "penetrates the universe" as "in a pearl" is the principle which, in the literal sense, makes the earth, and, in the moral sense, the soul bear fruit. In the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, as in the symbolism of primitive myth and religion, the analogies with the sexual organism on which the symbolism is based are developed in detail. For the discussion of Dante's symbolism of light as phallic in relation to the female form of the universe, see Chapter VII.

The two acrostics at the end of *Paradiso* are: L'AMATA and SALMA. *Salma* means *corpo morto* or *corpo*; it is a word which Dante uses, *Par.* xxxii. 113-114, in the phrase:

Il Figliuol di Dio
Carcar si vuole della nostra salma.

The appropriateness of the acrostic SALMA to the passage in which it appears, and, indeed, to the theme of the entire poem becomes evident in considering the theme of the poem in the light of Dante's own definition, in the letter to Can Grande:

“The subject, then, of the whole work, taken according to the letter alone, is simply a consideration of the state of souls after death; for from and around this the action of the whole work turneth. But if the work is considered according to its allegorical meaning, the subject is man, liable to the reward or punishment of Justice, according as through the freedom of the will he is deserving or undeserving.”*

It thus appears that the real subject of the poem, disguised as it is as a journey through the post-mortem regions of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, is in reality the life of man on earth—a journey, indeed, but a journey which begins with birth and ends with death. This meaning of the poem is indicated by the acrostic *NATI* at the beginning of the poem, which symbolizes the birth of the hero Man, and by the acrostic *SALMA* at the end of the poem, which symbolizes his corpse, or death. And just as we find the female *NEMICA* in connection with the *NATI* at the beginning of the poem, we find *L'AMATA* in connection with the *SALMA* at the end of the poem. *L'AMATA* is the beloved whom Dante rejoins, at the end of his journey, in death; and she contrasts with the *NEMICA*, from whom his journey begins at birth. Dante is at once, as I shall have to develop later, the lover of *L'AMATA* and, in a symbolical sense at least, her son, since it is through his love for her that he is reborn, or born to God. Thus the *NEMICA* and *L'AMATA* represent the two mothers, or the two aspects of the one mother, who is universally present in myths and allegories of rebirth. The *NEMICA*, as the evil mother, delivers the child from her womb to the evil life on earth; she is the mother of the evil life. *L'AMATA*, as the divine mother, receives the child back into her womb, as to the divine source of life in which the life of the son may be renewed. She is thus the mother of the divine life, a form of life which is constantly symbolized, not only in myths, dreams, and religion, but also in the allegory of the *Divina Commedia*, as the prenatal existence in the womb. The foetus in the womb has been universally symbolized, as I shall show later, by the corpse in the grave; it is a symbolism which

*From the translation of *Dante's Eleven Letters* by Chas. S. Latham.

rationalizes the universal desire to consider the grave, or death, as the birthplace, or birth, of a life after death.

The intra-uterine existence, as thus symbolized by the corpse in the grave, and as we shall see, by the soul in Hell or Purgatory or Paradise, is taken by Dante as the symbol of the return of the soul to God; the soul is thus enfolded again in the very source of life; and God, as the supreme object of love, is conceived as a divine motherhood from whose womb the soul is expelled in birth to the evil life of the flesh on earth, and back to whose womb the soul once more returns for the life eternal. It is in this dual character of the mother as expelling and receiving the child that the *NEMICA* and *L'AMATA* are to be considered as in the last analysis identical, and in Dante's relation to this dual character there is necessarily implied the idea of incest. It is an idea, moreover, which is inherent in the Christian symbolism of the birth of Christ. Dante expresses the idea supremely in the prayer to the Virgin Mary, *Par.* xxxiii. 1:

Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio.

The complicated relationship implied in this line is both filial and marital.

I showed in connection with the acrostics: *NATI* and *NEMICA*, that the *NEMICA* seems to be indicated as the mother of the *NATI* by the acrostic figure of the *NATI* as formed in part of the same letters as the *NEMICA*, and as extending beyond, or growing out of, it. The acrostic figure appears thus:

1	NE
2	MI
3	C
4	A
5	
6	
7	T
8	
9	
10	I

Analogous to this acrostic figure of the *NATI*, as children,

growing out of the maternal NEMICA is the acrostic figure of the SALMA, as corpse or foetus, in the womb of L'AMATA:

136 TA
 137
 138
 139 MA
 140
 141
 142 A
 143 MA
 144 S
 145 L

THE DIVISION INTO FOUR

There is another division of the *Divina Commedia* that has not yet been mentioned. I refer to the introduction to the poem, which is contained in the first canto of *Inferno*. The three regions of the life after death are generally considered as the scene of the *Divina Commedia*. In reality, however, the scene is the universe, which includes, in its entirety, the important region of Earth, and it is in the introductory canto of *Inferno* that the life on earth is represented by a symbolism that is as complete as it is compact. The apparent tripartite division of the *Divina Commedia* thus conceals a division into four parts.

The actual division into four of the apparent tripartite division of the poem is an essential feature of Dante's number symbolism. This fact, however, is not recognized; it is constantly said, to the contrary, that the number symbolism of the poem is based on *three*; and, in support of the three as the basic number, the Trinity of God is cited as suggesting to Dante the numerical structure that he follows not only in the division of his poem into three main parts but also in his invention of the *terzina*, his peculiar stanza form of three lines. As a matter of fact, the instances cited in favor of the

three symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* prove the contrary; for both the Trinity and the *terzina* are in reality based on a concept of four. The four of the Trinity is evident in the basic Christian belief that the Son of the Triune Father, Son, and Holy Ghost makes a fourth in the human form in which he is reborn on earth as Christ. As Dante says, *Par. i.* 104-105:

questo è forma
Che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante.

The statement that the universe, with its four-fold division into Paradise, Purgatory, Hell, and Earth, is like God implies the four-fold aspect of God.

Similarly, the *terzina*, which is apparently based on a system of three, is in reality based on a system of four lines; for the *terzina* form, by virtue of its unrhymed second line, is only completed by the rhyme of the first line of the succeeding *terzina*, or, as in the case of the end of a canto, by the rhyme of the separate last line.

The four which thus appears in the Trinity, in the structure of the Christian universe of Dante, and in the stanza form which he himself invented, is emphasized in the *Divina Commedia* by many symbols which I cannot at present take time to enumerate. The instances just cited, however, are sufficient in themselves to indicate that the poem is in reality divided into four principal parts, and that the number symbolism not only of the poem but of Dante's conception of life is based, not on three, but on the relation of three to four.

This view of the number symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* is consonant with the fact that Dante has placed acrostics on the ten-line frame at the end of *Inferno i*, the end of the division that might properly be called *Terra*, and at the beginning of *Inferno ii*, which is really the beginning of *Inferno* proper.

The ten lines that show the acrostic at the end of *Inf. i* are:

In tutte parti impera, e quivi regge, 127
Quivi è la sua città e l' alto seggio:
O felice colui cui ivi elegge!

Ed io a lui: 'Poeta, io ti richieggio	130
Per quello Dio che tu non conoscesti,	
Acciocch' io fugga questo male e peggio	
Che tu mi meni là dov' or dicesti,	133
Sì ch' io vegga la porta di san Pietro,	
E color cui tu fai cotanto mesti.'	
Allor si mosse, ed io li tenni retro.	136

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line and of the fourth, seventh, and tenth from the last:

127	IN
130	ED I
133	C
136	A

Read: E INDICA

This is an incomplete reading of the acrostic on these lines. Notice the words *Ed io*, line 130; they are, as I shall show in the chapter on the Universal Form, a cryptic sign for Dante himself. The INDICA spelling *down* the line through the DI of ED IO makes a *cross* with ED IO, thus:

IN
E DI O
C
A

The cryptographic reading, therefore, is in effect: INDICA ED IO. That is, it "indicates Dante;" and indicating Dante in the form of a cross, it suggests the identification which he constantly makes of himself with Christ. For further discussion of the cryptographic content of this passage see pp. 151-2.

The first four *terzine* of *Inf.* ii are:

Lo giorno se n' andava, e l' aer bruno	
Toglieva gli animai che sono in terra	
Dalle fatiche loro; ed io sol uno	
M' apparecchiava a sostener la guerra	4
Sì del cammino e sì della pietate,	
Che ritrarrà la mente, che non erra.	

O Muse, o alto ingegno, or m' aiutate: 7
 O mente, che scrivesti ciò ch' io vidi,
 Qui si parrà la tua nobilitate.
 Io cominciai: 'Poeta che mi guidi, 10
 Guarda la mia virtù, s' ella è possente,
 Prima che all' alto passo tu mi fidi.

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

1 LO
 4 M
 7 O
 10 IO

Read: L'OMO IO

Subsidiary to this acrostic on ten lines appears an acrostic on the following marginal letters of the first two lines:

1 LO
 2 TO

Read: LOTO

The relation of these acrostics to the meaning of the text is very close. LOTO, a term for *fango*, commonly used to mean *il genere umano*, corresponds to the English use of "clay" for "mankind." In the present instance, it is the generic term for what Dante, as L'OMO IO, represents as an individual. Dante, it is implied, represents mankind by virtue of the typical life in which he portrays himself.

But the most interesting implication is to be found in the fact that both these acrostics spring from *Lo giorno*, line 1. The day, that is, the sun, is sinking as Dante descends into Hell, and it rises again as Dante ascends to Purgatory. Dante thus, as the representative OMO, whose nature is both human and divine, associates himself with the sun as the universal symbol both of mankind and of God.

The four divisions of the *Divina Commedia* are thus shown to be marked off by acrostics on the ten-line frame at the beginning and the end of each. The number symbolism of four in relation to three which this demarcation confirms is further confirmed by the structure of the acrostics them-

selves. The ten-line frame acrostic is constructed, essentially, on *four* *terzine* of *three* lines each—the number of lines in the terminal acrostics being necessarily diminished by the incomplete form of the final *terzina*. The four that thus appears in connection with a three—the number of lines being four times three—suggests again the symbolism of 3:4. It is to be further noted that the four *terzine* involved in the ten-line frame are very clearly marked off in *Inf. i*, *Purg. i*, and *Par. i*, as *rhetorical* units. In each of these openings the four *terzine* are separated from the fifth by a decided change of thought and subject. The coincidence of the acrostic frame with the rhetorical unit can scarcely be considered accidental.

OTHER ACROSTICS ON THE TEN-LINE FRAME

There are to be found in the *Divina Commedia* many other acrostics on the ten-line frame both at the beginnings and the ends of cantos and in the interior of cantos. I will give here a few examples, simply for the purpose of further illustrating the structure. The remaining examples of acrostics on the ten-line frame I will reserve for later chapters, in which the meaning of the acrostics will serve to confirm my interpretation of the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*.

The following passage, *Inf. viii.* 82–93, consists of four *terzine*:

Io vidi più di mille in sulle porte	82
Da' ciel piovuti, che stizzosamente	
Dicean: 'Chi è costui, che senza morte	
Va per lo regno della morta gente?'	85
E il savio mio Maestro fece segno	
Di voler lor parlar segretamente.	
Allor chiusero un poco il gran disdegno,	88
E disser: 'Vien tu solo, e quei sen vada,	
Che sì ardito entrò per questo regno.	
Sol si ritorni per la folle strada:	91
Provi se sa, chè tu qui rimarrai	
Che gli hai scorta sì buia contrada.'	

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Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these *terzine*:

82 IO
85 V
88 A
91 S

Read: SAVIO

The passage begins, line 82, with the words *Io vidi*; we shall see later that the presence of these words at the beginning of a *terzina* is frequently a hint of the presence of a cryptogram. The intention of the acrostic SAVIO is confirmed by the repetition of the word in line 86.

Another hint of the presence of a cryptogram is to be found in the acrostic on the three lines of the *terzina* beginning line 85. Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

85 V
86 E
87 DI

Read: VEDI

In the second line of the *terzina* in which the acrostic VEDI is found occurs the word *savio*, line 86. Possibly the acrostic instruction to *look* is a direction to this word, the reappearance of which in the ten-line acrostic SAVIO confirms the acrostic.

The following passage, *Par.* xiv. 70-81, consists of four *terzine*:

E sì come al salir di prima sera	70
Comincian per lo ciel nuove parvenze,	
Sì che la vista pare e non par vera;	
Parvemi lì novelle sussistenze	73
Cominciar a vedere, e fare un giro	
Di fuor dall' altre due circonferenze.	
O vero isfavillar del santo spiro,	76
Come si fece subito e candente	
Agli occhi miei che vinti non soffriro!	
Ma Beatrice sì bella e ridente	79
Mi si mostrò, che tra quelle vedute	
Si vuol lasciar che non seguir la mente.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

70 E
73 P
76 O
79 MA

Read: POEMA

The first four *terzine* of *Purg.* ii are:

Già era il sole all' orizzonte giunto,
Lo cui meridian cerchio coperchia
Jerusalem col suo più alto punto:
E la notte che opposta a lui cerchia, 4
Uscìa di Gange fuor colle bilance,
Che le caggion di man quando soperchia;
Si che le bianche e le vermiglie guance, 7
Là dove io era, della bella Aurora
Per troppa etate divenivan rance.
Noi eravam lunghesso il mare ancora, 10
Come gente che pensa a suo cammino,
Che va col core, e col corpo dimora:

Consider on the first lines of these four *terzine* the following marginal letters:

I G
4 E
7 S
10 NO

Read: SEGNO.

For the importance which Dante attaches to the position of Jerusalem indicated in the text see pp. 267-72.

The following passage, *Purg.* xiii. 145-154, consists of the last ten lines of the canto:

'Or questa è ad udir sì cosa nuova,' 145
Rispose, 'che gran segno è che Dio t' ami;
Però col prego tuo talor mi giova.
E chieggjoti per quel che tu più brami, 148
Se mai calchi la terra di Toscana,
Che a' miei propinqui tu ben mi rinfami.

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Tu li vedrai tra quella gente vana	151
Che spera in Talamone, e perderagli	
Più di speranza, che a trovar la Diana;	
Ma più vi metteranno gli ammiragli.'	154

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line of the canto and of the first lines of the three preceding *terzine*:

145	OR
148	E
151	T
154	M

Read: MORTE

Note in the first line of the preceding *terzina*, line 142, the words: *E vivo sono*.

In Moore's text the first word of this passage is *O*. I have adopted the reading *Or* of Toynbee and Casini. If the acrostic is accepted as intentional it establishes *Or* as the correct reading.

ACROSTICS ON OTHER FRAMES

In addition to the acrostics that appear on the first lines of four *terzine* there are others that appear on the first lines of more or less than four *terzine*. The following is an example of an acrostic that appears on the first lines of three *terzine*. The passage is *Par.* xxii. 28–36, which reads:

E la maggiore e la più luculenta	28
Di quelle margarite innanzi fessi,	
Per far di sè la mia voglia contenta.	
Poi dentro a lei udi': 'Se tu vedessi,	31
Com' io, la carità che tra noi arde,	
Li tuoi concetti sarebbero espressi;	
Ma perchè tu aspettando non tarde	34
All' alto fine, io ti farò risposta	
Pure al pensier di che sì ti riguarde.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these three *terzine*:

28 E
31 PO
34 MA

Read: POEMA

The following passage, *Par.* xv. 76-84, consists of three terzine:

Perocchè il Sol, che v' allumò ed arse 76
Col caldo e con la luce, è sì iguali,
Che tutte simiglianze sono scarse.
Ma voglia ed argomento nei mortali, 79
Per la cagion ch' a voi è manifesta,
Diversamente son pennuti in ali.
Ond' io che son mortal, mi sento in questa 82
Disagguaglianza, e però non ringrazio,
Se non col core, alla paterna festa.

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these three terzine:

76 PE
79 MA
81 O

Read: POEMA

The following passage, *Purg.* xi. 1-9, contains another acrostic on the first lines of three terzine:

'O Padre nostro, che nei cieli stai,
Non circoscritto, ma per più amore
Che ai primi effetti di lassù tu hai,
Laudato sia il tuo nome e il tuo valore 4
Da ogni creatura, com' è degno
Di render grazie al tuo dolce vapore.
Vegna ver noi la pace del tuo regno, 7
Chè noi ad essa non potem da noi,
S' ella non vien, con tutto nostro ingegno.

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these three terzine:

I O
4 L
7 VE

Read: VELO

The word *ingegno*, line 9, is, as often, a hint.

Following is an example of an acrostic on the last line of a canto and the first lines of the two preceding *terzine*, *Purg.* xvii. 133-139:

Altro ben è che non fa l' uom felice;	133
Non è felicità, non è la buona	
Essenza, d' ogni ben frutto e radice.	
L' amor ch' ad esso troppo s' abbandona,	136
Di sopra noi si piange per tre cerchi;	
Ma come tripartito si ragiona,	
Tacciolo, acciocchè tu per te ne cerchi.'	139

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line of the canto and of the first lines of the two preceding *terzine*:

133 A
136 L'AM
139 TA

Read: L'AMATA

This is a sort of "potence," as the acrostic word begins on *L'amor*. L'AMATA appears also in the acrostic at the end of *Par.* xxxiii. (see p. 30).

Following is an example of an acrostic on the first lines of five *terzine*, *Par.* xxix. 61-75:

Perchè le viste lor furo esaltate	61
Con grazia illuminante, e con lor merto,	
Sì ch' hanno piena e ferma volontate.	
E non voglio che dubbi ma sie certo,	64
Che ricever la grazia è meritorio,	
Secondo che l' affetto gli è aperto.	
Omai dintorno a questo consistorio	67
Puoi contemplare assai, se le parole	
Mie son ricolte, senz' altro aiutorio.	
Ma perchè in terra per le vostre scuole	70
Si legge che l' angelica natura	
È tal che intende e si ricorda e vuole,	

Ancor dirò, perchè tu veggi pura 73
 La verità che laggiù si confonde,
 Equivocando in sì fatta lettura.

The initials of the first lines of these five terzine are:

61 P
 64 E
 67 O
 70 M
 73 A

Read: POEMA

Following is an example of an acrostic on the first lines of six terzine, *Purg.* xvi. 67-84:

Voi che vivete, ogni cagion recate 67
 Pur suso al ciel, così come se tutto
 Movesse seco di necessitate.
 Se così fosse, in voi fora distrutto 70
 Libero arbitrio, e non fora giustizia,
 Per ben letizia, e per male aver lutto.
 Lo cielo i vostri movimenti inizia, 73
 Non dico tutti: ma, posto ch' io il dica,
 Lume v' è dato a bene ed a malizia,
 E libero voler, che, se fatica 76
 Nelle prime battaglie col ciel dura,
 Poi vince tutto, se ben si nutrica.
 A maggior forza ed a miglior natura 79
 Liberi soggiacete, e quella cria
 La mente in voi, che il ciel non ha in sua cura.
 Però, se il mondo presente disvia, 82
 In voi è la cagione, in voi si cheggia,
 Ed io te ne sarò or vera spia.

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these six terzine:

67 V
 70 SE
 73 L
 76 E
 79 AM
 82 PER

Read: PEREMAS VEL

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Following is an example of an acrostic on four lines, *Par.* x.
43-46:

Perch' io lo ingegno, l' arte e l' uso chiami, 43
 Sì nol direi che mai s' immaginasse,
 Ma creder puossi, e di veder si brami.
 E se le fantasie nostre son basse 46

Consider on these four lines the following marginal letters:

43 PER
 44 S
 45 MA
 46 E

Read: PEREMAS

There is a hint in the words *ingegno* and *arte*.

Another acrostic on four lines appears in the following
passage, *Par.* viii. 100-103:

E non pur le nature provvedute 100
 Son nella mente ch' è da sè perfetta,
 Ma esse insieme con la lor salute.
 Perchè quantunque questo arco saetta, 103

Consider on these four lines the following marginal letters:

100 E
 101 S
 102 MA
 103 PER

Read: PEREMAS

Following is an acrostic on a single *terzina*, *Par.* xxv.
28-30:

Ridendo allora Beatrice disse:
 'Inclita vita, per cui la larghezza
 Della nostra basilica si scrisse,

Consider the following marginal letters of these three lines:

28 R
 29 I
 30 DE

Read: RIDE

This is a sort of "potence," as the acrostic word begins on *Ridendo*.

Another acrostic on the three lines of a single *terzina* appears in the following passage, *Par. x.* 52-54:

E Beatrice incominciò: 'Ringrazia,
Ringrazia il Sol degli Angeli, ch' a questo
Sensibil t' ha levato per sua grazia.'

Consider the following marginal letters on these three lines:

52 E
53 RI
54 S

Read: RISE

Compare RISE with the foregoing RIDE, which expresses the same idea in connection with Beatrice.

Another example of an acrostic on the three lines of a single *terzina* appears in the following passage, *Purg. xx.* 1-3:

Contra miglior voler voler mal pugna;
Onde contra il piacer mio, per piacerli,
Trassi dell' acqua non sazia la spugna.

Consider the following marginal letters of these three lines:

1 C
2 ON
3 TRA

Read: CONTRA

This is a potence, as the acrostic word begins on *Contra*.

The following passage, *Par. i.* 85-87, consists of one *terzina*:

Ond' ella, che vedea me sì com' io,
A quietarmi l' animo commosso,
Pria ch' io a domandar, la bocca aprio,

Consider the following marginal letters of these three lines:

85 O
86 A
87 PRI

Read: APRIO

This repeats the word *aprio* in the text.

The following passage, *Inf.* xvi. 88–90, consists of one *terzina*:

Un *ammen* non saria potuto dirsi
Tosto così, com' ei furo spariti:
Perchè al Maestro parve di partirsi.

Consider the following marginal letters on these three lines:

88 UN
89 TO
90 P

Read: PUNTO

Ammen is in a sense a *punto*.

Following is one *terzina*, *Purg.* vii. 16–18:

'O gloria de' Latin,' disse, 'per cui
Mostrò ciò che potea la lingua nostra,
O pregio eterno del loco ond' io fui.

The initials of the lines of this *terzina* are:

16 O
17 M
18 O

Read: OMO

OMO, as a form of *uomo*, appears frequently in the cryptograms in the *Divina Commedia*.

The foregoing acrostics are sufficient to illustrate the structure of the shorter acrostics which I have discovered in the *Divina Commedia*. With the exception of the necessarily brief suggestion of the implications of the acrostics at the beginning and the end of the four main divisions of the *Divina Commedia*, I have not attempted to explain the meaning of the acrostics shown in the present chapter in relation to the meaning of the poem. The whole question of meaning is deferred to succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER III
SIGNATURES

CHAPTER III

SIGNATURES

THERE is apparently but a single instance of Dante's use of his own name in the *Divina Commedia*; it occurs, *Purg.* xxx. 55, in the words with which Beatrice addresses him. And apparently Dante is seeking to excuse himself for using his name when he says, lines 62-63:

mi volsi al suon del nome mio,
Che di necessità qui si registra.

The necessity, apparently, is that his name occurs in the words of Beatrice which he is obliged to record. The excuse, if it is an excuse, may be related to the opinion, expressed in the *Convivio*, i. 2, 8-17: *Parlare alcuno di sè medesimo pare non licito . . . Non si concede per li rettorici alcuno di sè medesimo senza necessaria cagione parlare.*

Now the duplicities of Dante's language are such that he repeats the mention of his name in the very words with which he excuses it. In his reference to his name, which, as he says, *di necessità qui si registra*, Dante may be understood to be saying that his name is "registered here" in the words: DI NECESSITA; that is, that the words: DI NECESSITA, are the form which he here uses for his signature.

But how can DI NECESSITA be deciphered as a signature of DANTE? The hint for the method of deciphering is given in the words, lines 58-59:

Quasi ammiraglio, che in poppa ed in prora
Viene a veder,

and, line 62:

mi volsi al suon del nome mio.

There are here suggested the sweeping glance that looks fore and aft, and the idea of *turning* at the sound of DANTE. Let us examine now the two words of the signature DI NECESSITA. Note, first, that the word DI is also the spelt form of the letter D, as which it may be at once considered. We have then for the signature:

D NECESSITA

Turn, now, fore and aft, and keep on so turning. In other words, read, first, the first letter, or D; second, the last letter, or A; third, the letter next the first letter, or N; fourth, the letter next the last letter, or T; and fifth, the letter nearest the front again, or E. The letters remaining spell CESSI, or "stop," so that the cryptogram directs the decipherer to stop as soon as he has spelt DANTE. This spelling device is perfectly regular. Instead of being read in a straight sequence, the letters are to be read in a sequence of regular alternations between the letters at the extreme left and the extreme right.

The regularity of the device will appear by numbering the letters in the order in which they are to be read:

D	N	E	cessi	T	A
I	3	5		4	2

This hidden signature of Dante is one of a large number contained in the *Divina Commedia*. In the present chapter I will show some of these signatures and the cryptographic devices on which they are based. Many of the signatures will have a value that cannot be overestimated for illuminating some of the obscurest passages in the poem.

ACROSTIC SIGNATURES

In connection with the letter cluster shown in the preceding chapter at the beginning of *Purg.* i. in which Dante signs his poem: POEMA: ECCO DANTE, see the last ten lines of *Purg.* xxxii. 151-160:

E come perchè non gli fosse tolta,	151
Vidi di costa a lei dritto un gigante,	
E baciavansi insieme alcuna volta:	
Ma perchè l' occhio cupido e vagante	154
A me rivolse, quel feroce drudo	
La flagellò dal capo infin le piante.	
Poi di sospetto pieno e d' ira crudo,	157
Disciolse il mostro, e trassel per la selva	
Tanto, che sol di lei mi fece scudo	
Alla puttana ed alla nuova belva.	160

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line of the canto and of the first lines of the three preceding terzine:

151	E
154	M
157	PO
160	A

Read: **POEMA**

But this is not the only acrostic in the passage, for there is another on the lines between the lines already used to spell **POEMA**. The lines between the lines already used, 151, 154, 157, and 160, are lines 152, 153, 155, 156, 158, and 159. Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

152	V
153	E
155	A
156	L
158	D
159	TAN

Read: **VELA DANT**

DANT is a form that, as we shall see, Dante uses elsewhere. The acrostic **POEMA** on the ten-line frame may be understood, since it appears on the salient and enclosing lines of the passage, to veil the acrostic on the intervening lines. In other words, **POEMA VELA DANT**; the poem is the veil behind which Dante is hidden.

A possible hint of the cryptographic intention may be

seen in the words *disciolsè il mostro* and *occhio . . . vagante a me*. Dante is here associated with the *puttana*, as he is in *Inf.* xviii. 127-136 (see pp. 59-60). The symbolism of this association is explained in Chapter VI, pp. 179-80.

Contrasting with this acrostic signature which appears as subsidiary to another acrostic built on the ten-line frame are others in which the ten-line frame is used for the signature itself. An example occurs in *Par.* xxvi. 94-105:

Devoto quanto posso a te supplico	94
Perchè mi parli; tu vedi mia voglia,	
E per udirti tosto non la dico.'	
Tal volta un animal coperto broglia	97
Sì che l' affetto convien che si paia	
Per lo seguir che face a lui l'invoglia;	
E similmente l' anima primaia	100
Mi facea trasparer per la coperta	
Quant' ella a compiacermi venia gaia.	
Indì spirò: 'Senz' essermi profferta	103
Da te, la voglia tua discerno meglio	
Che tu qualunque cosa t' è più certa.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

94	D
97	TA
100	E
103	IN

Read: I', DANTE

Notice in connection with this acrostic signature the line on which it ends, line 103, and the line next following. Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

103	IN
104	DA TE

Read: I', DANTE

The repetition on lines 103-104 of the words I', DANTE, which appear on the ten-line frame, is strong confirmation of the intentional character of both acrostics, and the subject

of the passage itself confirms the intention. The subject is Adam, in whom, as the father of mankind, Dante exists. Moreover, the words:

Mi facea trasparer per la coperta,

say plainly enough that DANTE may be made to appear through the covering of the text. *Un animal coperto* and *convien che si paia* are likewise expressions which may be taken as having a similar reference to the cryptogram. It is to be noticed also that the passage as a whole begins with the letters DE, the first and last of DANTE and constantly used in the poem, either as DE or ED, to indicate both the name itself and the presence of a cryptogram in the passage of which they are the beginning or the end. The passage is further bounded, first and last, by the significant letters D, line 94, and I, line 103. These letters also are used by Dante to suggest his own name and to indicate the limits of cryptographic passages.

Another example of a signature on the ten-line frame appears in *Inf.* xviii. 127-136:

Appresso ciò lo Duca: 'Fa che pinghe,'	127
Mi disse, 'il viso un poco più avante,	
Sì che la faccia ben con gli occhi attinghe	
Di quella sozza e scapigliata fante,	130
Che là si graffia con l' unghie merdose,	
Ed or s' accoscia, ed ora è in piede stante.	
Taide è la puttana, che rispose	133
Al drudo suo, quando disse: "Ho io grazie	
Grandi appo te?" "Anzi meravigliose."	
E quinci sien le nostre viste sazie.'	136

An interesting feature of the acrostic signature which appears here is that it occurs with another acrostic on the same lines. The two acrostics are thus concurrent. Before showing the DANTE signature I will show the acrostic that coincides with it. Consider first the following marginal letters of the last line, the last of the canto, and of the first lines of the three preceding *terzine*:

127 A
 130 DI
 133 T
 136 E

Read: TAIDE

TAIDE is the name of the harlot mentioned in the text, and the acrostic, since it repeats a word of the text and uses the initial of that word as one of its own letters, is a "potence." The repetition in the acrostic of the name in the text is confirmation of the intention of the acrostic.

The signature DANTE to which I referred as concurrent with this acrostic TAIDE appears by taking on the same lines the following marginal letters:

127 A
 130 D
 133 T
 136 E QUIN

Read: DANTE QUI

The text contains an unmistakable hint that a signature is concealed. This hint is found in the double meaning of the following words of Virgil to Dante himself, 127-129:

Fa che pinghe
 . . . un poco il viso più avante,
 Si che la faccia ben con gli occhi attinghe.

If these words are taken as having the double meaning of which they are capable, Dante is told to show himself. This command, moreover, is immediately followed by a line, 130, of which the first letter, D, and the last letters, ANTE, spell DANTE. For a discussion of this device and for other examples, see pp. 71-4.

The two concurrent acrostics: TAIDE and DANTE QUI, show Dante and the *puttana* together. It is in harmony with the deeper symbolism of the poem that hero and harlot are involved with each other (see pp. 179-80).

The following passage, *Purg.* xx. 100-111, consists of four terzine:

SIGNATURES

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Tanto è risposta a tutte nostre prece, Quanto il dì dura; ma, quand' e' s' annotta, Contrario suon prendemo in quella vece.	100
Noi ripetiam Pigmalion allotta, Cui traditore e ladro e patricida Fece la voglia sua dell' oro ghiotta;	103
E la miseria dell' avaro Mida, Che seguì alla sua domanda ingorda, Per la qual sempre convien che si rida.	106
Del folle Acan ciascun poi si ricorda, Come furò le spoglie, sì che l' ira Di Josuè qui par ch' ancor lo morda.	109

Consider on the first lines of these four *terzine* the following marginal letters:

100	TA
103	N
106	E
109	D

Read: DANTE

The following passage, *Par.* vi. 61–70, consists of four *terzine*:

Quel che fe'poi ch'egli uscì di Ravenna, E saltò Rubicon, fu di tal volo Che nol seguiteria lingua nè penna.	61
In ver la Spagna rivolse lo stuolo; Poi ver Durazzo, e Farsalia percosse Sì ch' al Nil caldo si sentì del duolo.	64
Antandro e Simoenta, onde si mosse, Rivide, e là dov' Ettore si cuba, E mal per Tolommeo poi si riscosse:	67
Da indi scese folgorando a Juba; Pocia si volse nel vostro occidente, Dove sentia la Pompeiana tuba.	70

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

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61 QUE
64 I
67 ANT
70 D

Read: DANTE QUI

The first four terzine of *Par. ii* are:

O voi che siete in piccioletta barca, Desiderosi d' ascoltar, seguiti Retro al mio legno che cantando varca, Tornate a riveder li vostri liti,	4
Non vi mettete in pelago; chè forse Perdendo me rimarreste smarriti. L' acqua ch' io prendo giammai non si corse:	7
Minerva spira, e conducemi Apollo, E nove Muse mi dimostran l' Orse. Voi altri pochi, che drizzaste il collo Per tempo al pan degli Angeli, del quale Vivesi qui, ma non sen vien satollo,	10

Consider on the first lines of these terzine the following marginal letters:

1 O
4 T
7 L
10 VO

Read: VOLTO

Compare VOLTO with the idea of turning in the text.

The meaning of this acrostic is repeated in the acrostic on the first four lines of the canto:

1 O
2 D
3 R
4 TORNATE

Read: ROTOR. DANTE

ROTOR is the first person singular, present indicative passive, of the Latin *roto*, "I revolve." The use of this word in connection with a signature is a reference, as in GIRA

(see p. 96), to the cryptographic device of revolving the letters in such a way as to give the hidden reading. "Revolve," is the word used to hint at the cryptogram in the anonymous letter to Malvolio, in *Twelfth Night*.

There is reason to suspect the existence of a cryptogram in any passage in the *Divina Commedia* that shows a marked symmetry in the repetition of a word or phrase. Such a repetition occurs in the four *terzine*, *Purg.* vi. 106–117:

Vieni a veder Montecchi e Cappelletti, Monaldi e Filippeschi, uom senza cura: Color già tristi, e questi con sospetti.	106
Vien, crudel, vieni, e vedi la pressura De' tuoi gentili, e cura lor magagne, E vedrai Santafor com' è sicura.	109
Vieni a veder la tua Roma che piagne, Vedova e sola, e dì e notte chiama: 'Cesare mio, perchè non m' accompagne?'	112
Vieni a veder la gente quanto s' ama; E se nulla di noi pietà ti move, A vergognar ti vien della tua fama.	115

The cryptogram is concealed here on all the lines except the four lines beginning with the same word: *Vien*. Consider on the second and third lines of each of the four *terzine* the following marginal letters:

106	[VIENI]
107	MON
108	COL
109	[VIEN]
110	DE T
111	E
112	[VIENI]
113	VE
114	C
115	[VIENI]
116	E
117	A

Read: VELO. ECCO ME, DANTE

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The following passage, *Inf.* xvii. 1-12, consists of the first four terzine of the canto:

‘Ecco la fiera con la coda aguzza, Che passa i monti, e rompe i muri e l’ armi; Ecco colei che tutto il mondo appuzza.’	
Sì cominciò lo mio Duca a parlarmi, Ed accennolle che venisse a proda, Vicino al fin de’ passeggiati marmi:	4
E quella sozza imagine di froda Sen venne, ed arrivò la testa e il busto; Ma in sulla riva non trasse la coda.	7
La faccia sua era faccia d’ uom giusto; Tanto benigna avea di fuor la pelle, E d’ un serpente tutto l’ altro fusto.	10

Consider on the first lines of these four terzine the following marginal letters:

I	E
4	S
7	E QU
10	LA

Read: SEQUELA

The “sequel” is to be found in the marginal letters of the last two lines of the passage:

11	TAN
12	ED

Read: DANTE

The following passage, *Par.* i. 13-24, consists of four terzine:

O buono Apollo, all’ ultimo lavoro Fammi del tuo valor sì fatto vaso, Come domandi a dar l’ amato alloro.	13
Infino a qui l’ un giogo di Parnaso Assai mi fu, ma or con ambedue M’ è uopo entrar nell’ aringo rimaso.	16
Entra nel petto mio, e spira tue Sì come quando Marsia traesti Della vagina delle membra sue.	19

O divina virtù, se mi ti presti 22
 Tanto che l' ombra del beato regno
 Segnata nel mio capo io manifesti,

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these *terzine*:

13 O
 16 I
 19 ENTR
 22 O

Read: IO ENTRO

Dante is entering *nell' aringo rimaso*, the last stage of his journey. This passage follows immediately after the acrostic *VELA PENE* (see pp. 29–30). The two acrostics are to be read together in the light of the symbolism, explained in Chapter VII, of DANTE AS PENE.

Now consider the following marginal letters of lines 21–24:

21 DE
 22 O
 23 TAN
 24 SEGN

Read: SEGNO DANTE

All but the first of the cryptograms shown so far in this chapter are acrostics appearing on the ten-line frame or acrostics subsidiary to them. But the ten-line frame is not the only frame on which the acrostics in the *Divina Commedia* are constructed. The following is an acrostic signature on the first lines of three *terzine*, *Purg.* xxix. 16–24:

Ed ecco un lustro subito trascorse 16
 Da tutte parti per la gran foresta,
 Tal che di balenar mi mise in forse.
 Ma perchè il balenar, come vien, resta, 19
 E quel durando più e più splendeva,
 Nel mio pensar dicea: 'Che cosa è questa?'
 Ed una melodia dolce correva 22
 Per l' aer luminoso; onde buon zelo
 Mi fe' riprender l' ardimento d' Eva,

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The initials of the first lines of these terzine are:

16 E
19 M
22 E

Read: E ME

Note that the first and last lines on which this acrostic reading is found begin respectively with ED.

Consider on the two lines following the last ED, the last two lines of the last terzina, the following marginal letters:

23 PER
24 MI

Read: PER MI

This reading echoes the acrostic E ME.

The signature which appears in this passage and which seems to be hinted at by the acrostics: E ME and PER MI, appears on the marginal letters of all the lines of the seven-line frame that is so conspicuously and symmetrically bounded at each end by ED. Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

16 E
17 D
18 T
19 MA
20 E
21 N
22 E

Read: E ME, DANTE

It may be that there is a hint of the signature in the use of the word *durando*, line 20, with its phonetic suggestion of *Durante*, the early form of *Dante*.

Hints in the text immediately preceding and following the acrostic passage are the words, line 15: *Frate mio, guarda ED ascolta*; and, line 27:

Non sofferse di star sotto alcun velo.

Guarda ed ascolta may be taken to mean: "Look, hear D . . . e." The allusion to the veil may likewise be understood as having a reference to the veil of the text that hides the cryptogram.

The following passage, *Par.* xxxii. 136-144, consists of three *terzine*:

E contro al maggior Padre di famiglia	136
Siede Lucia, che mosse la tua Donna,	
Quando chinavi a ruinar le ciglia.	
Ma perchè il tempo fugge che t' assonna,	139
Qui farem punto, come buon sartore	
Che, com' egli ha del panno, fa la gonna;	
E drizzeremo gli occhi al primo amore,	142
Sì che, guardando verso lui, penetri,	
Quant' è possibil, per lo suo fulgore.	

The initials of the first lines of these three *terzine* are:

136	E
139	M
142	E

Read: E ME

Consider the following marginal letters of the third *terzina*:

142	ED
143	SI
144	QUANT'E

Read: SE' QUI, DANTE

The following passage, *Par.* xxvii. 43-48, consists of two *terzine*:

Ma per acquisto d' esto viver lieto	43
E Sisto e Pio e Calisto ed Urbano	
Sparger lo sangue dopo molto fletto.	
Non fu nostra intenzion ch' a destra mano	46
Dei nostri successor parte sedesse,	
Parte dall' altra, del popol cristiano;	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the two *terzine*:

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43 MA
46 NO

Read: NOMA

Now consider the following marginal letters on all the lines:

43 MA
44 E
45 S
46 N
47 DE
48 PARTE

Read: PEREMAS DANTE

The following passage, *Par.* xv. 19–24, consists of two *terzine*:

Tale, dal corno che in destro si stende, 19
Al piè di quella croce corse un astro
Della costellazion che lì risplende;
Nè si partì la gemma dal suo nastro, 22
Ma per la lista radial trascorse,
Che parve foco retro ad alabastro.

Consider first the following marginal letters of the first four lines:

19 T
20 A
21 D
22 NE

Read: DANTE

In the lines on which this signature appears Dante is describing his vision of his ancestor Cacciaguida, who is seen like a star moving upon the cross seen at the same time. There is a suggestion that the star is reflected in the gleaming surface of the cross, and this reflection is represented in a curious way by a second signature on the initials of the last words of lines 22, 23, and 24, taken in connection

with **D** before *alabastro* of line 24. The two signatures may be shown as follows:

19	T
20	A
21	D
22	NE.....N
23T
24D A

Read on the initials of the telestic words, lines 22, 23, and 24, together with the contiguous **D**: **DANT**.

It is natural that Dante should see himself (his name) both in the light of his ancestor and as reflected in the cross, the symbol of humanity that reflects, necessarily, the character of the human individual. The telestic **DANT** on lines 22, 23, and 24, is the cryptographic reflection of the acrostic **DANTE** on lines 19, 20, 21, and 22.

The following passage, *Par. i.* 107–110, consists of four lines:

Dell' eterno valore, il quale è fine
 Al quale è fatta la toccata norma.
 Nell' ordine ch' io dico sono accline 109
 Tutte nature, per diverse sorti,

Consider the following marginal letters on these four lines:

107	D
108	A
109	NE
110	T

Read: **DANTE**

Hints in the text may be found in the words *forma*, line 104, and *orma*, line 106.

The following passage is *Inf. vi.* 85–87:

E quegli: 'Ei son tra le anime più nere;
 Diversa colpa giù li grava al fondo:
 Se tanto scendi, li potrai vedere.

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Consider the following marginal letters on these lines:

85 E QU
86 DI
87 SE TAN

Read: DANTE, SE' QUI

Dante here identifies himself with the blacker spirits, as, indeed, he identifies himself with all that he sees. Unlike Aeneas, who says of his experience: *pars magna fui*, Dante, as the dreamer of the universe, identifies himself with the whole of it.

The following *terzina* is *Inf.* xxxiii. 109-111:

Ed un de' tristi della fredda crosta
Gridò a noi: 'O anime crudeli
Tanto, che data v' è l'ultima posta.

Consider the following marginal letters on these lines:

109 ED
110 GRIDO
111 TAN

Read: GRIDO DANTE

This echoes the sense of the text. There may be a hint in the line which follows this passage:

Levatemi dal viso i duri veli.

The following passage consists of the last four lines of *Inf.* xxiii:

Appresso il Duca a gran passi sen giù, 145
Turbato un poco d' ira nel semblante:
Ond' io dagl' incarcati mi parti'
Dietro alle poste delle care piante. 148

Consider the following marginal letters:

145 A
146 T
147 ON
148 DIE

Read: IO, DANTE

STRING CIPHERS

The last line of the foregoing passage, 148, contains an example of the "string" cipher, which may be seen in the letters which I here capitalize:

Dietro Alle poste delle care piaNTE

The string cipher is a device well known to students of cryptography. The device consists in spelling a name or other word or words in such a way that the first letter of the hidden word is the first letter of a unit of text, and the last letter of the hidden word is the last letter of the unit of text, and each of the interior letters of the hidden word, spelled in regular order, is the first instance of that letter to appear in the unit of text after the letter in the text already required for the preceding letter of the word. There are certain modifications of this method not indicated in the foregoing definition; I have not defined these modifications because they do not appear in the examples of the string cipher which I have discovered in the *Divina Commedia*. The unit of text in which I have found string ciphers in the *Divina Commedia* is the single line. In the line just quoted we begin with D, which is the first letter of the line, the line being a definite unit of text. We then take, not *any* A, but the *next* A, and the *next* N, and the *next* T, and the *next* E, which is the last letter of the line.

Following are several examples, in which I have capitalized for clarity the letters of the cryptogram.

- Di quella sozza e scapigliata faNTE.
—*Inf.* xviii. 130.
- De' miei mAggior mi fer si arrogaNTE.
—*Purg.* xi. 62.
- Del quAl ti fasciaN venTiquattro piantE.
—*Par.* xii. 96.
- Dove ANchise fini la lunga eTatE.
—*Par.* xix. 132.
- DinANzi agli occhi miei le quaTtro facE.
—*Par.* xxvii. 10.
- Ditene dove lA moNTagna giacE.
—*Purg.* iii. 76.

- Della molt' aNni lagrimaTa pacE.
—*Purg.* x. 35.
- Diogenes, ANassagora e Tale.
—*Inf.* iv. 137.
- Diretro A me che Non era piu Tale.
—*Purg.* xxxi. 57.
- Dunque costui che tutte quANTo rapE
—*Par.* xxviii. 70.
- Di che il polo di quA tutto quANTo ardE.
—*Purg.* viii. 90.
- DA si vil padre che si reNde a marTE.
—*Par.* viii. 132.
- Di piegAr cosi piNTa in altra partE.
—*Par.* i. 132.
- Due ANGeli con due spade affocaTE.
—*Purg.* viii. 26.
- DAl tuo potere e dalla tua boNTatE.
—*Par.* xxxi. 83.
- DinANzi a me non fur cose creaTE.
—*Inf.* iii. 7.
- Di guido o d'AlessaNdro o di lor fraTE.
—*Inf.* xxx. 77.
- Di pugliA fu del suo saNgue dolenTE.
—*Inf.* xxviii. 9.
- DA quella parte oNde il core ha la genTE.
—*Purg.* x. 48.
- De' nostri sensi ch'e del rimANenTE.
—*Inf.* xxvi. 115.
- Diretro Al sol del moNdo senza genTE.
—*Inf.* xxvi. 117.
- DA queste due se tu ti rechi a meNTE.
—*Inf.* xi. 106.
- DA pigliar occhi per aver la meNTE.
—*Par.* xxvii. 92.
- DA' ciel piovuti che stizzosameNTE.
—*Inf.* viii. 83.
- Di voler lor pArlar segretameNTE.
—*Inf.* viii. 87.
- Di quel ch'ei fe' col bAiulo segueNTE.
—*Par.* vi. 73.
- Di bene in meglio si subitAmeNTE.
—*Par.* x. 38.
- Di moise legista e ubbidiente.
—*Inf.* iv. 57.

- Della carNe d'adamo ond'ei si vesTE.
—*Purg.* xi. 44.
- D'un giro e d'un girAre e d'uNa seTE.
—*Par.* viii. 35.
- Di fAre allor che fuori alcuN si meTtE.
—*Inf.* xxii. 105.
- Del cui lAtiNo augusTin si provvidE.
—*Par.* x. 120.
- Del sANgue piu che sua colpa sorTilleE.
—*Inf.* xii. 75.
- Della NosTra basilica si scrissE.
—*Par.* xxv. 30.
- Divenner membrA che Non fur mai visTE.
—*Inf.* xxv. 75.
- Del cui nome ne' dei fu tANTa litE.
—*Purg.* xv. 98.
- DANnando se danno Tutta sua proLE.
—*Par.* vii. 27.
- Donne mi pArver Non da ballo sciolTE.
—*Par.* x. 79.
- Delle sustANzie che T'appaion tonDE.
—*Par.* xxviii. 75.
- DicevA l'uN con laTro in sul gropponE.
—*Inf.* xxi. 101.
- DAl suo priNcipio ch'e in quesTo tronconE.
—*Inf.* xxviii. 141.
- Dicendo le pArole tue sieN conTE.
—*Inf.* x. 39.
- Debili si che perLA iN bianca fronTE.
—*Par.* iii. 14.
- Dolce ch'io vidi primA a pie del monTE.
—*Inf.* xxiv. 21.
- DAll' altra spoNda vanno verso il monTE.
—*Inf.* xviii. 33.
- Dell' Alto di i giroN del sacro monTE.
—*Purg.* xix. 38.
- Del vecchio pAdre Ne il debiTo amorE.
—*Inf.* xxvi. 95.
- Di pAradiso taNTo il nostro amorE.
—*Par.* xiv. 38.
- Del romAN principaTo il cui valorE.
—*Purg.* x. 74.
- Della vera cittade almeN la TorrE.
—*Purg.* xvi. 96.

Della quartaNa ch' ha gia l'unghie smorTE.

—*Inf.* xvii. 86.

DAll' altra parte m'eraN le devoTE.

—*Purg.* xiii. 82.

Diverse voce fAN giu dolce noTE.

—*Par.* vi. 124.

Della corNice onde cader si puoTE.

—*Purg.* xiii. 80.

Di suA poteNza conTra il sommo giovE.

—*Inf.* xxxi. 92.

DA molte stelle mi vieN quesTa lucE.

—*Par.* xxv. 70.

Del nostro pellicANo e quesTi fuE.

—*Par.* xxv. 113.

Perhaps the construction of the foregoing string ciphers, in which the reading is suspended until the last letter of the line, will be more clearly evident if we examine two lines in which this suspension does not occur:

DA deNTi morsi dElla morte avante.

—*Purg.* vii. 32.

Here the reading is complete on an indeterminate place in the middle of the line and there is, accordingly, no string cipher.

Di tANTa plEnitudine volante.

—*Par.* xxxi. 20.

Here again the reading ends before the end of the line. It may be that since these lines begin with D and end with ANTE, we should regard them as containing signatures, but they are certainly *not* string ciphers. I do not suggest that all the string ciphers shown above are intentional; the intentional character of some of them, however, seems to be confirmed by hints in the text.

LETTER SEQUENCES

Dante seems to use as a cryptographic device sequences of letters which, when rearranged, yield the cryptographic reading. I give here three examples.

In *Purg.* xxiii. 91–92, is the following expression:

Tant'è a Dio più cara e più diletta
La vedovella mia.

Notice in line 91 the letter sequence: NT E A D. These letters may be rearranged to read DANTE. It may be surmised that Dante set his signature here to indicate that in the reference to the *vedovella* he had in mind his own wife, widowed indeed by his exile.

The following line is *Par.* i. 10:

Veramente quant'io del regno santo.

Note in these words the letter sequence: ANT IO DE. These letters may be rearranged into a signature: IO, DANTE. This signature appears on the last line of the ten-line frame of the acrostic VELA PENE (see pp. 29–30).

Line 8 of the same canto reads:

Nostro intelletto si profonda tanto.

The letter sequence in this line: NDA T may be rearranged to read: DANT.

These letter sequences are like the one in *Inf.* viii. 105 (see p. 79).

ACROSTIC SIGNATURES WITH MISSING LETTERS

There are in the *Divina Commedia* a number of acrostic signatures in which one of the letters of the signature is apparently missing. In every such instance the letter which is necessary for the spelling of the name and which is missing from the acrostic letters is indicated, by some hint in the text, as existing somewhere in the interior of the text. In some instances the letter thus apparently missing is indicated, by some hint in the text, as existing in some equivalent substitute which the text supplies. The purpose of thus hiding an essential letter is in some instances to render the disguise more complete and in other instances to suggest some symbolic association with the name.

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The following passage, *Par.* iv. 13–24, consists of four *terzine*:

Fe' sì Beatrice, qual fe' Daniello,	13
Nabuccodonosor levando d' ira,	
Che l' avea fatto ingiustamente fello,	
E disse: 'Io veggio ben come ti tira	16
Uno ed altro disio, sì che tua cura	
Sè stessa lega sì che fuor non spira.	
Tu argomenti: "Se il buon voler dura,	19
La violenza altrui per qual ragione	
Di meritar mi scema la misura?"	
Ancor di dubitar ti dà cagione,	22
Parer tornarsi l' anime alle stelle,	
Secondo la sentenza di Platone.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

13	F
16	E
19	T
22	AN

Read: FANTE

Fante has the same significance as *fancello* or *fanciullo*. With this acrostic FANTE Dante identifies himself by means of an acrostic signature on the same lines. Notice that in the five letters of the acrostic FANTE, four: ANTE, occur in the spelling of DANTE. If the F of FANTE were to be substituted by a D, the spelling of DANTE would be complete. That this substitution is to be made is indicated by the sense of the text. According to line 13, "Beatrice did what Daniel did." It is in the implications of these significant words that the substitution of D for F is indicated. The implication of these words is to be discovered by referring to the incident to which Beatrice here refers; her reference, as appears in *Dan.* ii, is to the fact that Daniel *stood before* the king and interpreted a dream. What Beatrice did, therefore, in doing what Daniel did, was to make Daniel *stand before*, that is, at the front of the line, and so replace the F of *Fe* by the D of *Daniello*.

By so doing, she substitutes the acrostic spelling of FANTE by the acrostic spelling of DANTE. By this identification of his own name with FANTE Dante identifies himself as the child in the rebirth symbolism of the poem, by a device analogous to that by which he identifies his own name with the acrostic NATI (see pp. 103-5).

Further hints in the text of cryptic intention are the words: *per parlar distinto*, line 12, which immediately precede the *terzine* containing the acrostic; and: *Io veggio ben come ti tira*, line 16. *Parlar distinto* may mean not only "distinct speech" but also "a different kind of speech," the different kind that is used in the cryptogram. And the words: *Io veggio ben come ti tira*, may be understood, apart from the context, as alluding to how clearly the letters of the text may be seen to draw out the acrostic DANTE.

An example of an acrostic to be read on five *terzine* may be seen in *Inf.* viii. 94-108; and the acrostic reading here will show another signature in which an essential letter is hidden in the body of the text in order to add to the disguise and also to deepen the symbolism. The passage is:

Pensa, Lettor, se io mi sconfortai	94
Nel suon delle parole maledette:	
Ch' io non credetti ritornarci mai.	
'O caro duca mio, che più di sette	97
Volte m' hai sicurtà renduta, e tratto	
D' alto periglio che incontra mi stette,	
Non mi lasciar,' diss' io, 'così disfatto:	100
E se 'l passar più oltre c' è negato,	
Ritroviam l' orme nostre insieme ratto.'	
E quel signor che lì m' avea menato	103
Mi disse: 'Non temer, chè il nostro passo	
Non ci può torre alcun: da tal n' è dato.	
Ma qui m' attendi; e lo spirito lasso	106
Conforta e ciba di speranza buona,	
Ch' io non ti lascerò nel mondo basso.'	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these five *terzine*:

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94 P
 97 O
 100 NON MI LASCIAR
 103 E
 106 MA

The letters, interrupted by the command: *Non mi lasciar*, spell: POEMA.

The command: *Non mi lasciar*, seems to hint that DANTE himself is not to be left out of the acrostic reading. Following the hint, read the following marginal letters of the line in which the command appears and of the lines on each side of it:

99 DA
 100 N
 101 E

If a τ were supplied, these letters would spell: DANTE. As it is, they suggest the name as either unfinished or mutilated, and this very suggestion is made by Dante himself in the complete form of his command, line 100:

Non mi lasciar, diss' io, così disfatto.

DANTE, as an acrostic reading, is *disfatto* by the lack of a τ . And because of this lacking τ Dante may be understood, lines 110 and 111, as referring to the doubtful spelling of his own name when he says:

ed io rimango in forse,
 Che'l sì e 'l no nel capo mi tenzona.

Now the lacking τ is mentioned by Virgil, line 108, when he replies, as he may be understood as replying, to Dante: *Non ti lascerò*. The *ti* of these words is to be understood, for the cryptographic purpose of the passage, to be the very letter τ in question; and Virgil may be understood to be refusing to leave the τ in Hell, since Hell is no place for τ , the symbol of the cross and of Christ. The letter τ as a cross, and so as the symbol of Christ, is often used in the cryptography of the *Divina Commedia*. Consistent with the idea that the symbol of Christ, and therefore Christ himself, is not to be left in

Hell is the fact that Dante does not himself refer to Christ by name in *Inferno*. Dante must be content, therefore, to spell his name on the marginal letters of lines 99, 100, and 101, with the τ thus mentioned as missing.

The acrostic reads, then: POEMA: DANTE.

In Virgil's words of comfort to Dante for leaving him *così disfatto*, he says, lines 104 and 105:

Non temer, chè il nostro passo
Non ci può torre alcun: da tal n'è dato.

Now the comfort of the words: *da tal n'è dato*, consists, from the point of view of the cryptographic intention, in the fact that they contain a letter sequence: NEDAT, which spells Dante's own name.

There are several other examples of acrostic signatures with the τ hidden. One occurs in *Inf.* xxiv. 70-84:

Io era volto in giù; ma gli occhi vivi	70
Non potean ire al fondo per l' oscuro:	
Perch' io: 'Maestro, fa che tu arrivi	
Dall' altro cinghio, e dismantiam lo muro;	73
Chè com' i' odo quinci e non intendo,	
Così giù veggio, e niente affiguro.'	
'Altra risposta,' disse, 'non ti rendo,	76
Se non lo far: chè la domanda onesta	
Si dee seguir coll' opera tacendo.'	
Noi discendemmo il ponte dalla testa,	79
Dove s' aggiunge coll' ottava ripa,	
E poi mi fu la bolgia manifesta:	
E vidivi entro terribile stipa	82
Di serpenti, e di sì diversa mena,	
Che la memoria il sangue ancor mi scipa.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these five terzine:

70	IO
73	D
76	A
79	N
82	E

If a τ were supplied, these letters would read: IO DANTE.

It may be understood to be on account of the missing τ , which blocks the spelling, that Dante says, line 75: *niente affiguro*. The allusion to the missing τ is made by Virgil, line 76: *non ti rendo*. And as the τ is not forthcoming, Dante, who is having great difficulty in seeing, cannot see the *bolgia*, the hole or hiatus in the spelling, until he descends to where the bridge joins the bank. The bridge joining the bank makes, naturally, the shape of a τ ; and it is then, with the τ thus supplied, that, as Dante says, *mi fu la bolgia manifesta*, and the spelling is completed: IO DANTE.

I take this acrostic to be on the five *terzine* spelling IO DANTE, instead of on the four spelling simply DANTE, for the reason that the hint of its presence is given in the line beginning with *Io*, line 70. Dante says here that *Io era volto in giù*. These words are the hint that his name is written down the margin.

The τ is again not given for the cryptic spelling of Dante's name in Hell for the reason, as already explained, that τ , as a cross shape, is the symbol of Christ.

There is a DANTE signature in *Paradiso* in which the τ is missing, and the reason that it is missing in the spelling in *Paradiso* confirms the reason for its being missing in the spellings in *Inferno*. The passage with the signature to which I refer is found in *Par. xviii. 37-48*:

Io vidi per la croce un lume tratto	37
Dal nomar Josuè, com' ei si feo,	
Nè mi fu noto il dir prima che il fatto.	
Ed al nome dell' alto Maccabeo	40
Vidi moversi un altro roteando,	
E letizia era ferza del paleo.	
Così per Carlo magno e per Orlando	43
Due ne seguì lo mio attento sguardo,	
Com' occhio segue suo falcon volando.	
Poscia trasse Guglielmo, e Rinoardo,	46
E il duca Gottifredi la mia vista	
Per quella croce, e Roberto Guiscardo.	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these four *terzine*:

37 IO
 40 ED
 43 CO
 46 P

Read: COPIO. ED

ED, as I shall show in Chapter V, is in itself a Dante signature. Notice that ED, as a signature, is immediately followed in the text by *al nome*. The whole passage is a play on the idea of name. In line 38 is the word *nomar*, and in the *terzina* immediately preceding, 34–36, is the phrase: *io or nomerò*.

The acrostic: COPIO. ED, may be understood to mean that Dante “copies” the cross, which is mentioned in the passage, in the sense that he shows the cross, or the divine nature, in his human nature. He illustrates this idea by the cryptographic device of showing the cross in the spelling of his name. Consider the following marginal letters of the *terzina* 37–39:

37 IO
 38 DA
 39 NE

IO equals ten, which in the Roman notation is x; and x, as a sign of the cross, is equivalent to the other sign of the cross, τ. Replace, therefore, IO by τ and read: DANTE.

Another signature with a concealed τ appears on the first lines of the four *terzine*, *Purg.* vi. 40–51:

E là dov' io fermai cotesto punto,	40
Non si ammendava per pregar difetto,	
Perchè il prego da Dio era disgiunto.	
Veramente a così alto sospetto	43
Non ti fermar, se quella nol ti dice,	
Che lume fia tra il vero e l' intelletto.	
Non so se intendi; io dico di Beatrice:	46
Tu la vedrai di sopra, in sulla vetta	
Di questo monte, ridere e felice.'	

Ed io: 'Signore, andiamo a maggior fretta; 49
 Chè già non m' affatico come dianzi;
 E vedi omai che il poggio l' ombra getta.'

Consider on the first lines of these *terzine* the following marginal letters:

40 E LA
 43 V
 46 NO
 49 ED

Read: VELO DANE

Notice that line 49 begins with the words: ED IO, which, as I shall show in Chapter V, are a cryptographic signature. If a T could be supplied, the acrostic reading: VELO DANE would become VELO DANTE. The missing T is twice referred to in line 44:

Non ti fermar, se quella nol ti dice.

The reason that the T is missing from the signature appears from the sense of the text, which concerns a *difetto*, line 41. The acrostic illustrates this *difetto* by being itself defective. But Dante does not leave the defective signature in doubt, for on all the lines of the *terzina* preceding his symbol ED IO, line 49, along with this line, he gives the following letters:

46 NON SO
 47 TU LA VE
 48 DI Q
 49 E

Read: VEL. SONO QUI. DANTE

An example of an acrostic in which the T for DANTE appears to be indicated by the letters IO, considered as a ten, an X, a cross, and so as a T, appears in *Par.* viii. 35-39:

D' un giro, e d' un girare, e d' una sete,
 Ai quali tu del mondo già dicesti:
Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete; 37
 E sem sì pien d' amor che, per piacerti,
 Non fia men dolce un poco di quiete.'

Consider the following marginal letters on these five lines:

35	D
36	AI
37	VOI
38	E
39	N

Notice that all the letters except the T of DANTE appear as initials, and that the only line, 37, on which a letter of the name does not appear is composed of a quotation from one of his *canzoni*. The suggestion is forced that the letters selected above contain a signature. By substituting again a T for the OI (reversed, IO, or ten) of line 37, read: DANTE VI.

Following are five *terzine*, *Purg.* xxii. 94-108:

Tu dunque, che levato hai il coperchio	94
Che m'ascondeva quanto bene io dico,	
Mentre che del salire avem soperchio,	
Dimmi dov'è Terenzio nostro antico,	97
Cecilio, Plauto e Varro, se lo sai:	
Dimmi se son dannati, ed in qual vico.'	
'Costoro, e Persio, ed io, ed altri assai,'	100
Rispose il Duca mio, 'siam con quel Greco	
Che le Muse lattar più ch'altro mai,	
Nel primo cinghio del carcere cieco.	103
Spesse fiate ragioniam del monte	
Che sempre ha le nutrici nostre seco.	
Euripide v'è nosco, ed Antifonte,	106
Simonide, Agatone ed altri piùe	
Greci che già di lauro ornar la fronte.	

The initials of the first lines of these five *terzine* are:

94	T
97	D
100	C
103	N
106	E

Read: DCNTE

I regard this as a concealed signature. C, initial of line 100, equals 100, which, by disregarding the ciphers, equals 1, which

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equals A, its cabalistic equivalent as the first letter of the alphabet. By substituting A for C we read DANTE. Note, as a hint of the concealed signature, the possible double sense of the first two lines of the passage.

The *terzina* following the foregoing passage, *Purg.* xxxii. 109-111, reads:

Quivi si veggion delle genti tue
 Antigone, Deifile ed Argia,
 Ed Ismene sì trista come fue.

Consider the following marginal letters of these three lines:

109 QUIVI
 110 ANT
 111 ED

Read: QUIVI DANTE

A signature in which the D is concealed appears in *Purg.* xxv. 10-21:

E quale il cicognin che leva l' ala	10
Per voglia di volare, e non s' attenta	
D' abbandonar lo nido, e giù la cala;	
Tal era io con voglia accesa e spenta	13
Di domandar, venendo infino all' atto	
Che fa colui ch' a dicer s' argomenta.	
Non lasciò, per l' andar che fosse ratto,	16
Lo dolce Padre mio, ma disse: 'Scocca	
L' arco del dir che infino al ferro hai tratto.'	
Allor sicuramente aprii la bocca,	19
E cominciai: 'Come si può far magro	
Là dove l' uopo di nutrir non tocca?'	

The initials of the first lines of the four *terzine* are:

10 E
 13 T
 16 N
 19 A

Read: ANTE

This approximation to DANTE suggests that the missing D

is indicated in a double meaning of *uopo di*, line 21, and *consumar d*, line 23.

Another indication that a D is to be supplied appears in an acrostic on lines 13–15, the first words of which are, significantly: *Tal era io*. Consider on these lines the following marginal letters:

13	TA
14	DI
15	C

Read: TACI D

But what was Dante's reason for omitting the D from his name? The reason is given in lines 20–27. Dante asks Virgil how the spirits of the gluttonous can appear emaciated when, as spirits, they can have no need of nourishment; and Virgil, who explains by analogy, asks Dante to remember

come Meleagro
Si consumò al consumar d'un stizzo.

Virgil is here referring to the story of the prophecy made to the mother of Meleager at the time of his birth. According to this prophecy, Meleager was to live as long as a log then burning on the hearth remained unconsumed. In order to preserve the life of her son, the mother seized the log from the hearth, extinguished it, and preserved it. But when Meleager grew to manhood, he excited her anger; in revenge she threw the log, which represented his life, in the fire; and as the log was consumed Meleager was consumed.

The signature ANTE, of which the D has been *consumed*, is obviously given by Dante as a cryptographic analogy to the story of Meleager. Dante lives as long as his name lives. And he is destroyed with the destruction of his name.

The myth of Meleager has a deeper meaning which is consonant with the deeper meaning of the *Divina Commedia*. The log is phallic; the fire is the symbol of sexual union; and the act of the mother in withdrawing the log from the fire at the moment of birth symbolizes the severing at birth of the union of the child with its mother. The act of the mother in putting the log back into the fire symbolizes the reunion of

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the mother and child in an incestuous act which is the cause at once of the death and the rebirth of the child.

The following passage, *Inf.* xxiii. 67-78, consists of four terzine:

O in eterno faticoso manto!	67
Noi ci volgemmo ancor pure a man manca	
Con loro insieme, intenti al tristo pianto:	
Ma per lo peso quella gente stanca	70
Venia sì pian, che noi eravam nuovi	
Di compagnia ad ogni mover d' anca.	
Perch' io al Duca mio: 'Fa che tu trovi	73
Alcun ch' al fatto o al nome si conosca,	
E gli occhi sì andando intorno movi.'	
Ed un che intese la parola Tosca	76
Diretro a noi gridò: 'Tenete i piedi,	
Voi che correte sì per l' aura fosca:	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the four terzine:

67	O
70	MA
73	P
76	E

Read: POEMA

Consider the following marginal letters on these lines and the intervening lines:

67	O
68	NOI C
69	C
70	MA
71	VE
72	D
73	P
74	A
75	E
76	E

Read: POEMA. ECCO VI DANE

If a τ were supplied, Dante's name would be complete. It is to be found in the *faticoso manto*, of line 67, for the weary mantle to be borne eternally is, for Dante, his poem, and it is also the cross, and the cross is a τ .

Consider the following marginal letters of the lines of the last *terzina*:

76	E
77	DI
78	V

Read: VEDI

INTERIOR SEQUENCES

In addition to the various devices which we have examined in the preceding signatures is another well known device of cryptography that is frequently used in the *Divina Commedia*. The device to which I refer consists in arranging the letters of the cryptogram, not on the margin as in acrostics, but in the body of the text, in such a way that they follow a straight line that is either perpendicular or oblique to the regular lines of the text. This device is the so called interior sequence.

An example of such an interior sequence appears in a passage which seems to give indications of a description of the very device in question. I refer to the first four *terzine* of *Par. x*:

Guardando nel suo figlio con l' amore	
Che l' uno e l' altro eternalmente spira,	
Lo primo ed ineffabile valore,	
Quanto per mente o per loco si gira	4
Con tanto ordine fe', ch' esser non puote	
Senza gustar di lui chi cid rimira.	
Leva dunque, lettor, all' alte rote	7
Meco la vista dritto a quella parte	
Dove l' un moto e l' altro si percote;	
E li comincia a vagheggiar nell' arte	10
Di quel maestro, che dentro a sè l' ama	
Tanto che mai da lei l' occhio non parte.	

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The complete acrostic reading on this passage will be shown in Chapter IX, pp. 407-8. For the present note the following marginal letters of the last *terzina*:

10 E
11 D
12 TAN

Read: DANTE

Now look at the letters which I have capitalized in the first five lines of this passage, as follows:

1 guardando nel suo figlio con l'amor**E**
2 che l'uno e l'altro eternalmen**T**e spira
3 lo primo ed ineffabile v**A**lore
4 quanto per men**T**E O Per loco si gira
5 con tanto or**D**ine fe ch'esser non puote

The letters which I have capitalized make the following figure:

E
NT
A
TE O P
D

The letters capitalized in line 4: TE O P, spell backwards: POET.

A straight line drawn from the capitalized D of *ordine*, line 5, to the capitalized E of *amore*, line 1, passes through the capitalized A of *valore*, line 3, and the capitalized NT of *eternalmente*, line 2. The capitalized letters on this line spell, therefore, DANTE; and the same line passes through the letter group: TE OP, on line 4. Thus the complete reading of the interior sequence may be considered to be: DANTE, POET.

Notice that the spacing between the letters of the signature is almost mathematically regular. In the sixth space beyond the D, on the line above the D, is the space between the O and the P of the sequence: TE O P; in the sixth space beyond this space, on the line above, is the A; in the sixth space

beyond the A, on the line above, is the T of NT; and in the sixth space beyond the N of NT, on the line above, is the E.

Let me first give the method by which I arrive at this sequence and then the confirmatory indications in the text for so doing.

First, then, for the method. The passage is printed with a perfectly even margin, so that the first letter of every line is directly above or below the first letter of the line that follows or precedes it. It is a necessary consequence, therefore, that if a line be considered as a series of equal positions every one of which is occupied either by a letter or a space between words, all the relative positions of the lines will be directly above or below each other, exactly as in the case of the positions of the first letters.

This is not the form in which the text of the *Divina Commedia* is usually presented; in all the editions with which I am acquainted, the second and third lines of each *terzina* are indented, with the effect of emphasizing the *terzine* as separate units by the salience of their first lines. Whatever the authority for thus indenting the second and third lines of each *terzina* and whatever advantage there may be in typographically marking the *terzina* as a unit, the uneven margin is a form that cannot be *presupposed* to have been used by Dante, especially if there is any reason to believe that he used his text as a bed for interior sequences. Indeed, in such a case, it is practically certain that he must have made, or at least have calculated, his margin even.

The discovery of the interior sequences in the *Divina Commedia* is dependent on the presumption that every letter in every line has a calculable position in relation to every other letter. An author may insert, indeed, an interior sequence into a text in which the positions of the letters have not been calculated, but he can never expect the sequence to be discovered by the reader, if the relative positions of the letters in his original copy are altered. Any alteration, in fact, would completely distort the sequence beyond the possibility of recognition. In the case of the use of a manuscript copy, such as Dante was obliged to use in presenting his poem to

the public, the chances for the alteration of the relative positions were infinite; the chances for preserving them were nil. His only means for preserving them, therefore, would have been to make it possible to calculate the relative positions of the letters of his original copy from the very form of the poem itself. And his only means of making this calculation possible would have been to consider every line as an ordinal series of equal positions directly above or below the relative positions in all the other lines. Such an ordinal series of equal positions, occupied respectively by the letters of the text or the spaces between the words of the text, never appears on the ordinary printed page, where the various letters, such as *i* and *m* for instance, occupy spaces of different size; it can occur, however, in script produced by a typewriter, where every letter occupies an equal space. I have accordingly, in order to show the interior sequences in the *Divina Commedia*, had the passages in which they occur printed in typewriter style.

My argument for supposing that Dante intended his text to be so arranged is based primarily, of course, on the hypothesis that he used his text as a bed for interior sequences. This original hypothesis has in its favor, first, the fact that if he used cryptographic devices at all he may well be supposed to have used the well known and common device of the interior sequence; and further in favor of this hypothesis are the implications of certain curious expressions in the very passage, and in the lines immediately following it, in which I have just shown the interior sequence spelling DANTE, POET. Let me refer first to the possible duplicity in the meaning of the command to "lift then thy sight, Reader, with me to the lofty wheels, straight to that region where the one motion strikes on the other." May there not be a hint here to look up at the "wheels" of the lines above, where "the one motion" of the first line "strikes on the other" motion of the second line? It is to this point, in the word *Amore*, the last word of the first line, that the reader may accordingly be considered to be directed to lift up his eyes for the beginning of the interior sequence just shown. And may

not the reference to the *art* of the master "who within himself so loves it" suggest the art of hiding a spelling *inside* the text? And may not the "master" be Dante, since DANTE appears in an acrostic on the *terzina* in which the "master" is mentioned? And considering the oblique line made by the interior sequence here discovered, may we not see an allusion to it in the words: "See how the oblique circle which bears the planets branches off?" And may there not be a similar hidden meaning in the allusion to the departure of this line as "more or less distant from the straight line?" The whole passage, read with suspicion alert to the duplicities of expression so common in the *Divina Commedia*, points to a cryptographic device like the interior sequence here discovered. In view of these possible hints of the existence of interior sequences I have arranged the text in the manner shown above; for this manner of arranging the text, assuming that the text contains interior sequences, may fairly be assumed to have been considered by Dante himself as the only means by which the interior sequences could be reconstructed from the text itself in the absence of the original copy.

It may very well be, however, that in spite of the presumptive evidence in its favor, the interior sequence which I have shown may fail in itself to convince the reader that it is anything else than an accident. Nor am I able to affirm, as a fact, that it is not an accident. The strongest evidence in its favor will be the cumulative evidence of other interior sequences in positions where the sense of the text corresponds to the sense of the interior sequence.

There is another possible objection to the "intention" of this interior sequence. It is the fact that the spacing of the letters of the sequence is not *quite* regular. I will show instances of interior sequences where the regularity of the spacing is absolute, and this regularity is additional proof, of course, of the intention of the sequence. But a sequence remains a sequence in spite of spacing that is not quite mathematically strict, especially when it can be confirmed by the sense of the text. A sequence that is not mathematically regular in its spacing may still, as in the present instance,

strike the eye as regular, and it is the eye that judges. Indeed, the mathematical regularity cannot be seen without careful counting, and it must be remembered that whatever the ingenuity of the author, the difficulties of constructing an absolutely strict sequence may be at times so great as to warrant his use of a sequence that satisfies the eye.*

There is a group of interior sequences spelling DANTE in *Par.* xv. 94-111, a passage to which I have referred in Chapter I as showing a curious symmetrical arrangement of four *terzine* each beginning with the same word: *Non*. The passage reads as follows:

Mio figlio fu, e tuo bisavo fue:	94
Ben si convien che la lunga fatica Tu gli raccorci con l' opere tue.	
Fiorenza dentro dalla cerchia antica	97
Ond' ella toglie ancora e terza e nona, Si stava in pace, sobria e pudica.	
Non avea catenella, non corona,	100
Non donne contigiate, non cintura Che fosse a veder più che la persona.	
Non faceva nascendo ancor paura	103
La figlia al padre, chè il tempo e la dote Non fuggian quinci e quindi la misura.	
Non avea case di famiglia vote;	106
Non v' era giunto ancor Sardanapalo A mostrar ciò che in camera si puote.	
Non era vinto ancora Montemalo	109
Dal vostro Uccellatoio, che, com' è vinto Nel montar su, così sarà nel calo.	

Before examining the interior sequences let us read the acrostic in this passage. Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the six *terzine*:

94	MI	103	NO
97	FIorenZA DE	106	NO
100	NO	109	NO

Read: NOMI, FIorenZA, D...E. NO, NO, NO

*In the device in George Herbert's poem, shown on page 8, the words are not regularly spaced, either numbered as words in the line, or counted in letters and letter spaces. Poe's well-known "Valentine" to Frances Sargent Osgood is mathematically regular.

Cacciaguیدا, the ancestor of Dante, is speaking of the past of Florence, Dante's birthplace, the mother that denied him by sending him into exile. The acrostic: NOMI, FIORENZA, D. . . E, is met, therefore, characteristically, by the reiteration of her denial: NO, NO, NO. Dante is thrice denied, as Christ was thrice denied. This is another of the numerous instances of Dante's identification of himself with Christ.

Florence refuses to name Dante, and the refusal seems to be expressed by the following cryptographic device. Grouped about the last NO, line 109, are the following marginal letters:

108	A
109	NON E
110	DAL
111	NEL MONTA

Read: ELLA NON NOMA DANTE

Now in connection with these two acrostic readings: NOMI, FIORENZA, D. . . E. NO, NO, NO, and ELLA NON NOMA DANTE, see how Dante is named in the passage in interior sequences, notwithstanding the refusal of Florence to name him:

99	si stava in pAcE sobria E pudica
100	non avea cateNella noN corona
101	non donne contigiATE non cintura
102	che fosse a vEDer piu che la persona

Read the capitals on the vertical line from A of *pace*, 99; N of *catenella*, 100; first T of *contigiate*, 101; ED of *veder*, 102: DANTE.

Read from E, after *sobria*, 99; second N on *non*, 100; AT of *contigiate*, 101; D of *veder*, 102: DANTE.

These two interior sequences, shown respectively in the capital letters on a vertical and an oblique line, are absolutely regular. In the vertical sequence the letters A, N, T, and E are each in the fourteenth space of their respective lines and the D is immediately adjacent to the E. In the oblique sequence there are exactly two spaces between the D and the AT, between the AT and the N, and between the N and the E. Moreover, the fact that both signatures meet on the same D

adds still more to the probability that they are intentional, as does likewise their meeting on the D of ED, in itself a signature. There is a hint in the text to look for the signature in the words: *veder più che la persona*, and this hint itself coincides with the converging point of the two signatures.

In lines 105-108, there is an interior sequence reading DANTE, thus:

105 non fuggiaN quinci e quindi la misura
 106 non avea case di fAmilia vote
 107 non v'era giunto ancor sarDanapalo
 108 a mostrar cio che in camera si puoTE

Read from N of *fuggian*, 105; first A of *famiglia*, 106; D of *sardanapalo*, 107; TE of *puote*, 108: DANTE.

This sequence is spaced with mathematical precision. There are seven spaces between the N of *fuggian* and the A of *famiglia*, seven spaces between this A and the D of *sardanapalo*, and seven spaces between this D and the TE of *puote*. There is a hint in the text in the words:

A mostrar ciò che in camera si puote.

The nest of three interior sequences spelling Dante in this passage, confirmed by hints in the text and the acrostic readings: NOMI, FIORENZA, D. . . E. NO, NO, NO, and ELLA NON NOMA DANTE, can scarcely be rejected as accidental.

Following is another interior sequence which resembles the first one I showed in that it appears on the first five lines of a canto, namely, *Inf.* xiii. 1-5:

1 non era ancor di la nesso arrivAto
 2 quando noi ci mettemmo pEr un bosco
 3 che da nessun sentTiero era segnato
 4 non fronDe verdi ma di color fosco
 5 Non rami schietti ma nodosi e involti

Read from the second A of *arrivato*, 1; E of *per*, 2; T of *sentiero*, 3; D of *fronde*, 4; initial N of *non*, 5: DANTE.

In the passage to which I have already referred as containing the acrostic VOM there are two interior sequences in the first five lines, *Purg.* xii. 25-29:

25 veDE colui che fu Nobil creato
 26 piu ch'Altra creaturA giu DAL cielo
 27 folgoreggiaNdo scender DA un lato
 28 vedea briareo fitTo DAL TELo
 29 celestial giacer DAll'altra parte

Read: DE of *vede*, 25; first A of *altra*, 26; N of *folgoreggiando*, 27; first T of *fitto*, 28: DANTE.

Read N of *nobil*, 25; second A of *creatura*, 26; D of *da*, 27; TE of *telo*, 28: DANTE.

Notice the curious sequence, DA, 26, DA, 27, DA, 28, DA, 29. DA are Dante's initials and are apparently used by Dante as a signature.

The foregoing examples are sufficient to establish Dante's use of the interior sequence in the *Divina Commedia*. The other interior sequences which I have discovered I will show later, as especially pertinent to certain aspects of Dante's symbolism.

NON-ITALIAN PHRASES

In the *Divina Commedia* are many Latin phrases, one passage in Provençal, and two passages of "gibberish." It is my opinion that Dante was partly determined in his use of these passages by the cryptographic possibilities which they presented. I will show, at any rate, that many of these non-Italian phrases can be regarded as yielding acrostic or telestic or anagrammatic readings referring to Dante or to the symbolism of the poem. The device by which the acrostics or telestics are read on phrases is the same device by which the famous acrostic 'IXΘΤΣ is derived from the phrase: 'Ιησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτῆρ.

It is impossible, indeed, to prove that the cryptograms which I shall show on the non-Italian passages were intended by Dante. But some evidence of intention appears from the *very possibility* of finding in a large number of them acrostics, telestics, and anagrams appropriate to the meaning of the poem. I believe that in many of these non-Italian

phrases Dante was conscious of the possibility of converting them, by cryptographic devices, into references to himself. The "delusion of reference" which this cryptographic use of innocent phrases indicates is consistent both with the form of the poem as a dream and with Dante's highly rationalized egocentricity. I will give here several examples which contain Dante's signature. Most of the other examples will be found in Chapter IX. A few will be found in other chapters, to which their cryptographic meaning is especially pertinent.

In *Purg.* ii. 46, is the Latin phrase: *In exitu Israel de Ægypto*. These words contain a signature. The x of *exitu* is to be taken as the equivalent of a τ, since x and τ, as has already been noted, are both signs of the cross. Consider the following initial and contiguous letters:

IN	IN
EXITU	EX=ET
ISRAEL	ISRA
DE	D
AEGYPTO	AEG

Read: GIRA. SEI DANTE

The GIRA of this reading is a direction to *revolve* or *re-arrange the letters*. The use of GIRA recalls the use of the word "revolve" in *Twelfth Night*, ii, 5.

That the signature in *In exitu Israel de Ægypto* was intended by Dante is indicated by the acrostic on the six lines ending with the line composed of the Latin words in question.

41	C
42	TA
43	DA
44	T
45	E
46	IN

Read: TACI DANTE (OF CITA DANTE)

Notice, moreover, that the *terzina* preceding the line in Latin contains a signature. The *terzina* reads:

Da poppa stava il celestial nocchiero,
 Tal che pareo beato per iscripto;
 E più di cento spirti entro sediero.

Consider the initial and contiguous letters on the *first* and *last* words of each line:

43 DA.....N
 44 T.....I
 45 E.....SE

Read: SEI DANTE

This method of signing appears to be hinted at in the allusion, line 43, to the *nocchiero* who stood *da poppa*. This allusion to the *poppa* may be understood as a hint of what is standing at the *poppa* of the line. In the signature in DI NECESSITA, *Purg.* xxx. 63 (see p. 55), there is a similar use of *poppa* with *prora* as a hint to look at the end as well as at the beginning of the words.

The signature on this *terzina*: SEI DANTE, is identical, with the exception of the word GIRA, with the signature found on the Latin phrase which immediately follows: GIRA. SEI DANTE.

In *Purg.* viii. 13, is the Latin phrase: *Te lucis ante*. These words are part of the first line of a hymn sung at Compline, the last service of the day. *Tutto l' inno intero*, as is indicated in line 17, was sung in the hearing of Dante. Why, then, does he refer to the hymn by just the three words: *Te lucis ante*? The answer is to be found in the cryptographic signature which these three words make possible. Consider in these words the following initial and contiguous letters:

TE	TE
LUCIS	LUCI
ANTE	ANTE

Read: TU CELI ANTE

There is, of course, a suggestion of DANTE in the sound of ANTE, and it is on this sound suggestion that Dante is here playing. If a D could be supplied, his name would be spelled

in full, and the cryptogram would read: TU CELI DANTE. Now as a matter of *double entente*, Dante is to be understood as saying himself that he heard his own name in the words: *Te lucis ante*; this double meaning appears in the way he says that the Latin phrase was uttered:

con sì dolci note,
Che fece me a me uscir.

These words, taken as they are from their context, are capable of meaning that the Latin phrase was uttered "with such sweet notes that it made me (my name) come out to me." In addition to this suggestion that a D is to be supplied, there is another suggestion to supply the D in the three D's in the line preceding the *Te lucis ante*:

Come dicesse a Dio: 'D'altro non calme.'

Moreover, the *D altro* is capable of suggesting an *other D*. Another suggestion that a D is to come out of the context for the signature in *Te lucis ante* may be found in the words *uscir di*, line 15. Another suggestion that a D somewhere in the text is to be sounded with *Te lucis ante* may be taken from the words, removed from their context: *squilla di lontano*. These words may be understood as meaning that "a distant D sounds."

For the acrostic which appears on the passage in which this Latin phrase is quoted see page 418. The acrostic reads: DANTE E QUI L'EGUALE. This acrostic may refer, in part, to the Latin words, to which Dante, in a cryptographic sense, is the equal. The Latin phrase is followed, lines 19-21, with a reference to the *velo*; the *velo* may be the cryptogram which we have just deciphered. The reference to the *velo* is as follows:

Aguzza qui, Lettor, ben gli occhi al vero,
Chè il velo è ora ben tanto sottile,
Certo, che il trapassar dentro è leggiero.

In *Purg.* xxvii. 8, is the Latin phrase *Beati mundo corde*. Consider in these words the following final and contiguous letters:

BEATI	ATI
MUNDO	NDO
CORDE	E

Read: IO DANTE

The first line of *Inf.* xxxiv. is in Latin:

Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni.

These words are a parody of a hymn in honor of Christ. The sense is *reversed* to apply to Lucifer. This reversing of the sense is paralleled by the cryptographic device of taking the letters from the end of the words instead of from the beginning. Consider the following telestic letters of the Latin words—the *v* of *prodeunt* being the equivalent of a *v*:

VEXILLA	A
REGIS	GIS
PRODEUNT	ODEUNT
INFERNI	NI

Read: VI SIGNO: DANTE

GROUPS OF PROPER NAMES

Analogous to the cryptograms constructed on the words of a phrase or a sentence is a form of cryptogram constructed on the proper names of a passage. Of this form I have found several examples in the *Divina Commedia*, and it is possible that there are more than I have found. Dante's choice of the proper names which he groups together seems to have been determined by his cryptographic purpose as well as by historical and poetical association. In some cases the association is not self-evident and has puzzled the commentators. It may be that the cryptograms which I have found explain the reason for his selection, namely, the need of certain letters for the cryptographic reading. I will give here a single specimen of this type of cryptogram; I will reserve others for the chapters to which the cryptographic meaning is especially pertinent and the rest for Chapter IX.

There are several groups of persons with whom Dante identifies himself by the device of signing his name on the first letters of their names. The first group is the group of souls that accompanied Christ in his ascent from Hell to Heaven. This group is mentioned by Virgil in *Inf.* iv. 46-69, in response to a question from Dante:

'Dimmi, Maestro mio, dimmi, Signore,'	46
Comincia' io, per voler esser certo	
Di quella fede che vince ogni errore:	
'Uscicci mai alcuno, o per suo merto,	49
O per altrui, che poi fosse beato?'	
E quei, che intese il mio parlar coperto,	
Rispose: 'Io era nuovo in questo stato,	52
Quando ci vidi venire un possente	
Con segno di vittoria coronato.	
Trasseci l' ombra del primo parente,	55
D' Abel suo figlio, e quella di Noè,	
Di Moisè legista e ubbidiente;	
Abraam patriarca, e David re,	58
Israel con lo padre, e co' suoi nati,	
E con Rachele, per cui tanto fe',	
Ed altri molti; e fecegli beati:	61
E vo' che sappi che, dinanzi ad essi,	
Spiriti umani non eran salvati.'	
Non lasciavam l' andar perch' ei dicessi,	64
Ma passavam la selva tuttavia,	
La selva dico di spiriti spessi.	
Non era lunga ancor la nostra via	67
Di qua dal sonno, quand' io vidi un foco	
Ch' emisperio di tenebre vincia.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the *terzine*:

46	D	58	A
49	USCI	61	E
52	RI	64	N
55	T	67	NON

Read: NON RIUSCI DANTE?

The acrostic expresses the real meaning of Dante's *parlar coperto*, the question: *Uscicci mai alcuno?*

Notice also the DANTE on the first lines of the four *terzine*, 55-66: T, A, ED, N.

Now consider the initials of the names actually mentioned, lines 56-60, of the spirits delivered from Hell by Christ immediately after the crucifixion. In the reference to Christ as *un possente*, the cross is indicated as the *segno di vittoria* with which he was crowned. The names, appearing in the text, of the delivered spirits are:

ABEL	A
NOE	N
MOISE	M
ABRAAM	A
DAVID	D
ISRAEL	I
RACHELE	R

The initials of these names may be taken to read: MIRA DAN. By adding to these letters the T of the cross, the sign of Christ, the reading is: MIRA DANT.

Dante thus identifies himself with the souls of the saved, and so answers in the affirmative the question expressed in the acrostic: NON RIUSCI DANTE?

LOST AND FOUND

The cryptographic signatures of Dante shown in the preceding pages are widely scattered through the *Divina Commedia*. I will conclude this chapter by showing signatures at the beginning and at the end of the poem. They are important because of their position, their structure, and their relation to each other; and also because they illustrate the philosophic *raison d'être* of the cryptographic signatures in general.

The importance of the signatures at the beginning and the end of the *Divina Commedia* consists in part in the fact that it is in these positions that Dante, in accordance with the

general cryptographic custom of signing a work at its beginning or end, is most surely to be expected to have signed his poem. The presence of the signatures in these positions is in itself, therefore, a strong confirmation that they are intentional. But of still greater importance is the light which these signatures throw on Dante's use of cryptography as a *symbol of his theme*.

Expressed in its simplest terms, the theme of the *Divina Commedia* is a *quest*. In the beginning of the poem Dante is lost; he has lost *himself* in being lost to God. He begins at once, accordingly, the quest to find himself, and it is on this quest that he traverses the universe, which, though he is lost in it, is still himself, his own human condition of evil and good. But at last, having climbed to Paradise, he finds God; and it is in finding God that his quest is ended, for in finding God it is himself that he finds. Dante and God, son and father, human and divine, are found together as one and inseparable.

Now the theme of the *Divina Commedia*, as thus expressed, is symbolized by the use which Dante makes of his cryptographic signatures. When, for instance, in the beginning of the poem, Dante is lost, he symbolizes his lost estate by losing (or hiding) his name in the text by means of various cryptographic devices. Dante thus shows himself as lost in the universe just as his name, hidden by the cryptographic spellings, is lost in the text.

And when Dante, in his quest to find himself, traverses the universe, which always, in all its diversities, is still himself in his dual nature as human and divine; when, in other words, he shows that it is in himself that he is lost when he is lost in the universe; he illustrates the identity of himself and the universe by the cryptographic devices which spell his own name with the very letters with which the various aspects of the universe itself are described.

And when at last Dante finds God and finds himself in God, he illustrates his meaning once more by the cryptographic devices which spell his name in the very words that describe his vision of God.

Let us now turn to the cryptographic signatures themselves which illustrate the theme of the *Divina Commedia* as a quest in which Dante is lost and found. The first that I will show appears on the marginal letters of the first lines of the first four terzine of *Inferno* i, the very position in which we have already seen the acrostic NATI:

I	N
4	A
7	T
10	I

Now the acrostic NATI refers to the human children of God who are born into the *selva oscura* of the life on earth; they are mankind in general, and they are represented in the poem by Dante, who describes himself as the typical human being whose experience is the common experience of all. In the sense that his experience as an individual is the common experience of mankind, Dante identifies himself with mankind, and it may not be unexpected, therefore, that he expresses this identification of himself with mankind by cryptographic means.

The cryptographic means of expressing the identification of himself with mankind appears at once in the possibility of identifying to a certain extent the words NATI and DANTE. These two words have three letters in common: N, A, T; and a cryptographic signature spelt with the very N, A, and T already used in the acrostic NATI would seem to indicate that Dante himself was aware of the common letters possessed by the two words, and intended, in his coincident use of these letters for an acrostic NATI and an acrostic DANTE, to express an identification not only of the words themselves but of what they represent.

In order to show the acrostic DANTE that coincides with the letters N, A, and T of the acrostic NATI, consider the following marginal letters on the same lines on which the NATI appears:

1 NE
 4 A
 7 T
 10 I' NON SO BEN RID

Read: I' NON SO BEN IR. DANTE

This acrostic not only gives a signature at the head of the poem but expresses in a single sentence the fundamental situation as described in the lines on which it appears. *La diritta via era smarrita*, and Dante does not know how to go.

I am inclined to believe that there is to be found on these same lines another acrostic DANTE that coincides even more closely with the NATI. Observe that the last of the four *terzine* has an acrostic on its three lines:

10 I
 11 TA
 12 C

Read: TACI

In accordance with the sense of this TACI, the reader is perhaps informed that he is keeping something silent or else commanded to keep something silent. Now observe that with the preceding line the acrostic letters may be considered:

9 D
 10 I
 11 TA
 12 C

Read: TACI D

May not the reader consider that this acrostic either informs him that he is keeping D silent or else commands him to keep it silent? In either case, there is suggested a silent D, and if this silent D is added to the acrostic letters NE, A, T, I, the spelling is I', DANTE.

Or if the TACI indicates that the whole final *terzina* on which it appears is to be kept silent, the last line of the frame would then become the ninth, the initial of which is D; and the acrostic would be read thus:

I NE
4 A
7 T
9 D

Read: DANTE

With whatever conjecture, and whether with or without the sentence: I' NON SO BEN IR, an acrostic DANTE appears on the opening lines of *Inferno* I in such a way as to suggest a cryptographic identification of DANTE and NATI, an identification which corresponds to the identification which Dante makes of himself, as a typical human being, with mankind in general. And this spelling of DANTE is lost in the text just as Dante himself is described in the text as lost in the *selva oscura*.

Compare this identification of DANTE and NATI with the identification of DANTE and FANTE (p. 77).

But Dante has not limited himself in this passage to the acrostic form of signature; the passage contains two interior sequences each spelling DANTE and keying together on the initial T of *Tanto*, line 7. The zigzag course of these signatures through the text may well be imagined to illustrate the course of Dante himself after he had lost the *diritta via*.

The two interior sequences appear thus:

3 che la diritta viA era smarrita
4 ahi quanto a Dir qual era e cosa dura
5 questa sElva selvaggia ed aspra e forte
6 che Nel pensier rinnova la paura
7 Tanto e amara che poco e piu morte
8 ma pEr trattar del ben ch'i'vi trovai
9 diro dell'Altre cose ch'io v'ho scorte
10 i'non so ben riDir com'io v'entrai
11 tant'era pien di sonNo in su quel punto

Read from A of *via*, 3; D of *dir*, 4; E of *selva*, 5; N of *nel*, 6; first T of *tanto*, 7: DANTE.

Read from the same T of *tanto*, 7; E of *per*, 8; A of *altre*, 9; D of *ridir*, 10; second N of *sonno*, 11: DANTE.

Let us now turn from the beginning of *Inferno*, where Dante shows himself by cryptographic devices as identical with mankind and as lost, to the end of *Paradiso*. In the words with which he there describes his vision of God, Dante illustrates by cryptographic devices that he is identical with God and that in finding God he finds himself.

The passage to be considered first is *Par.* xxxiii, lines 121–132; within this passage is hidden a most remarkable complex of cryptographic signatures. The passage, which follows, describes what Dante saw in his vision of the *luce eterna*, the eternal light being, as consistently throughout the *Divina Commedia*, the symbol of God:

O quanto è corto il dire, e come fioco	121
Al mio concetto! e questo a quel ch' io vidi	
È tanto, che non basta a dicer poco.	
O luce eterna, che sola in te sidi,	124
Sola t' intendi, e da te intelletta	
Ed intendente te, ami ed arridi!	
Quella circolazion, che sì concetta	127
Pareva in tre come lume riflesso,	
Dagli occhi miei alquanto circonspecta,	
Dentro da sè del suo colore stesso	130
Mi parve pinta della nostra effige,	
Per che il mio viso in lei tutto era messo.	

Let me call attention first, before proceeding to the cryptograms, to the remarkable play on sounds suggesting the sound of DANTE in lines 125 and 126, and indeed throughout the entire passage. The letters of the name circulate through the text like motes in a sunbeam, now and then almost spelling the name complete. Indeed, in this circulation of the motes of DANTE in the sunbeam of the *luce eterna*, the name, I', DANTE, is actually spelled in the letter sequence, line 125, DA TE IN. The figure which I have used of motes circulating in a sunbeam, appropriate as it is in connection with the letters of DANTE circulating in the text describing the *luce eterna*, suggests that Dante himself may have had the figure in mind. And if such may have been the case, it may well be imagined that there is a *double entente* in the phrase, lines 127–128:

Quella circolazion, che sì concetta
Pareva in tre.*

This phrase, as I take it, has in addition to its manifest meaning a meaning referring to the cryptograms contained in the text. The cryptic allusion that I see in the phrase may be developed in the following fashion: "That circulation of the letters, conceived thus as DANTE, appeared in three ways or signatures." And as a matter of fact, out of *quella circolazion* of the letters three signatures do indeed appear.

The first of the three signatures to which I refer is the letter sequence already referred to: DA TE IN, in line 125, spelling I' DANTE. Though this is in itself not a particularly interesting signature, it assumes an extraordinary interest from the fact that it is one of three signatures which have in common the same letter D. The other two signatures are interior sequences which transect each other on this D and form a cross. Thus the first signature is a DANTE on a cross which is composed of two interior sequences, each spelling DANT or DANTE. The sequences appear thus:

```
123  e tanTo che non basta a dicer poco
124  o luce eterNa che sola iN te sidi
125  sola t'intendi E Da te intelletta
126  ed intendenTe te ami ed Arridi
127  quella circolazion che si concetta
```

The figure of the cross with Dante upon it appears thus:

```
123  . . . . T. . . . .
124  . . . . . N. . . . . N . . . . .
125  . . . . . E DA TE IN . . . . .
126  . . . . . T. . . . . A . . . . .
127  . . . . A . . . . .
```

For the first of these interior sequences, read from the second *t* of *tanto*, line 123, through the *n* of *eterna*, line 124, through the *d* of *da*, line 125, to the *a* of *arridi*, line 126.

*I have adopted Toynbee's reading *tre* in place of *te*, as in the text of Moore. Nothing consistent with the sense of the passage, so far as I can see, can be said for *te*. *Tre* as an allusion to the Trinity is especially appropriate.

These letters spell DANT. For DANTE add the E adjacent to the D, line 125.

For the second interior sequence, read from the A of *quella*, line 127, through the second T of *intendente*, line 126, through the D of *da*, line 125, to the N of *in*, line 124. These letters spell DANT. For DANTE add the E adjacent to D, line 125, as in the other sequence.

Notice that these two sequences are absolutely identical in their spacing, and that they form an absolutely symmetrical cross. The first sequence starts with the letter T, on the sixth space of line 123; the second sequence starts with the letter A, on the sixth space of line 127. The second letter of the first sequence, N, falls on the twelfth space in line 124; the second letter of the second sequence, T, falls on the twelfth space of line 126. The third letter of both sequences, the D of line 125, on which the sequences transect, falls on the eighteenth space of the line. The fourth letter of the first sequence, A, falls on line 126 on the seventh space beyond the transection; the fourth letter of the second sequence, N, falls on line 124 on the seventh space beyond the transection. The two feet of the cross, which correspond to the letters with which I have described the sequences as beginning, are five lines apart; the two heads, which correspond to the letters with which I have described the sequences as ending, are three lines apart; and the transection of the cross is on the central line of the passage in which the cross appears. On this middle line, line 125, at the transection is the sequence spelling: I', DANTE; so that DANTE, like Christ, is on the cross, composed of his own name, or nature, as a dualism.

What Dante finds, therefore, when he looks into the eternal light, is the thrice repeated image of himself, corresponding to the triune God; and he sees himself on the cross, as Christ was on the cross. In finding God he finds himself in the image of God.

Compare this cross with the cross formed by interior sequences in *Par.* xix. 124-129 (pp. 163-4).

In addition to this remarkable cross composed of two DANTE'S with DANTE crucified upon it, there is an anagram in

the passage describing the vision of the eternal light. I was directed to this anagram by the suggested sound of Dante's name, just as I was directed to the cross by the suggested sound of his name in the earlier lines of the passage. The suggested sound I regarded as a hint, just as I have proved the suggested sound to be a hint in treating of the cryptographic cross.

Observe, then, as a hint of the presence of the anagram, the words with which lines 129 and 130 begin:

129 DAGLI OCCHI MIEI
130 DENTRO DA SE

Observe that DAGLI suggests vaguely the ancestral form of Alighieri, or Aldighiero, in the following letters: ALDIG; observe that DENTRO begins with four of the five letters of DANTE. The juxtaposition of these two words suggesting the sound of the first and last names of Dante gave me the idea, after the success of my experiment with the cryptographic cross, that Dante might have intended here an anagram. This idea was reinforced by the fact that the words at the beginnings of lines 127-130 could be read consecutively to form the following acrostic sentence:

QUELLA CIRCULAZION PAREVA DAGLI OCCHI MIEI DENTRO
DA SE.

This acrostic sentence corresponds in meaning exactly to what we have found was true of the *circulazion* as a *circulazion* of letters spelling Dante's name. In other words, the *circulazion*, . . . *sì concetta* as the image of Dante, appeared, when Dante looked into the *luce eterna*, like the image of his own eyes (or himself) which was reflected in it. It was as if Dante saw his own eyes reflected back from the *luce eterna* in the form of the *circulazion*. So much for a partial justification of the acrostic sentence: QUELLA CIRCULAZION PAREVA DAGLI OCCHI MIEI DENTRO DA SE. But this same sentence may also, with equal truth to the cryptographic character of the passage as we have already discovered it, be read as follows:

QUELLA CIRCULAZION PAREVA: "*Dagli occhi miei dentro da sè.*"

In other words, the *circulazion*, which we have discovered to be a circling of letters spelling Dante's own name, appeared also in the form: "DAGLI OCCHI MIEI DENTRO DA SE."

If, then, the acrostic sentence says that the circling of letters spelling Dante's name appeared also in the form: DAGLI OCCHI MIEI DENTRO DA SE, can the statement be justified? It may, indeed, for the words: DAGLI OCCHI MIEI DENTRO DA SE, are an anagram which may be read as follows:

ECCOMI, DIS, DANTE ALDIGHIERO.

In this anagram, accordingly, Dante utters his cry of victory and exultation as he finds himself at last in the very womb of the divine light which is God. Is he calling back to Dis, the emperor of Hell, that Dis should see him so high above? Or is he exulting over God himself, who, as it is said in the first chapter of Genesis, had feared, and with reason, that man would make himself equal with Him; is he calling to God to see him, Dante, as identical with Dis in his usurpation of divinity? I am inclined to believe, in view of the general ambivalence of the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, that both these meanings are expressed in this anagram at the close of the poem.

This anagram is important, moreover, as determining the form in which Dante spelt his own name: Aldighiero. This indeed, was an early form of the name.

There remains one other signature in the closing lines of the final canto of the poem that I wish to show here. In Chapter IX the reader may see two more. Dante says, lines 137-138, that, as he looked into the eternal light which is God and saw the image of himself,

Veder voleva, come si convenne
L'imago al cerchio, e come vi s'indova.

In the lines immediately succeeding, in telling how he lacked the power to fulfill this desire until, in a flash, the wish came, he signs his name in a final interior sequence:

SIGNATURES

III

139 ma non eran Da cio le proprie penne
 140 se non che lA mia mente fu percossa
 141 da un fulgorE in che sua voglia venne
 142 all'alta faNTasia qui manco possa

Read from D of *da*, 139; A of *la*, 140; E of *fulgore*, 141; NT of *fantasia*, 142: DANTE.

This sequence is absolutely vertical as to four letters, with the fifth adjacent.

Thus in the moment of realizing his wish, the wish to understand his exact relation with God in whom he finds himself, it is his name (himself) that comes as the fulfillment of his wish—his name which here signifies, in the symbolic use which Dante makes of cryptography throughout the *Divina Commedia*, that the relation of Dante to God is the relation of Dante to Dante, of self to self.

CHAPTER IV

DXV

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DXV

THE personage described by Beatrice, *Purg.* xxxiii. 43, as “a five hundred, ten, and five” has never been satisfactorily identified. He remains, in fact, after many guesses, the Iron Mask of the *Divina Commedia*. I will show that he is Dante himself.

The evidence that I shall here present that Dante himself is designated by the cryptic number is based on the cryptograms contained in the passage in which the number is mentioned. The cryptograms are not, however, the only evidence that I have to offer; I had, indeed, not yet discovered them when I first came to the conclusion that the identification of Dante with the cryptic number was indicated by the symbolism of the poem.

The most commonly accepted method of interpreting the designation: “a five hundred, ten, and five,” is to substitute for the three numbers mentioned the letters which represent these numbers in the Roman notation. Thus five hundred is D, ten is X, and five is V; and they read in the sequence given: DXV. If the V and the X are transposed, as in an anagram, the three letters spell DVX, or—since V and U are interchangeable forms—DUX, the Latin word for “leader.”

This interpretation, which is satisfactory as far as it goes, fails, however, to yield the *name* of the DVX; he remains, in fact, as anonymous as before. And in the opinion of certain commentators his anonymity is intentional. The reference to the DVX is prophetic; he is said to be coming, as a leader “sent by God,” at some future date; and since Dante is not supposed to have had the gift of prophecy, the name of the

leader cannot have been known to him, no matter how much he may have hoped for or believed in him. In the opinion, therefore, of those who hold that the DVX is intentionally anonymous, Dante quite naturally alluded to the unknown leader by a generic term that would apply to whatever particular person he might turn out to be.

More commonly held, however, is the opinion that the enigmatic DVX is a reference to a particular person. In the words of Moore, "it must represent in some way or other *a definite name*, because it is so evidently suggested by the riddle of the number of the Beast in *Rev.* xiii. 18." The verse in *Revelation* reads: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." By substituting for these numbers the Hebrew letters regarded as their cabalistic equivalents, the beast has been identified as Nero.

It seems likely, therefore, from the analogy of the cabalistic "number of the beast" in *Revelation*, that the DVX, as "a five hundred, ten, and five," is some sort of cabalistic cryptogram for the name of a particular person.

That the "number of the beast" was indeed Dante's model for the DVX as "a five hundred, ten, and five" is further proved by another striking analogy. It is prophesied of the DVX, *Purg.* xxxiii. 44-45, that he

anciderà la fuia
Con quel gigante che con lei delinque.

The harlot here mentioned is evidently suggested by "the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication," *Rev.* xvii. 1-2; and the giant by "the beast that carrieth her," *Rev.* xvii. 7, the beast, that is, whose number is given in *Rev.* xiii. These analogies between *Revelation* and the passage in *Purgatorio* prove that Dante found the model for his *enigma*

forte in the cabalistic "number of the beast." That he found his model in the Scriptures disposes finally of any objection that he could have considered cryptographic devices as unworthy of his poem.

Proceeding on the analogy with "the number of the beast," which is generally accepted as a cabalistic cryptogram, various commentators, with various results, have attempted to decipher the "five hundred, ten, and five" by the method of cabala. This method consists of representing the letters of the alphabet by numbers. Since there are many cabalistic systems, which differ as to the numbers by which the various letters are represented, the interpretation must depend on the system that is adopted. As an illustration I refer specially to the process by which Moore, in his *Studies in Dante*, seeks to prove that 515 refers to Emperor Henry VII.

The entire essay might well be quoted for my purposes, for its detailed erudition reveals the vast extent of cabalistic literature, the seriousness with which learned men regarded it, and especially the likely "acquaintance and even friendship" between Dante and a Jewish writer on cabala, Emanuel ben Salomon. Moore thinks that Dante would have designated the Emperor Henry as "Arrico," and that then, since the science of cabala was originally and remained predominantly Hebrew, he would have transliterated the Italian name into the nearest Hebrew equivalents. As there is no equivalent for "o," Moore assumes that Dante would have assigned to it the value 4, because it is the fourth vowel; the other values which Moore assigns are those regularly accepted in Hebrew. Thus he obtains:

A	I
R	200
R	200
I	10
C OR K	100
O	4
	<hr/>
	515

By a different application of the cabalistic method Scartazzini arrives at what he regards as proof that the DVX is Can Grande. His "proof" depends, among other things, on his giving Can Grande the title: "Kan Grande de Scala, Signore de Verona." Moore dismisses Scartazzini's solution in the following words: "Scartazzini endeavors, in a most preposterous fashion, to make the number 515 indicate 'Can Grande' by the help of a descriptive title containing a mixture of Latin and Italian words, and by then selecting out of it most arbitrarily certain letters and neglecting others . . . He has still to invent . . . a purely arbitrary and imaginary system of numerical values for the letters of the alphabet, not Latin, nor Greek, nor Hebrew."

Some of the objections which Moore makes to Scartazzini's solution are applicable to his own. The arbitrary character of Moore's argument shows in the choice of the form ARRICO, his assumption of the value four for the letter o, his dubious use of κ, and the further assumption that Dante would have used for the numerical equivalents of Italian letters the cabalistic equivalents of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It is significant, however, that the two great Dante scholars agree that it is only by some application of the cabalistic method that the enigma is to be solved. There can be no doubt, in justification of this agreement, that Dante knew the literature of cabala. As Moore points out, "the method could scarcely have been unfamiliar to one so much interested in Biblical exegesis as Dante. Indeed, his own processes of interpretation have much in common with Kabbalistic methods." Moreover, there appeared in Dante's life-time the celebrated book *Zohar*, an important and widely circulated work on the cabalistic interpretation of Scripture.

Evidence exists, as I believe, in the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* that Dante was acquainted with this work; and it is not impossible that he may have been acquainted, as Moore suggests, with the work of his contemporary Emanuel ben Salomon, an authority on the subject of cabala.

There is a device used by Emanuel ben Salomon, the

contemporary of Dante to whom I have just referred, which shows an interesting variation of the cabalistic method. In order to designate himself at the end of one of his works he says:

“My name is 70 and 40, and a *Nun* (n) joined to a *Vau* (v or u), and the ending of my name is ‘El.’”

In this cabalistic signature, made by an expert in cabala, it is important to note that, along with the use of numbers regarded as cabalistic equivalents of letters, some of the *actual letters* of the name are used. This use of a combination of numbers and letters will show, I think, a kind of precedent for the method by which I interpret the DXV.

In my own interpretation of the “five hundred, ten, and five” I accept as a partial interpretation the reading: DVX. In other words, I regard the cryptogram as *double*, in the sense that it not only, as I shall show, names Dante himself but also names him leader. DVX, then, is the first, or preliminary, form into which the “five hundred, ten, and five” is to be translated. But how, in its turn, is DVX to be translated into DANTE?

The translation of DVX into DANTE requires, for the perfect working out of the cryptogram, a spelling of Dante’s whole name in which the last name has ten letters. The cryptogram will work out, however, on a nine letter form of the last name ending in o, as in the accepted form for the name of Dante’s father, *Alighiero*. An instance of Dante’s own use of a spelling with ten letters exists, I believe, in the anagrammatic reading: ECCOMI, DIS, DANTE ALDIGHIERO (see page 110.)

We need not rely, however, on this anagram for authority for a ten-letter spelling of Dante’s last name. For early examples I refer to Toynbee’s *Dante Dictionary* and to Scherrillo’s *Il Cognome Alighieri in Alcuni Capitoli della Biografia di Dante*, which show that there is early evidence for the forms *Aldighiero*, *Aldighieri*, and *Allighieri*. The name derives from the name of the wife of Dante’s ancestor Cacciaguada, which was, according to some spellings, *Aldighiera degli Aldighieri*. The singular masculine would, then, in this original form, have been *Aldighiero*.

For the translation of DVX into Dante's name I take, then, the form DANTE ALDIGHERO. The other ten-letter spellings of *Alighieri* will answer, as will also the nine-letter spelling ending in o: *Alighiero*; but they answer less perfectly.

The D of DVX, obtained as the equivalent of five hundred, corresponds to the initial letter D in DANTE.

The v, or five, corresponds to the number of letters in DANTE. It also corresponds to E, the last letter in DANTE, since E, as the fifth letter of the alphabet, is the alphabetical equivalent of five. DANTE is indicated, therefore, not only as to the number of letters, but also as to the first and last letters, as in the common method of indicating a proper name without spelling it in full: D . . . E.

The x, or ten, corresponds to the ten letters in ALDIGHERO. It also indicates in their proper order both the initial and the final letter of ALDIGHERO, or A O. This indication appears in writing ten according to the Arabic notation. The I of IO corresponds to the initial A of ALDIGHERO, since A, as the first letter of the alphabet, has the numerical value of one. And the o of IO corresponds to the final o in ALDIGHERO, since o as zero and o as a letter have the same form.

Thus the ten indicates not only the number of letters in the last name, but also the first and last letters of the name: A O. In case, however, the name, as in *Alighiero*, was a nine-letter name ending in o, the ten of the cryptogram still indicates the name by its initial and its final letters: A O.

The correspondence between "five hundred, ten, and five," DVX, and DANTE ALDIGHERO is sufficiently close. And this correspondence is determined by variations in a cabalistic method which is known to have been used by Dante's contemporary, the authority on cabala, Emanuel ben Salomon. This method, as we saw, consists in a combination of letters and of numbers regarded as the equivalents of letters. Dante's variations—if it be admitted that the method I have ascribed to him is his—from the method of Salomon consists in a combined use of the Roman and Arabic notation of numbers and in taking as the numerical value of a letter, not the number that would be assigned to it in the Hebrew

alphabet, but the number of its position in the Italian alphabet.

The identification of the DVX and DANTE ALDIGHIERO may certainly be regarded as indicated by the preceding interpretation. But in the very passage that treats of the *enigma forte* there is further evidence of a cryptographic character for this identification. This evidence consists of a double acrostic, a series of interior sequences, and an acrostic on the proper names contained in the passage.

First, for the double acrostic, see the five *terzine*, *Purg.* xxxiii. 43-57:

Nel quale un cinquecento diece e cinque, Messo da Dio, anciderà la fuia Con quel gigante che con lei delinque.	43
E forse che la mia narrazion buia, Qual Temi e Sfinge, men ti persuade, Perch' a lor modo lo intelletto attuaia;	46
Ma tosto fien li fatti le Naiade, Che solveranno questo enigma forte, Senza danno di pecore o di biade.	49
Tu nota; e sì come da me son porte, Così queste parole segna ai vivi Del viver ch' è un correre alla morte;	52
Ed abbi a mente, quando tu le scrivi, Di non celar qual hai vista la pianta, Ch' è or due volte dirubata quivi.	55

There are several features in the text of this passage which seem to indicate that these five *terzine* are to be taken as an acrostic frame.

First, the passage begins with the line in which the all important "five hundred, ten, and five" is mentioned. Moreover, the number of this line is 43, a number whose integers have the perfect number 7 for their sum and which express, moreover, the fundamental relation: 3 to 4, on which the number symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* is based.

Second, the passage ends with a *terzina* that begins, line 55, with the letters: ED. These letters, the last and first of DANTE, seem often to be used by Dante both to indicate his own name and to mark the beginning or the end of a passage that contains a cryptogram.

Third, the initials of the three lines of this last *terzina* have a special significance which I shall have to wait till the next chapter to explain in full. These initial letters are:

E
D
C

Note that E, as the fifth letter in the alphabet, has the value of 5. D, in the Roman notation, has the value of 500. And c, in the Roman notation, has the value of 100. If the zeros are disregarded, it appears that the integers which these numbers yield are 5 and 5 and 1, exactly the same integers contained in the number of the enigma: 500, 10, and 5. In the next chapter I will show in detail how Dante constantly uses as a signature a variety of combinations of letters which yield these integers. For the present, then, I simply note that the five *terzine*, lines 43 to 57, are indicated as an acrostic frame by being bounded symmetrically at the beginning and end by the significant integers: 5, 5, and 1.

Consider, then, that the five *terzine* are indicated as an acrostic frame. The initials of the first lines of these *terzine* are:

43 N
46 E
49 M
52 T
55 E

Read: MENTE

But this acrostic MENTE is not the only acrostic on these lines. Consider on the same lines the following marginal letters:

43 N
46 E
49 MA
52 T
55 ED

Read: ME, DANTE

Exactly as Dante identifies himself (his name) by means of a double acrostic with NATI (see pp. 103-5), with FANTE (see p. 77), and with MENTE (see pp. 183-4), so here, by the same device, he again identifies himself with MENTE. MENTE, as appears in the reference to the Trinity in *Inferno* iii, is the intellectual form of the divine Son, or Christ, with whom Dante constantly identifies himself throughout the *Divina Commedia*.

The presence of ME, DANTE in acrostic form in the passage which contains the *enigma forte*: "five hundred, ten, and five," is an association which points indubitably to Dante as the mysterious person whom the enigma masks. DANTE, as MENTE, is the prophesied DVX.

There are some interesting double meanings in the passage containing these acrostics which may be taken as hints of the cryptic intention. Note first the words, line 55: *Ed abbi a mente*. If ED is taken, as it so often seems to be meant, to indicate DANTE, the quotation may be understood in the sense: "Have Dante in mind." Moreover, the ED and *mente* in the same phrase repeat the association of DANTE and MENTE that appears in the associated acrostic readings: ME, DANTE and MENTE.

Note, second, the words, line 56: *Di non celar*. DI is the spelled form of D; it may be understood in connection with this phrase as the initial of DANTE. The words *Di non celar* may therefore be read, as having a double sense, for the imperative "Do not conceal DANTE."

Note also the possible double meaning, line 52, in regard to the enigma, of the words: *Come da me*. All these possible double meanings, slight or farfetched as they may seem in themselves taken separately, have a cumulative value in connection with my reading of the enigma and the acrostic readings which I have shown.

Note now, in confirmation of my interpretation of the DVX AS DANTE ALDIGHIERO, the interior sequences in the same passage in which the DVX is mentioned and the acrostic ME, DANTE is found.

The first interior sequence to which I will call attention

begins on the initial of *cinquecento*, line 43, and reads directly down. The *c* of *cinquecento* is to be replaced, exactly as it is replaced in the reading: DVX, by a D, since D is the equivalent of *cinquecento* in the Roman notation. The sequence to which I refer appears in the following form:

43 nel quale un D
44 messo da dio A
45 con quel gigaNTE

The letters of the sequence, which I have thus capitalized, spell: DANTE.

The regularity of this sequence is noteworthy. The D, the A, and the N are each in the fourteenth letter space of their respective lines; and the TE is immediately adjacent to the N. The possibility that such a sequence might be accidental is very slight. The intention is confirmed, first, by the mathematical regularity, and, second, by the fact that the beginning of the sequence coincides with the beginning of the cryptic number and that the sequence and the cryptic number both give for their readings the name of the same person: DANTE.

There are two more interior sequences in this passage, and the three sequences appear as follows:

43 nel quale un Dinquecento Diece e cinque
44 messo da dio AnciderA la fuia
45 con quel gigaNTE che con lei delinque
46 e forse che la mia narrazion buia
47 qual temi e sfiNge men ti persuade
48 perch'a lor modo lo inTelletto attua
49 ma tosto fien li fatti le naiADE

For the second sequence read the D of *diece*, the second of the cryptic numbers, line 43; the second A of *anciderà*, 44; the NTE of *gigante*, 45: DANTE.

For the third sequence read the N of *sfinge*, 47; the first T of *intelletto*, 48; the ADE of *naiade*, 49: DANTE.

The second sequence, which runs from D of *diece* to NTE of *gigante*, is mathematically regular in its spacing. It is strongly corroborated as intentional by its relation to the first

sequence; it starts on the second of the cryptic numbers, just as the first sequence starts on the first cryptic number; it uses for its A the last letter of *anciderà*, just as the first sequence uses for its A the first letter of the same word; and it uses for its NTE the NTE used by the first sequence. The third sequence is likewise spaced with mathematical regularity.

The fourth interior sequence which I shall show here is in a passage a few lines below the foregoing, as follows:

52 tu nota e si come da me son porTE
 53 cosi queste parole SEGNA ai vivi
 54 del viver ch'e un correre alla morte
 55 ed abbi A mente quando tu le scrivi
 56 Di non celar qual hai vista la pianta

Read the TE of *porte*, 52; SEGNA, 53; the N of *un*, 54; the A before *mente*, 55; the D, initial of 56: SEGNA DANTE.

Note the hints in the text which call attention to the signature. The signature starts on the D of *Di non celar*, which words may be taken, as I have indicated, in a double sense to mean, "Do not conceal Dante." And the signature ends on a line that begins with what may be understood as an injunction to the reader to be on the lookout: *Tu nota*. And on the same line are the significant words: *Come da me*.

This sequence is mathematically regular. It begins with the D on the first space of 56; on the eighth space after D, on the line above, is A; on the eighth space after A, on the line above, is N; the eighth space after N, on the line above, is an empty space, since no letter is to be read here, and the word SEGNA is immediately adjacent; and on the line above, on the eighth space beyond the empty space adjacent to SEGNA where no letter is to be read, is the T followed by the E which completes the signature.

I need hardly repeat that the mathematical regularity of the sequence is a strong argument against the possibility that it might be accidental.

In the passage of five *terzine* which contains in its first line

the cryptic *un cinquecento diece e cinque* we have now seen an acrostic signature and several signatures in interior sequences. The passage contains still another signature by still another cryptographic device—the device of an acrostic on a group of proper names. The proper names mentioned in the passage which we are here considering are DIO, TEMI, SFINGE, and NAIADE. Consider the following initial and contiguous letters in these proper names:

DIO	DI
TEMI	TE
SFINGE	SFINGE
NAIADE	NA

Read: DANTE SI FINGE

Interesting in connection with this signature is the fact that it is made possible by Dante's use of a word to which the editors of the *Divina Commedia* commonly refer as a blunder: *Naiade* for the Latin *Laiades*.

In recapitulation of my argument that Dante is the DXV, I have shown in the preceding pages a close correspondence between the cryptic number, "five hundred, ten, and five," and the name DANTE ALDIGHIERO, a form of the name for which, as I have shown, there is early evidence and the evidence of the anagram: ECCOMI, DIS, DANTE ALDIGHIERO. I have also shown an acrostic signature: ME, DANTE, in the passage in which the cryptic number appears, a series of four interior sequences in the same passage, reading DANTE, and an acrostic on the proper names in the passage. Moreover, I have pointed out a number of expressions in the passage that may be taken as having double meanings which again indicate DANTE. Such a complex of signatures, which can scarcely have been accidental, is the cryptographic proof that Dante and the DXV are one and the same.

For the symbolism of the DXV see the discussion in Chapter VI of the symbolism of the *Veltro* and especially the discussion, in Chapter VIII, of the symbolism of the Mystic Procession, in connection with which the DXV is prophesied. The DXV, as I will show, is to be understood to indicate Dante as *reborn* and therefore as divine.

CHAPTER V

THE UNIVERSAL FORM

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THERE is a curious statement in the fifth canto of *Paradiso*, lines 98–99, that Dante makes about himself. He says:

pur di mia natura
Trasmutabile son per tutte guise!

This statement that Dante is by nature transmutable into all guises is an important clue both to the symbolism and to the cryptography of the *Divina Commedia*.

But what are the guises into which Dante is transmutable? One of them, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, is certainly the *DXV*, the cryptic number, five hundred, ten and five, into which, as I have shown, the name of Dante can be transmuted.

What, then, are his other guises? In the present chapter I will show various purely cryptographic guises into which Dante, or, rather, the name of Dante, is transmutable. I will leave to the next chapter the discussion of the symbolic guises, the personifications, into which he transmutes himself as an individual.

The passage in which Dante comes nearest to giving a literal statement as to the method of discovering his guises, the transmutations of which he remains himself the constant factor, is to be found in *Paradiso* xxxiii. 85–93, in the words with which he describes what he saw in his vision of the *somma luce*.

The passage reads as follows:

Nel suo profondo vidi che s' interna,	85
Legato con amore in un volume,	
Ciò che per l'universo si squaderna;	
Sustanzia ed accidenti e lor costume,	88
Quasi conflati insieme per tal modo,	
Che ciò ch' io dico è un semplice lume.	
La forma universal di questo nodo	91
Credo ch' io vidi, perchè più di largo,	
Dicendo questo, mi sento ch' io godo.	

Dante is here describing how he saw in his vision the union of substance and accidents and their modes. The words *substance*, *accident*, and *mode* belong to the technical vocabulary of scholastic philosophy; they are used to express the relation of appearance to reality. The appearance of things is infinite, the infinite phenomena of the universe. But underlying the infinite phenomena and uniting them is a reality that is single, the one and universal substance of God. The appearances of things, therefore, are the accidents and modes of the divine substance; they are the divine manifestations, the guises into which God himself is transmuted. The key to these transmutations of God into all the guises of his phenomena, the solution—in other words—of the problem of appearance and reality, is what Dante says he found in his mystic vision of the Supreme Light.

Now when Dante declares that he himself is by his nature transmutable into all guises he is making no confession of weakness or instability of character, as is often supposed. He is actually declaring, on the contrary, that his transmutability into all guises is the transmutability of God, who manifests himself in all the divine guises of the phenomena of the universe. Dante is asserting, therefore, his own divine character; he is identifying himself with God.

If, then, as Dante says in describing his vision of the Supreme Light, he solved the problem of appearance and reality, seeing and understanding the relation of the infinite phenomena of the universe to the divine substance that makes them one, if, in other words, he found the key to the transmutations of God into the guises of God, he found, per-

force, the key to his own transmutations into all the guises of himself. The key that unlocks the mystery of the divine appearances is the key that unlocks the mystery of his own, since the mystery is the same for the appearances of God and the appearances of Dante. Important for us, therefore, are the exact words with which Dante expresses himself as having found this key. They are so very important, indeed, that I will repeat them:

La forma universal di questo nodo
Credo ch' io vidi.

These words, which are capable of a double meaning, give the key to the "guises" of Dante.

The obvious meaning which these words convey is simply this: "The universal form of this knot I believe that I saw." But it is possible to understand them as follows: "The universal form of this knot I believe as IO VIDI." In other words, Dante may here be understood to say: "I believe that the universal form of this knot is IO VIDI"—taking thus the words IO VIDI as being a form in themselves quite apart from their denotation.

But how, as I have here suggested, can the words IO VIDI be "the universal form" of the guises of Dante? How can they be the key to his transmutations of himself as an individual or as a name? The answer is obvious. The words IO VIDI, considered as a cryptogram, are the equivalent of the cryptic number "*five hundred, ten, and five,*" and therefore in turn equivalent, as I demonstrated in the preceding chapter, to DVX and to DANTE ALDIGHERO (or, if the reader prefers, to DANTE ALDIGHERI or DANTE ALIGHIERO). The letters IO of IO VIDI are the equivalent, in the Arabic notation of numbers, of ten; the letters VI of VIDI are the Italian spelling of the letter v, which in the Roman notation of numbers is five; and the letters DI of VIDI are the Italian spelling for the letter D, which in the Roman notation is five hundred. The correspondences may be expressed more clearly, perhaps, as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{IO} &= 10 \\ \text{VI (v)} &= 5 \\ \text{DI (D)} &= 500 \end{aligned}$$

The transmutation of the words of the universal form IO VIDI into DVX may be shown as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{IO} &= \text{ten} = \text{x (in the Roman notation)} \\ \text{VI} &= \text{v} \\ \text{DI} &= \text{D} \end{aligned}$$

Rearranged, these letters spell DVX.

The transmutation of the words of the universal form IO VIDI into DANTE proceeds by the method described in the preceding chapter for transmuting "five hundred, ten, and five" into DVX and into DANTE ALDIGHIERO.

IO = IO = ALDIGHIERO, the I of IO representing the alphabetical equivalent of one, or A, the first letter of the alphabet and the initial of ALDIGHIERO; the O of IO representing the last letter, or O, of ALDIGHIERO; and the IO, as a number, representing the ten letters of the name. As I said in the preceding chapter, ALDIGHIERO is the form of the name for which there is documentary evidence and, as I have found, the evidence of the anagram (see p. 110). But if the reader is unwilling to admit the evidence for this form of the name, the IO, as a ten, of IO VIDI is transmutable, as I showed in the preceding chapter, to any ten-letter spelling of the name in so far as it designates the number of letters of the name, or to a nine-letter spelling ending in o, as in *Alighiero*, in that it designates by its I the initial and by its o the final letter.

VI = V, or five, = first, the number of letters in DANTE; and second, the letter with which DANTE ends, or E, which, as the fifth letter of the alphabet, has the numerical value of five.

DI = D, the initial letter of DANTE.

IO VIDI is, therefore, "the universal form" which appears, by transmutation, in the name of Dante, and in his guise as a "five hundred, ten, and five," and in DVX.

In the foregoing exposition of IO VIDI as "the universal form" of DANTE, I have confined myself to the purely crypto-

graphic analogies between IO VIDI and DANTE as a name. In addition to these cryptographic analogies, however, there is a striking analogy between the sense of the words IO VIDI and the character of Dante—the character, at any rate, which he ascribes to himself in the *Divina Commedia*. The analogy to which I now refer may have further determined Dante in his choice of IO VIDI as his “universal form.” The sense, “I saw,” expresses, indeed, the very theme of the *Divina Commedia*. Dante is the *seer*; he saw the universe from bottom to top; he saw God; and in God he saw himself. The universal form IO VIDI expresses, therefore, not only a cryptographic analogy with the name of Dante but an analogy with his character in the poem. It is not inconceivable, moreover, that in the identification which he makes in the poem of his own nature with the divine nature, Dante may have intended a punning: IO, VI DI, as “I, there God.”

The importance of the *forma universal* as the clue to the cryptographic guises, or disguises, of Dante is indicated by an acrostic reading in the very passage in which the *forma universal* is mentioned. The six *terzine*, *Par.* xxxiii. 91–108, are:

La forma universal di questo nodo	91
Credo ch' io vidi, perchè più di largo, Dicendo questo, mi sento ch' io godo.	
Un punto solo m' è maggior letargo,	94
Che venticinque secoli alla impresa, Che fe' Nettuno ammirar l' ombra d' Argo.	
Così la mente mia, tutta sospesa,	97
Mirava fissa immobile ed attenta, E sempre di mirar faceasi accesa.	
A quella luce cotal si diventa,	100
Che volgersi da lei per altro aspetto È impossibil che mai si consenta;	
Perocchè il ben ch' è del volere obbietto,	103
Tutto s' accoglie in lei, e fuor di quella È difettivo ciò che li è perfetto.	
Omai sarà più corta mia favella,	106
Pure a quel ch' io ricordo, che di un fante Che bagni ancor la lingua alla mammella.	

Consider the initials of the first lines of these *terzine*:

91 L
 94 U
 97 C
 100 A
 103 P
 106 O

Read down on lines 91, 94, 97, and 100: LUCA.

Read down on 97, 100, 103, and 106: CAPO.

Each of the acrostic words is spelt on four *terzine*, so that they overlap, the last two letters of the first word being also the first two letters of the second word. Exactly in the middle of this acrostic reading, between the two letters used in both words, is the acrostic ME, spelt on the initials of lines 98 and 99. The complete reading may be shown thus:

91	L		
94	U		
97	C		
		98	M
		99	E
100	A		
103	P		
106	O		

The complete reading is therefore: LUCA CAPO. ME. The ME calls attention to the fact that Dante is present in the passage. CAPO, like the words *viso* and *faccia*, indicates the device of the person concealed. "Head shines," therefore, is a confirmation of the *forma universal* as a disguise for Dante. The first words of the line, 97, on which the acrostic CAPO begins are: *Così la mente mia*, so that the text and the acrostic are related in meaning. Moreover, as we have seen, Dante identifies himself with *mente* in general. The idea of the acrostic LUCA appears in the text in the words: *A quella luce*, line 100, the line on which the acrostic LUCA ends.

Note that on the first lines of the two *terzine*, 103–108, may be read an acrostic: POEMA; so that, as a variant for the acrostic: LUCA CAPO, there may be read on the same lines an acrostic: LUCA POEMA.

There is another confirmation of the cryptic character of the *forma universal* in the initials of the three lines of the *terzina* in which the *forma universal* is mentioned. The initials of these lines are:

91 L
92 C
93 D

These three letters, considered as indicating numbers in the Roman notation, represent respectively 50, 100, and 500. By disregarding the zeroes, we have here 5, 1, and 5, the integers of the cryptic number of the prophesied *DXV*, in connection with the *forma universal*.

As a symbol of himself Dante constantly uses any combination of letters which may be transmuted into these integers, since from these integers his own name can be reconstructed. Before proceeding, therefore, to show the more important specific guises of Dante I will show a few examples of his use, as symbols of his own name, of various combinations of letters that may be transmuted, by disregarding the zeroes, into a 5, a 1, and a 5.

The following passage, *Par.* xxxiii. 46–57, consists of four *terzine*:

Ed io ch' al fine di tutti i disii	46
M' appropinquava, sì com' io dovea, L' ardor del desiderio in me finii.	
Bernardo m' accennava, e sorridea,	49
Perch' io guardassi suso; ma io era Già per me stesso tal qual ei volea;	
Chè la mia vista, venendo sincera,	52
E più e più entrava per lo raggio Dell' alta luce, che da sè è vera.	
Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio	55
Che il parlar nostro, ch' a tal vista cede, E cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these *terzine*:

46 E
 49 BERNARDO
 52 C
 55 DA

Read: CEDA BERNARDO

This reading is appropriate to the text. Bernardo has been directing the eyes of Dante to God, and he yields his place, as intermediary, when Dante, as he says himself, becomes

per me stesso tal qual ei volea.

The chief cryptographic interest of the passage, however, is not in this acrostic, but in the variants which it contains of Dante's numerical signature. The initials of the first, the third, and the fourth *terzina* may be transmuted respectively into a 5, a 1, and a 5.

The initials of the first *terzina* are:

46 E
 47 M
 48 L

E, as the fifth letter of the alphabet, has the value in cabala of 5; M, in the Roman notation, is 1,000; and L, in the Roman notation, is 50. By disregarding the zeroes we have a 5, a 1, and a 5.

The initials of the third *terzina* are:

52 C
 53 E
 54 D

C, in the Roman notation is 100; E, in cabala, is 5; and D, in Roman notation, is 500. By disregarding the zeroes we have a 5, a 1, and a 5.

The initials of the fourth *terzina*, D, C, E, are the same in different order, and give therefore the same integers.

But why, if there is a numerical signature on the first, the third, and the fourth *terzina*, should there be none on the second? The absence here is only apparent, for the signature is concealed in an interior sequence:

49 bernardo m'accennava e sorrIDea
 50 perch'io guardassi suso ma IO era
 51 gia per me stesso tal qual eI Volea

Notice that in *sorridea*, 49, is D with I beside it; immediately below, 50, in the same letter space, is o, with I beside it; and immediately below is I, with v beside it. All these letters spell IO VIDI, the "universal form" itself, and give, therefore, the integers of the cryptic number, 515.

Notice that the passage on which the acrostic CEDA BERNARDO appears begins with the words *Ed io*. These words, as we shall see, are also a cryptographic signature.

Notice, moreover, that the letters on the line indicating the sequence, the letters, that is, that fall in an exactly vertical line, spell DIO.

Thus in the very passage in which Dante says in effect: *Io vidi Dio*, he makes in one of the four *terzine* in question an interior sequence: IO VIDI, with a special emphasis on the letters DIO; and in each of the other three *terzine* acrostic initials with the numerical value of IO VIDI. The coincidence in such a passage of an interior sequence: IO VIDI, with three numerical equivalents in acrostics is strong confirmation for the argument that IO VIDI is the "universal form" that may be transmuted into DANTE, and the guises of DANTE, by a system of alphabetical and numerical equivalents.

It may be noted that in connection with the one overt mention of the name of Dante in the *Divina Commedia* there appear in acrostic form the letters: VID, which yield in Roman notation the same number as IO VIDI: 515. The four *terzine* beginning with "Dante," *Purg.* xxx. 55-66, are:

‘Dante, perchè Virgilio se ne vada,	55
Non pianger anco, non pianger ancora;	
Chè pianger ti convien per altra spada.’	
Quasi ammiraglio, che in poppa ed in prora	58
Viene a veder la gente che ministra	
Per gli altri legni, ed a ben far la incuora,	
In sulla sponda del carro sinistra,	61
Quando mi volsi al suon del nome mio,	
Che di necessità qui si registra,	

Vidi la Donna, che pria m' appario 64
 Velata sotto l' angelica festa,
 Drizzar gli occhi ver me di qua dal rio.

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these four terzine:

55 D
 58 QUASI
 61 I
 64 V

Read: QUASI VID

This suggestion of IO VID I in the acrostic QUASI VID, is curiously repeated in the text itself, where, along with the mention of Dante, there is constant reiteration of the elements of IO VID I. This reiteration will appear in the following method of capitalizing the text:

55 D ante, perche V irgil IO se ne V a D a
 62 quando mi V olsi al suon D el nome m IO
 64 v i D i la D onna che pria m' appar IO
 66 D rizzar gli occhi V er me di qua dal r IO

In line 55 IO VID I is repeated, reading, first, from the first of the line to the centre, and reading, second, from the last of the line to the centre.

This repetition of D, V, and IO in the passage which contains the one overt mention of his name in the *Divina Commedia* confirms the use of IO VID I as a cryptographic symbol of the name of Dante.

There is a curious use of IO VID I in *Par.* xxx. 91-99, which further confirms the words as a cryptographic symbol. The passage is:

Poi come gente stata sotto larve, 91
 Che pare altro che prima, se si sveste
 La sembianza non sua in che disparve;
 Così mi si cambiaro in maggior feste 94
 Li fiori e le faville, sì ch' io vidi
 Ambo le corti del ciel manifeste.

O isplendor di Dio, per cu' io vidi 97
 L' alto trionfo del regno verace,
 Dammi virtù a dir com' io io vidi.

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the three *terzine*:

91 POI
 94 C
 97 O

Read: COPIO

What is it that, as Dante says in the acrostic, he copies? I suggest that it is the words of the "universal form", IO VIDI.

Lines 95, 97, 99 end in *vidi*, one of the only three words, so far as I can discover, which Dante uses as rhymes in an identical sense. He has many "perfect" rhymes, but in the perfect rhyme the sense is different, though the sound is the same. He uses *Cristo* as an identical rhyme in three passages, and the Latin word *me*, *Purg.* xxxiii. 10 and 12. The use of *vidi* to rhyme with itself in the same way that *Cristo* is used to rhyme with itself suggests that IO VIDI and *Cristo* are identified as symbols in the way that Dante constantly identifies himself with Christ in the symbolism of the entire poem. And the use of *me* in the same way confirms the suggestion.

The usual explanation of this repetition of *vidi*, thus used as a rhyme with itself, is that Dante wished to emphasize the intensity of his vision. This explanation is good as far as it goes. But see what the final words really are:

95 IO VIDI
 97 IO VIDI
 99 IO LO VIDI

Here is Dante's symbol IO VIDI repeated in a most significant passage. Dante is looking into the light of God and sees the image of himself as IO VIDI, exactly as in the passage in which IO VIDI appears in connection with the *forma universal*. Notice as possible hints of IO VIDI as a disguise of Dante, the words: *gente stata sotto larve*, and: *mi si cambiaro*.

The following passage, *Inf.* xxvi. 19–24, consists of two *terzine*:

Allor mi dolsi, ed ora mi ridoglio,	19
Quand' io drizzo la mente a ciò ch' io vidi;	
È più lo ingegno affreno ch' io non soglio,	
Perchè non corra che virtù nol guidi;	22
Sì che se stella buona, o miglior cosa	
M' ha dato il ben, ch' io stesso nol m' invidi.	

Consider, first, on all the lines of this passage the following marginal letters:

19	A
20	QU
21	E
22	PER
23	SI
24	M

Read: PEREMAS QUI

The command, expressed in this acrostic, to “remove here” may refer to the telestic device by which the signature IO VIDI appears:

19	(ridogl)	IO
20		VIDI
21	(sogl)	IO
22	(g)	UIDI
23		COSA
24	(in)	VIDI

Thus IO VIDI is repeated twice, VIDI thrice. The sense of the passage is amusing in connection with the signatures; Dante is curbing his genius (*ingegno*) so that he may not have reason to grudge himself the good. *Ingegno* is a suggestive word here, meaning “artifice” and “wit,” as we find it in the phrase *ingegno sottile*, *Purg.* xii. 66 (see p. 14).

The repetition of the *vidi* rhyme should be compared with *Par.* xxx. 95–97–99. There we have the same word in the same

sense, whereas here we have a "perfect" rhyme, the letters the same, since *u* equals *v*, but the sense different.

Confirming *IO VIDI* as a cryptic designation of Dante is an acrostic on the passage in which the words *Io vidi* are used for the first time in the *Divina Commedia, Inf. i. 64*:

Quand'io vidi costui nel gran deserto.

The four *terzine*, *Inf. i. 55-66*, ending with the *terzina* in which this first use of the words *Io vidi* appears, are:

E quale è quei che volentieri acquista,	55
E giugne il tempo che perder lo face,	
Che in tutt' i suoi pensier piange e s' attrista:	
Tal mi fece la bestia senza pace,	58
Che, venendomi contra, a poco a poco	
Mi ripingeva là, dove il Sol tace.	
Mentre ch' io rovinava in basso loco,	61
Dinanzi agli occhi mi si fu offerto	
Chi per lungo silenzio pareo fioco.	
Quand' io vidi costui nel gran deserto,	64
'Miserere di me' gridai a lui,	
'Qual che tu sii, od ombra od uomo certo.'	

Consider on the first lines of these *terzine* the following marginal letters:

55	E
58	TA
61	ME
64	QUAND IO VIDI

Read: "IO VIDI" QUA ME, DANTE

The second time that the words *Io vidi* appear in the *Divina Commedia* is in *Inf. ii. 8*:

O mente, che scrivesti ciò ch' io vidi.

The cryptograms in the passage in which the *IO VIDI* thus appears confirm again the words as a designation for Dante. The first four *terzine* of the canto read as follows:

Lo giorno se n' andava, e l' aer bruno
Toglieva gli animai che sono in terra,
Dalle fatiche loro; ed io sol uno

M' apparecchiava a sostener la guerra	4
Sì del cammino e sì della pietate,	
Che ritrarrà la mente, che non erra.	
O Muse, o alto ingegno, or m' aiutate:	7
O mente, che scrivesti ciò ch' io vidi,	
Qui si parrà la tua nobilitate.	
Io cominciai: 'Poeta che mi guidi,	10
Guarda la mia virtù, s' ella è possente,	
Prima che all' alto passo tu mi fidi.	

On the first lines of these *terzine*, as we have already noted, are the following marginal letters:

I	LO
4	M
7	O
10	IO

Read: L'OMO IO

Dante is here associated, in his descent into Hell, as I suggested in Chapter II, with the dying day.

Note now on the three lines of the third *terzina*, within which the IO VIDI appears, the following marginal letters:

7	O M
8	O
9	QUI

Read: OMO QUI

This acrostic repeats in effect the acrostic on the ten-line frame, and says that the "Man" is here in the very *terzina* which contains IO VIDI.

In addition to the acrostics in this passage there is a telestic which even more precisely identifies IO VIDI with Dante. This telestic appears on lines 3-8. Notice, in connection with these lines, that the first contains the words *Ed io*, which, as I shall show later, are another cryptographic guise of Dante, and that the last line contains the IO VIDI. The telestic on these lines appears in the following telestic letters:

3 NO
 4 RA
 5 E
 6 A
 7 TE
 8 DI

Read: IO ERA DANTE

This telestic: IO ERA DANTE, reading as it does with the *di* of *io vidi*, associates IO VIDI with Dante.

The third time that the words *Io vidi* appear in the *Divina Commedia*, and the first time that they appear at the beginning of a line, is in *Inf.* iv. 121:

Io vidi Elettra con molti compagni.

This line falls within the five *terzine*, *Inf.* iv. 118–132:

Colà diritto sopra il verde smalto	118
Mi fur mostrati gli spiriti magni, Che del vederli in me stesso n' esalto.	
Io vidi Elettra con molti compagni,	121
Tra' quai conobbi Ettore ed Enea, Cesare armato con gli occhi grifagni.	
Vidi Cammilla e la Pentesilea,	124
Dall' altra parte vidi il re Latino Che con Lavinia sua figlia sedea.	
Vidi quel Bruto che cacciò Tarquino,	127
Lucrezia, Julia, Marzia e Corniglia, E solo in parte vidi il Saladino.	
Poi che innalzai un poco più le ciglia,	130
Vidi il Maestro di color che sanno Seder tra filosofica famiglia.	

Notice first that the *Io vidi* at the beginning of the *terzina* 121–123 is followed by a *Vidi* at the beginning of each of the next two *terzine*. Such a symmetrical repetition of a word is often used by Dante as a hint of the presence of a cryptogram. Consider now the following marginal letters of the first lines of the five *terzine*:

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118 CO
 121 I
 124 V
 127 V
 130 POI

Read: COPIO V, V, I.

v, v, and i correspond, in Roman notation, to 5, 5, and 1, so that they yield the integers of the cryptic number 515. In saying thus in this acrostic in connection with the words *Io vidi* that "I copy 515," Dante may be understood to indicate the association of himself with the cryptic number and the "universal form," IO VIDI.

That Dante is indeed making a cryptographic reference to himself appears not only from the cryptographic use which he makes of the proper names (see p. 445), but also from the acrostic on the first lines of the remaining *terzine* of the canto.

The *terzine* immediately following the *terzine* on which we find the acrostic: COPIO V, V, I, read as follows:

Tutti lo miran, tutti onor gli fanno.	133
Quivi vid' io Socrate e Platone, Che innanzi agli altri più presso gli stanno.	
Democrito, che il mondo a caso pone,	136
Diogenes, Anassagora e Tale, Empedocles, Eraclito e Zenone:	
E vidi il buono accoglitore del quale,	139
Dioscoride dico: e vidi Orfeo, Tullio e Lino e Seneca morale:	
Euclide geometra e Tolommeo,	142
Ippocrate, Avicenna e Galieno, Averrois, che il gran commento feo.	
Io non posso ritrar di tutti appieno;	145
Perocchè sì mi caccia il lungo tema, Che molte volte al fatto il dir vien meno.	
La sesta compagnia in due si scema:	148
Per altra via mi mena il savio duca, Fuor della queta nell' aura che trema;	
E vengo in parte ove non è che luca.	151

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these *terzine*:

133 T
 136 D
 139 E
 142 E
 145 IO N
 148 LA S
 151 E

Read: DANTE E ELIOS

The last word of the canto is *luca*, and the region described in the passage on which the acrostic appears is one

Ch' emisperio di tenebre vincia.
 —*Inf.* IV. 69

Dante is here again associated with the sun as his symbol. For another acrostic ELIOS see page 349. For the cryptograms in connection with the last instance of the use of *Io vidi*, *Par.* xxxiii. 122, see pages 106-8.

IO VIDI is frequently used in the *Divina Commedia* as a cryptogram for DANTE to indicate the presence of other cryptographic devices in the text. The appearance of IO VIDI at the beginning of a line, or in the interior of a line, is often the hint that the text is speaking in a hidden way of Dante himself.

ED IO

The next cryptographic guise of DANTE to which I wish to call attention is the words ED IO. By the system already shown of alphabetical and numerical equivalents, these words may be transmuted into either the "universal form," IO VIDI, or DANTE. In other words, ED IO, as a symbol, has the value of the cryptic number, five hundred, ten, and five. This numerical value appears as follows:

E, as the fifth letter	=	5
D, in Roman notation	=	500
IO, in Arabic notation	=	10

The use of ED IO at the beginning of a *terzina*, like the similar use of IO VIDI, is frequent in the *Divina Commedia*. This use is not accidental to the literal meaning of the poem; it is often meant to have a cryptic reference to Dante himself and to indicate the presence of other cryptograms in the text. And indeed, quite apart from the numerical value of ED IO as a 515, the words suggest the name of Dante in the following obvious way: IO, D . . . E, or "I, Dante," the name DANTE being suggested by the common convention of indicating a proper name by its first and last letters.

Dante's use of the words ED IO as a cryptogram for DANTE is further determined, I believe, by the fact that the same letters in the same order may be read: E DIO. In view of the identification, so fundamental in the *Divina Commedia*, which Dante makes of himself with God, he may surely be suspected of having wished to suggest the punning ED IO, E DIO. In other words, he expresses by this cryptographic device the symbolism of the poem that Dante, by virtue of his divine nature, is God.

Let me now cite several instances of the use of ED IO as a cryptographic device for DANTE.

The four *terzine*, *Purg.* xiv. 16-27, are:

Ed io: 'Per mezza Toscana si spazia	16
Un fiumicel che nasce in Falterona,	
E cento miglia di corso nol sazia.	
Di sopr' esso rech' io questa persona:	19
Dirvi ch' io sia, saria parlare indarno;	
Chè il nome mio ancor molto non suona.'	
'Se ben lo intendimento tuo accarno	22
Con lo intelletto,' allora mi rispose	
Quei che diceva pria, 'tu parli d' Arno.'	
E l' altro disse a lui: 'Perchè nascose	25
Questi il vocabol di quella riviera,	
Pur com' uom fa dell' orribili cose?'	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

16 ED IO
 19 DI S
 22 S
 25 E

Read: "ED IO," DISSE

"He said: ED IO," is the answer to the question in the text. The passage is a play on the idea of name, identification, and concealment. Dante is answering the question *who he is*; he says it were vain for him to tell who he is, for as yet his name does not make much noise. He does not even name the Arno, but defines its position and leaves it to his questioner to penetrate his meaning. In the literal meaning of the text, therefore, he avoids giving his name. But the question thus left unanswered is answered in the acrostic: "ED IO," DISSE.

In *Par.* xxxiii. 28-39, Bernardo is praying that a way may be found for Dante to see God. The four *terzine* are:

Ed io, che mai per mio veder non arsi	28
Più ch' io fo per lo suo, tutti i miei preghi	
Ti porgo, e prego che non sieno scarsi,	
Perchè tu ogni nube gli dislegghi	31
Di sua mortalità coi preghi tuoi,	
Sì che il sommo piacer gli si dispieghi.	
Ancor ti prego, Regina, che puoi	34
Ciò che tu vuoi, che conservi sani,	
Dopo tanto veder, gli affetti suoi.	
Vinca tua guardia i movimenti umani:	37
Vedi Beatrice con quanti Beati	
Per li miei preghi ti chiudon le mani.'	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

28 ED IO
 31 PER
 34 A
 37 VI

Read: VIA PER "ED IO"

The words of the acrostic are in effect a repetition of the prayer of Bernardo for a "way for Dante."

The following passage, *Inf.* xv. 22–33, consists of four terzine:

Così adocchiato da cotal famiglia,	22
Fui conosciuto da un, che mi prese	
Per lo lembo e gridò: 'Qual meraviglia?'	
Ed io, quando il suo braccio a me distese,	25
Ficcai gli occhi per lo cotto aspetto	
Sì che il viso abbruciato non difese	
La conoscenza sua al mio intelletto;	28
E chinando la mia alla sua faccia,	
Risposi: 'Siete voi qui, ser Brunetto?'	
E quegli: 'O figliuol mio, non ti dispiaccia	31
Se Brunetto Latini un poco teco	
Ritorna indietro, e lascia andar la traccia.'	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these terzine:

22	C
25	ED IO
28	LA
31	E

Read: CELA ED IO

The following passage consists of the first four terzine of *Purg.* xviii:

Posto avea fine al suo ragionamento	
L' alto Dottore, ed attento guardava	
Nella mia vista s' io pareo contento:	
Ed io, cui nuova sete ancor frugava,	4
Di fuor taceva, e dentro dicea: 'Forse	
Lo troppo domandar, ch' io fo, gli grava.'	
Ma quel padre verace, che s' accorse	7
Del timido voler che non s' apriva,	
Parlando, di parlare ardir mi porse.	
Ond' io: 'Maestro, il mio veder s' avviva	10
Sì nel tuo lume, ch' io discerno chiaro	
Quanto la tua ragion porti o descriva:	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four terzine:

1 P
4 ED IO
7 MA
10 O

Read: POEMA, signed with the device of Dante, ED IO.

The signature thus attached to the poem is confirmed by the acrostic reading of the first four lines of this passage. Consider the following marginal letters of these four lines:

1 POSTO
2 L'A
3 NELL
4 ED IO

Read downwards: POSTO L'ANELL: "ED IO." This may mean that ED IO, as Dante's signature, is the "seal set."

The following passage, *Purg.* xxvi. 103-114, consists of four terzine:

Poichè di riguardar pasciuto fui,	103
Tutto m' offeri pronto al suo servizio, Con l' affermar che fa credere altrui.	
Ed egli a me: 'Tu lasci tal vestigio,	106
Per quel ch' i' odo, in me e tanto chiaro, Che Lete nol può tor, nè farlo bigio.	
Ma se le tue parole or ver giuraro,	109
Dimmi che è cagion per che dimostri Nel dire e nel guardare avermi caro?'	
Ed io a lui: 'Li dolci detti vostri	112
Che, quanto durerà l' uso moderno, Faranno cari ancora i loro inchiostri.'	

Consider on the first lines of these four terzine the following marginal letters:

103 PO
106 E
109 MA
112 ED IO

Read: POEMA. ED IO

The POEMA is signed by the cryptic signature.

The following passage, *Purg.* xxiv., 49–54, consists of two terzine:

Ma di' s' io veggio qui colui che fuore 49
 Trasse le nuove rime, cominciando:
Donne, ch' avete intelletto d' Amore.
 Ed io a lui: 'Io mi son un che, quando 52
 Amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo
 Che ditta dentro, vo significando.'

Line 51 is a quotation from one of Dante's canzoni. On all the lines of the two terzine consider the following marginal letters:

49 MA
 50 TR
 51 DO
 52 ED I
 53 A
 54 C

Read: MARCO DI DANTE

The MARCO DI DANTE seems to be the line quoted from his canzone, which is followed immediately by his signature: ED IO.

The following passage, *Inf.* xi, 61–72, consists of four terzine:

Per l' altro modo quell' amor s' obblia 61
 Che fa natura, e quel ch' è poi aggiunto,
 Di che la fede spezial si cria:
 Onde nel cerchio minore, ov' è il punto 64
 Dell' universo, in su che Dite siede,
 Qualunque trade in eterno è consunto.'
 Ed io: 'Maestro, assai chiaro procede 67
 La tua ragione, ed assai ben distingue
 Questo baratro e il popol che il possiede.
 Ma dimmi: Quei della palude pingue, 70
 Che mena il vento, e che batte la pioggia,
 E che s' incontran con sì aspre lingue,

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these terzine:

61 P
64 O
67 E
70 MA

Read: POEMA

POEMA is signed, line 67, by the acrostic words: ED IO.

The first time that the words *Ed io* appear in the *Divina Commedia* is in *Inf.* i. 130:

Ed io a lui: Poeta, io ti richieggio.

This line lies within the last four terzine of the canto:

In tutte parti impera, e quivi regge, Quivi è la sua città e l' alto seggio: O felice colui cui ivi elegge!	127
Ed io a lui: 'Poeta, io ti richieggio Per quello Dio che tu non conoscesti, Acciocch' io fugga questo male e peggio Che tu mi meni là dov' or dicesti, Si ch' io vegga la porta di san Pietro, E color cui tu fai cotanto mesti.'	130
Allor si mosse, ed io li tenni retro.	133
	136

On the first lines of these four terzine we have already seen, pages 40-1, the acrostic: E INDICA. In showing this acrostic I said that I was obliged to defer showing the full cryptographic content of the passage to a later chapter. Let us consider now, therefore, the following marginal letters of the lines immediately before and after the *Ed io*:

127	I
128	QU
129	O
130	ED IO
131	P
132	A
133	C

Read: CAPO QUI: ED IO

This acrostic CAPO recalls the CAPO in the acrostic that

appears in the passage that contains the words *La forma universal, Par. xxxiii. 91*, in connection with the words *io vidi*.

Now consider the following marginal letters on all the lines:

127	IN T
128	QU
129	O
130	ED
131	PE
132	A
133	C
134	S
135	E C
136	A

Read: CAPO ESCE QUI. DANTE

DA, as the initials of Dante Aldighiero, DI, as the spelled form of the initial D of Dante, and ED, as an abbreviation of ED IO, seem to be frequently used as symbols of Dante's name. This use of ED is determined in part, I think, by the fact that *ed* is a copulative conjunction. It expresses thus, as a copulative, the phallic symbolism of Dante himself in the theme of rebirth as developed in the *Divina Commedia*.

The following passage, *Inf. xxv. 28-36*, consists of three terzine:

Non va co' suoi fratei per un cammino,	28
Per lo furar che frodolente fece	
Del grande armento ch' egli ebbe a vicino:	
Onde cessar le sue opere biece	31
Sotto la mazza d' Ercole, che forse	
Gliene diè cento, e non sentì le diece.'	
Mentre che sì parlava, ed ei trascorse,	34
E tre spiriti venner sotto noi,	
De' quai nè io nè il Duca mio s' accorse,	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the three terzine:

28	N
31	O
34	ME

Read: NOME

The initials of the last two lines of the passage are:

35 E
36 D

Read: ED

So that the complete reading on the passage is: NOME ED.

Following are the last ten lines of *Par.* iii:

Così parlo mmi, e poi cominciò: <i>Ave,</i>	121
<i>Maria</i> , cantando; e cantando vanio,	
Come per acqua cupa cosa grave.	
La vista mia, che tanto la seguio	124
Quanto possibil fu, poi che la perse,	
Volsesi al segno di maggior disio,	
Ed a Beatrice tutta si converse;	127
Ma quella folgorò nello mio sguardo	
Sì che da prima il viso non sofferse;	
E ciò mi fece a domandar più tardo.	130

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line of the canto and of the first lines of the three preceding *terzine*:

121	C
124	LA
127	ED
130	E

Read: CELA ED

The following passage, *Par.* vii. 76–87, consists of four *terzine*:

Di tutte queste cose s' avvantaggia	76
L' umana creatura, e s' una manca,	
Di sua nobiltà convien che caggia.	
Solo il peccato è quel che la disfranca,	79
E falla dissimile al Sommo Bene,	
Perchè del lume suo poco s' imbianca;	
Ed in sua dignità mai non riviene,	82
Se non riempie dove colpa vota,	
Contra mal dilettrar con giuste pene.	
Vostra natura, quando peccò <i>tota</i>	85
Nel seme suo, da queste dignitadi,	
Come da Paradiso, fu remota;	

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Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the four *terzine*:

76 D
79 SOL
82 E
85 VO

Read: SOLVO ED

The following passage, *Par.* xxvi. 13-24, consists of four *terzine*:

Io dissi: 'Al suo piacere e tosto e tardo	13
Vegna rimedio agli occhi che fur porte,	
Quand' ella entrò col foco ond' io sempr' ardo.	
Lo ben che fa contenta questa corte,	16
Alfa ed O è di quanta scrittura	
Mi legge amore, o lievemente o forte.'	
Quella medesima voce, che paura	19
Tolta m' avea del subito abbarbaglio,	
Di ragionare ancor mi mise in cura;	
E disse: 'Certo a più angusto vaglio	22
Ti conviene schiarar; dicer convienti	
Chi drizzò l' arco tuo a tal bersaglio.'	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the *terzine*:

13 I
16 LO
19 QU
22 ED

Read: LOQUI ED

There is a hint in the words *scrittura mi legge*, 17-18. For the reading of *Alfa ed O*, see page 444.

The following passage, *Inf.* xxxiv. 118-129, consists of four *terzine*:

Qui è da man quando di là è sera:	118
E questi che ne fe' scala col pelo,	
Fitto è ancora, sì come prim' era.	

Da questa parte cadde giù dal cielo: 121
 E la terra che pria di qua si sporse
 Per paura di lui fe' del mar velo,
 E venne all' emisferio nostro; e forse 124
 Per fuggir lui lasciò qui il loco voto
 Quella che appar di qua, e su ricorse.'
 Loco è laggiù da Belzebù remoto 127
 Tanto, quanto la tomba si distende,
 Che non per vista, ma per suono è noto

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the four terzine:

118 QUI
 121 D
 124 E
 127 LO

Read: LOQUI ED

Note the suggestive *velo* in line 123.

DIL

I mentioned in Chapter I the curious way in which the letters D, I, and L appear in *Par.* xviii, apart from their context, as the first letters in the sentence: *Diligite iustitiam qui iudicatis terram.* These letters, DIL, form another of the cryptographic guises of Dante.

D, in Roman notation = 500
 I, in Roman notation = 1
 L, in Roman notation = 50

If we disregard the zeroes, these numbers give the integers 5, 1, and 5, the integers of the cryptic DXV, and may accordingly be transmuted into the name of DANTE.

This interpretation of DIL as a cryptographic device for DANTE is confirmed by other cryptographic devices to be found in the same passage. The passage in which Dante speaks of seeing the cryptic letters begins, line 70, with the significant IO VIDI, and continues for four terzine, as follows:

Io vidi in quella giovia facella	70
Lo sfavillar dell' amor che li era, Segnare agli occhi miei nostra favella.	
E come augelli surti di riviera,	73
Quasi congratulando a lor pasture, Fanno di sè or tonda or altra schiera,	
Si dentro ai lumi sante creature	76
Volitando cantavano, e faciensi Or D, or I, or L, in sue figure.	
Prima cantando a sua nota moviensi;	79
Poi, diventando l' un di questi segni, Un poco s' arrestavano e taciensi.	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these four terzine:

70	IO VIDI
73	E COM
76	SI
79	PR

Read: COMPRESI "IO VIDI"

Thus in connection with the cryptic letters D, I, and L, mentioned in the text, Dante says in the acrostic: "I understood IO VIDI." In other words, he says in the acrostic that he understood IO VIDI, that is, DANTE, when he saw DIL.

The four terzine that follow the passage just quoted contain further cryptographic proof that DIL is a guise of DANTE. These four terzine, *Par.* xviii. 82-93, which include an invocation to Pegasus, read as follows:

O diva Pegasea, che gl' ingegni	82
Fai gloriosi, e rendili longevi, Ed essi teco le cittadi e i regni,	
Illustrami di te, sì ch' io rilevi	85
Le lor figure com' io l' ho concette; Paia tua possa in questi versi brevi.	
Mostrarsi dunque in cinque volte sette	88
Vocali e consonanti; ed io notai Le parti sì come mi parver dette.	
<i>Diligite iustitiam, primai</i>	91
Fur verbo e nome di tutto il dipinto; <i>Qui iudicatis terram, fur sezzai.</i>	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these four *terzine*:

82	O
85	I
88	MOSTR
91	D

Read: DIMOSTRO

Notice that the first line of the passage on which this acrostic is found begins with the letters: O DIV. These letters are in themselves the "universal form": IO V-D. Notice also the word *ingegni*, a word which Dante frequently uses in connection with cryptographic devices.

The acrostic DIMOSTRO may refer to what Dante says, line 88, of the whole sentence of which DIL is the beginning. This sentence, he tells us, is composed of vowels and consonants "five times seven." Now what can be the reason for his thus indicating the exact number of the letters?

I suggest that the reason is simply that the number offers another means of identifying himself with what he describes himself as seeing. "Five times seven" is thirty-five, the age, as is well known, which Dante ascribes to himself at the time of his "vision." His vision came to him, as he tells us in *Inf. i, nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*. In the *Convivio* he elaborates the psalmist's idea of the length of the life of man as seventy years, the *mezzo* of which is thirty-five. This age, moreover, is really an approximation to the age of Christ, according to medieval computations, at the time of his crucifixion. Thus Christ and Dante may be considered to have descended into Hell at the same age, a coincidence which I believe Dante intended as a further indication of his identity with Christ. At any rate, the "thirty-five" of the letters in the sentence beginning with DIL further identifies the DIL as a guise of Dante.

The cryptic play on the letters of this sentence of thirty-five letters is continued in what Dante says about the letter M with which the sentence ends. This M is metamorphosed, first, into a fleur-de-lys and then into an eagle which utters

some of the most cryptic sentences of the whole *Divina Commedia*. I shall have to postpone to the chapter on the Symbolic Guises of Dante the explanation of the meaning of this M and of the eagle into which it changes.

Another proof that DIL is indeed a cryptographic guise of Dante is contained in the passage itself in which the cryptic letters are mentioned. This proof consists of various interior sequences spelling the name of Dante. Consider the following:

71 lo sfavillar dell'amor che li erA
 72 segnare agli occhi miei noSTra favella
 73 e come augelli surti Di riviera
 74 quasi congratulaNdo a lor pasture
 75 fanno di sE or tonda or altra schiera

Read A of *era*, 71; T of *nostra*, 72; D of *di*, 73; second N of *congratulando*, 74; E of *se*, 75: DANTE.

This sequence is not quite regular by count, but it is straight to the eye, and it is confirmed by the sense of the words on which it ends, *fanno di sè*. The lights of the spirits "make of themselves," according to the text, DIL; they likewise make DANTE.

The next six lines are:

76 si dentro ai lumi sanTE creature
 77 volitando cANTavano e faciensì
 78 or D or i or l in sue figure
 79 prima cAntando a sua nota moviensì
 80 poi diventaNdo l'un di questi segni
 81 un poco s'arrestavano e taciensì

Read TE of *sante*, 76; first AN of *cantavano*, 77; D, 78: DANTE.

Read the same D, 78; first A of *cantando*, 79; second N of *diventando*, 80; T of *arrestavano*, 81: DANT. This sequence starts on the fourth space of line 78, and the other letters are on the eighth, twelfth and sixteenth spaces of the respective lines.

A few lines below is another sequence:

86 lE lor figure com'io l'ho concette
 87 paia Tua possa in questi versi brevi
 88 mostrarsi Dunque in cinque volte sette
 89 vocali e consoNAnti èd io notai

Read E of *le*, 86; T of *tua*, 87; D of *dunque*, 88; NA of *consonanti*, 89: DANTE.

The four sequences in the passage treating of the cryptic letters confirm the identification of DIL as a guise of Dante and as a variation of the *forma universal*.

The meaning which I have thus established for DIL will prove illuminating in the interpretation of the obscure passage in the opening of *Par. vii*, where Dante refers to Beatrice as BE and ICE. In this passage he uses three times the form *dille*. The repetition, as I shall show, page 350, is intended to convey a reference to the cryptic meaning of DIL as Dante.

VEL

One of the enigmatic passages to which I referred in Chapter I is *Par. xix. 115-141*, which reads as follows:

Lì si vedrà tra l' opere d' Alberto	115
Quella che tosto moverà la penna,	
Per che il regno di Praga fia deserto.	
Lì si vedrà il duol che sopra Senna	118
Induce, falseggiando la moneta,	
Quei che morrà di colpo di cotenna.	
Lì si vedrà la superbia ch' aseta,	121
Che fa lo Scotto e l' Inghilese folle,	
Sì che non può soffrir dentro a sua meta.	
Vedrassi la lussuria e il viver molle	124
Di quel di Spagna, e di quel di Buemme,	
Che mai valor non conobbe, nè volle.	
Vedrassi al Ciotto di Jerusalemme	127
Segnata con un I la sua bontate,	
Quando il contrario segnerà un emme.	
Vedrassi l' avarizia e la viltate	130
Di quel che guarda l' isola del foco,	
Dove Anchise finì la lunga etate;	

Ed a dare ad intender quanto è poco, 133
 La sua scrittura fien lettere mozze,
 Che noteranno molto in parvo loco.
 E parranno a ciascuñ l' opere sozze 136
 Del barba e del fratel, che tanto egregia
 Nazione, e due corone han fatte bozze.
 E quel di Portogallo, e di Norvegia 139
 Lì si conosceranno, e quel di Rascia
 Che mal ha visto il conio di Vinegia.

Of the nine *terzine* of this passage the first three begin with the letter L, the second three with the letter v, and the third three with the letter E. And the same letters are repeated in the ninth *terzina* in a curious way, the first line beginning with E, the second with L, and the third showing a v, not as the initial of the line, but as the initial of the last word of the line. The repeated initials of the *terzine* make, therefore, the following figure:

L
 L
 L
 v
 v
 v
 E
 E
 E

The last *terzina* repeats these letters in the following way:

E
 L
v

This artificial symmetry recalls that of the passage in *Purg.* xii. 25–63, in which the acrostic VOM has long been recognized. I know of no recognition, however, that the initials of the *terzine* of the present passage, rearranged, make an acrostic VEL, or “veil.”

This VEL is another of the cryptographic guises of DANTE. It may be transmuted either into the “universal form” of his

name or into his name itself by the method already described of transmuting the letters involved into numerical equivalents that have for their integers, the zeroes being disregarded, a five, a one, and a five. The transmutation of **VEL** into these integers is made as follows:

v, in Roman notation	=	5
E, as fifth letter of the alphabet	=	5
L, as tenth letter of the alphabet	=	10

L is the tenth letter of the Italian alphabet, as the Italian alphabet has neither j nor κ.

The determinants for adopting **VEL** as one of the cryptographic guises of the name **DANTE** cannot have been merely the possibility of this numerical correspondence. The sense of the word itself is profoundly significant of the character which Dante ascribes to himself in the *Divina Commedia*. As man he is the veil of the divine nature which the human nature covers over. I conjecture, moreover, that Dante was not insensible to the punning value of the word **VEL**, which in Latin means *either* and *or*. In his identification of himself with the divine nature Dante is *either* God *or* man. That Dante had some cryptic idea connected with **VEL** appears, indeed, in the use which he constantly makes of the word in the manifest meaning of the poem. In *Inf.* ix. 62 and 63, he says:

Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
Sotto il velame degli versi strani!

Scattered throughout the poem are many similar references to the veil as a hiding place of something cryptic.

The passage, *Par.* xix. 115-141, in which I have shown the acrostic **VEL**, contains one of the clearest references in the whole *Divina Commedia* to the devices of cryptography. This reference, on which I have already commented, appears in lines 133-135:

Ed a dare ad intender quanto è poco,
La sua scrittura fien lettere mozze,
Che noteranno molto in parvo loco.

The *scrittura*, as I explained in Chapter I, is in "letters cut

off" from the context, exactly as in acrostics and interior sequences, and indeed, in many other methods of cryptography.

That the acrostic **VEL** that is found in this passage is indeed a cryptographic guise of **DANTE**, transmutable from the universal form **IO VIDI**, is proved by the various cryptographic signatures of **DANTE** which the passage contains.

Note first the following marginal letters of lines 130-133:

130	VE
131	DI
132	D
133	E

Read: **VEDI D . . . E**

Notice, moreover, line 133, the sounds that suggest vaguely the name of Dante. This sort of suggestion Dante frequently employs as a means of calling attention to a more precise way by which his name is hidden in the same passage.

In line 132, the line following the acrostic **VEDI** just shown, the name **DANTE** is spelled by the "string" cipher device which we have seen in Chapter III, p. 71. I have capitalized the letters of the signature, thus:

132 Dove **AN**chise fini la lunga e**TatE**

In this passage, as if confirming the cryptographic hint in *lettere mozze*, is also an interior sequence, which may be shown thus:

132	dove anchis E fini la lunga etate
133	ed a dare a D intender quanto e poco
134	la sua scri T tura fien lettere mozze
135	che noteran N o molto in parvo loco
136	e parranno A ciascun l'opere sozze

Read in a vertical line from **E** of *anchise*, 132; **D** of *ad*, 133, first **T** of *scrittura*, 134; third **N** of *noteranno*, 135; **A**, 136: **DANTE**. This reading begins on the line which contains the string cipher and runs through the passage which we have already noticed as a hint of a cryptographic device. Follow-

ing the *N* of this signature, 135, are the letters *o mol*, which spell backward: *L'OMO*, "the man."

But the most surprising signature in the passage containing the acrostic *VEL* is a double signature in the form of a cross. And this double signature is surprising in spite of the fact that it is most precisely indicated by the literal meaning of the text. It will clarify one of the obscure passages of the *Divina Commedia*.

The double signature in the form of a cross to which I refer appears in connection with the *ciotto di Jerusalemme*. This "cripple of Jerusalem" is generally supposed to have been Charles II, king of Naples and titular king of Jerusalem. It is said of him here, lines 127-128, that his goodness shall be signed with an *i*, while an *m* shall sign the contrary. These obscure words are supposed to mean that his virtues shall be signed, or marked, with a one, the *i* being taken for one in the Roman notation; and that a thousand, the *m* being taken for a thousand in the Roman notation, shall sign, or mark, his vices. In other words, Dante is supposed to be saying that this king had one virtue and a thousand vices.

Long before I discovered the cryptographic character of the *Divina Commedia*, I came to the conclusion that it is not Charles II of Naples, but the Christ-like, or Christ-likened, Dante himself who is here indicated. My conclusion is verified by the following interior sequences:

124 vedrassi la lussuria e il viver molle
 125 Di quel di spagna e di quel Di buemme
 126 che mai vAlor non coNobbe ne volle
 127 vedrassi al ciOtTo di jerusalemme
 128 segnaTA con un i la sua boNtate
 129 quando il contrario segnara un emmE

Read *E* of *molle*, 124; *D* of *di*, 125; *N* of *conobbe*, 126; *IO* of *ciotto*, 127; *TA* of *segnata*, 128: *IO DANTE*.

Read *D*, initial of 125; *A* of *valor*, 126; second *T* of *ciotto*, 127; *N* of *bontate*, 128; second *E* of *emme*, 129: *DANTE*.

Since this signature terminates on *emme*, an *M* signs it, just as the *I* in *Io* signs *DANTE* in the other sequence. Thus Dante,

like the *ciotto*, is signed with an I and an M; these letters spell MI. Both signatures run through *ciotto*, the center of the cross which they form.

The letters I and M with which DANTE is thus signed and which spell MI may have a further cryptic meaning, indicating the dual character of Dante as both human and divine. The M is, as we have already seen, the symbol of *man*; and the I, both as the initial of Iesu and also as a *one* and therefore as an A (see p. 443) is the symbol of Christ.

The meaning of the passage now becomes clear. The reference to Charles of Naples may indeed have been intended by Dante in the sense that the commentators say; but if so, only as the veriest screen or, *trompe d'œil*, for his deeper meaning. The real *ciotto* of Jerusalem was Christ, who was crucified there. It is apparent, therefore, that in the present cryptographic device Dante is identifying himself with Christ by putting himself on the cross of Christ.

In connection with the transmutability of VEL into the universal form of DANTE: IO VIDI, by way of the figures 5, I, and 5, the foregoing signatures that appear in the passage that shows the acrostic VEL are sufficient proof, I think, that VEL is a cryptographic guise of DANTE.

CHAPTER VI
SYMBOLIC GUISES

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SYMBOLIC GUISES

THE cryptographic transmutations of Dante as a name are not the only guises in which he hides himself in the *Divina Commedia*; he hides himself also, as I shall show in the present chapter, in various symbolic guises.

PHOENIX

The first of the symbolic guises of Dante to which I wish to call attention is the Phœnix, mentioned in *Inf.* xxiv. This mythical bird was supposed to burn itself, when it reached its five hundredth year, on a pyre of incense, and to rise again from its own ashes in the shape of a small worm, which on the third day thereafter developed into the full grown bird. There was only one Phœnix, and its rebirth was accomplished without intercourse with a mate.

The Phœnix, as an example of rebirth, was widely adopted in the middle ages as a symbol of Christ. The detail of its rebirth as a worm that developed into the full grown bird in three days corresponds, obviously, to the story of the rebirth of Christ, who after the crucifixion descended into Hell and remained there three days before ascending into Heaven.

In the passage in which Dante mentions the Phœnix he compares to its transformations the transformations of a robber who is burned to ashes before his eyes and then returns to his human shape. The passage, which includes seven *terzine*, reads as follows:

[167]

Tra questa cruda e tristissima copia Correan genti nude e spaventate, Senza sperar pertugio o elitropia.	91
Con serpi le man dietro avean legate: Quelle ficcavan per le ren la coda È il capo, ed eran dinanzi aggroppate.	94
Ed ecco ad un, ch' era da nostra proda, S' avventò un serpente, che il trafisse Là dove il collo alle spalle s' annoda.	97
Nè O sì tosto mai, nè I si scrisse, Com' ei s' accese ed arse, e cener tutto Convenne che cascando divenisse:	100
E poi che fu a terra sì distrutto, La polver si raccolse per sè stessa, E in quel medesimo ritornò di butto:	103
Così per li gran savi si confessa, Che la Fenice more e poi rinasce, Quando al cinquecentesimo anno appressa.	106
Erba nè biado in sua vita non pasce, Ma sol d' incenso lagrime ed amomo; E nardo e mirra son l' ultime fasce.	109

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these seven terzine:

91	T
94	C
97	ED ECCO AD
100	N
103	E
106	CO
109	E

READ: ECCO ED! ECCO DANTE!

The ED of this acrostic is, as we have already seen, a cryptographic device for DANTE. So that the whole acrostic reads in effect: "Lo, Dante! Lo, Dante!" The fact that Dante is thus named twice is appropriate to the rebirth symbolism of the passage. His name appears in two forms as the robber appears in two forms, and as the Phœnix appears in two forms. The two forms of the name, ED and DANTE, suggest the appearances of Dante before and after the symbolized rebirth.

This acrostic is not the only cryptographic device in the passage which identifies the Phœnix with Dante. Line 100 reads:

Nè O si tosto mai, nè I si scrisse.

The mention of the letters o and i in this line is generally considered as merely the means of comparing the speed of the described transformations with the speed with which these particular letters may be written. But Dante is not here dealing with the merely obvious; he is using the letters of the comparison to spell, backwards, IO or "I", thus again indicating that he is speaking of himself in speaking of the robber and the Phœnix. The use of the o and the i in this passage to spell IO is analogous to the use, in the passage describing the *ciotto*, of I and M to spell MI (see pp. 163-4).

This cryptographic use of the letters o and i appears on line 100, and 100 in its first two digits, gives the same reading: IO.

The number ten, which thus appears twice in the same line, was considered in the number symbolism of the Middle Ages, I believe, as appropriate to Christ, both because ten, in its form in the Roman notation, is a cross, and also because it is the number which follows nine, nine being, as three times three, the symbol of the operation of Trinity upon itself. The ten then, as the number following the nine of the operation of Trinity upon itself, was taken as the symbol of the humanly incarnated son of the Trinity, who proceeded from this operation, as in rebirth. For the development in the *Vita Nuova* of this idea of the Trinity as multiplied by itself, see pages 341-3.

There is another cryptographic use of the letters o and i as a *ten*. In line 108 the age at about which the Phœnix is reborn is designated as *five hundred*. There thus appear here in connection with the Phœnix the five hundred and the ten of the cryptic number of the DXV, a five hundred, a ten, and a five. In the light of this coincidence it is not surprising to find that there is also a *five* concealed in the present passage dealing with the robber and the Phœnix.

It is said, line 94, of the shades whom Dante is viewing that

Con serpi le man dietro avean legate.

The robber who is here described as undergoing the remarkable transformation from human shape to ashes and from ashes to human shape has, therefore, like his companions, his hands tied behind his back. With his hands thus tied, his arms, perforce, make the shape of a v, or five. There thus appears in this passage the complete cryptic number, a five hundred, a ten, and a five. This number identifies the Phœnix with the prophesied DVX, and so together with the acrostic: ECCO ED! ECCO DANTE!, with Dante himself.

There are several hints in the passage of a cryptographic character. The initials of the final *terzina* are:

IOG	E
IIO	M
III	E

Read: E ME

The word *man*, line 94, may be used with a double sense of "hand", or signature. The word *copia*, line 91, for "crowd" suggests the sense of a "copy," a copy, perhaps, of the cryptic number of the DVX and of DANTE.

The fact that the person described in this passage as being transformed like a Phœnix is a robber is significant of the deeper symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*. In Greek myth Prometheus is a thief of the divine fire. And in the Christian story Christ is crucified between thieves, a companionship intended to indicate that he shares, in a Promethean way, the character of his guilty companions. The *theft* implied in numerous myths of rebirth is the theft of the power to give new life to oneself—the power, that is, of the father who gives life to the son in the first place. This theft, or usurpation, is an expression of the act of incest which appears, disguised or undisguised, in all symbols of rebirth. The Phœnix is associated with the thief, as Christ, on the cross, is associated with the thieves. Dante is here symbol-

izing his own rebirth in the terms in which the rebirth of Christ is symbolized. He is here once more identifying himself with Christ.

Dante associates himself with the Phoenix in his letter to the Italian cardinals,* when he says: "But, O Fathers, believe me not the phoenix of the universe, for all murmur, or ponder, or dream the things that I say aloud."

VELTRO

The next of the symbolic guises of Dante to be considered is the *Veltro*, the enigmatic creature prophesied by Virgil in the first canto of *Inferno*. He may well be called, to use the words of Francis Thompson, "the Hound of Heaven."

It has been often surmised, and often denied, that the *Veltro* represents the same person as the DXV, and that this person is Can Grande. I will show that the *Veltro*, like the DXV, represents Dante *reborn*, and reborn like Christ.

The passage in which the *Veltro* is described begins, significantly, on the hundredth line of *Inf. i*. The five terzine beginning with the hundredth line are:

Molti son gli animali a cui s' ammoglia, E più saranno ancora, infin che il veltro Verrà, che la farà morir con doglia.	100
Questi non ciberà terra nè peltro, Ma sapienza e amore e virtute, E sua nazione sarà tra Feltro e Feltro.	103
Di quell' umile Italia fia salute, Per cui morì la vergine Cammilla, Eurialo, e Turno, e Niso di ferute:	106
Questi la cacerà per ogni villa, Fin che l' avrà rimessa nello inferno, Là onde invidia prima dipartilla.	109
Ond' io per lo tuo me' penso e discerno, Che tu mi segui, ed io sarò tua guida, E trarrotti di qui per loco eterno,	112

*Letter ix, 8, Latham's translation.

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For the cryptographic proof that the *Veltro* symbolizes Dante, consider the following marginal letters on all the lines of these five terzine:

100 MOLT
 101 E P
 102 VER
 103 QUESTI NO
 104 MA SA
 105 E
 106 DI
 107 PER C
 108 E
 109 QU
 110 FI
 111 LA O
 112 ON
 113 C
 114 E TRA

Read: PEREMAS QUI POEMA. ECCO DANTE, QUASI VELTRO IN FELTRO

The foregoing acrostic is a good example of the long anagrammatic acrostics which I will show and discuss in detail in Chapter IX. As the discussion in Chapter IX will make clear, this long anagrammatic acrostic is identical in structure with the short anagrammatic acrostics of which we have already seen a number of examples; it differs from the short anagrammatic acrostics simply in appearing in a greater number of lines and containing in itself a greater number of words. Let me indicate how strictly the reading which I have deciphered is determined by the text. Notice first how clearly the VELTRO appears in the first three lines:

100 MOLT
 101 E
 102 VER

Read: ME, VELTRO

The initials of the three lines of this *terzina*, by yielding the cryptic 515, confirm the VELTRO as Dante; the M equaling 1,000; the E, as the fifth letter, 5; and the V, 5. Notice

now how clearly the FELTRO appears on the last lines of the passage:

110	F
111	L
112	O
113	C
114	E TR

Read, with the c unaccounted for: FELTRO.

Equally apparent is the PEREMAS:

104	MA S
105	E
106	D
107	PER

Read, with the D unaccounted for: PEREMAS.

Thus in the acrostic reading: PEREMAS QUI POEMA. ECCO DANTE, QUASI VELTRO IN FELTRO, three important words are very clearly suggested in the acrostic letters; and the POEMA is suggested by the letter cluster:

100	MO
101	E P

Read: POEM

The DANTE is determined by the initial D of line 106 and by the fact that it is *possible* to find the remaining letters either in initials or as contiguous to the letters already accounted for. ECCO is determined as to one letter by the initial c of line 113. The beginning of the passage as a cryptographic unit is indicated by the acrostic CAVE on the passage immediately preceding, *Inf.* i. 88-99 (see p. 186).

The appearance of the words VELTRO and FELTRO in an acrostic in a passage which contains the same words in the text is confirmation of the intentional character of the acrostic. The reading: PEREMAS QUI POEMA, as will appear in Chapter IX, is frequently repeated in the long acrostics which I have deciphered in the *Divina Commedia*. This reading instructs the reader to remove the poem—that is,

the words of the text in their obvious aspect—as if it were a veil that hid the secret symbolism.

Confirming the *Veltro* as a symbol of Dante, there appears in *terzina* 106–108 a cryptographic signature on the words properly capitalized, namely, the word at the beginning of the sentence and the proper names. With these capitals the *terzina* appears thus:

Di quell' umile Italia fia salute,
per cui morì la vergine Cammilla,
Eurialo, e Turno, e Niso di ferute.

Consider on the capitalized words the following initial and contiguous letters:

DI	D
ITALIA	ITA
CAMMILLA	CA
EURIALO	E
TURNO	T
NISO	N

Read: CITA DANTE

By means of the capitalized words, therefore, the *terzina* cites, or names, Dante.

Now the *Veltro*, like the *DXV*, is to be understood to symbolize Dante as reborn and therefore as divine. The divine character of the *Veltro* is indicated by the words, lines 103–104:

Questi non ciberà terra nè peltro,
Ma sapienza e amore e virtute.

Sapienza e amore e virtute represent the divine Trinity, or God, as appears in the opening lines of *Inf.* iii, where the Trinity is referred to as *potestate, sapienza, and amore*. The *Veltro*, or Christ-like Dante, derives, therefore, his being from God, from the Trinity from which the divine man Christ derived *his* being. The divine character of the *Veltro* is further indicated by the fact that the passage describing him suggests, as it suggested to Benvenuto da

Imola, a passage in Virgil's fourth Eclogue, where Virgil prophesies the coming of a son. This passage, which is actually paraphrased by Dante, *Purg.* xxii. 70-72, seems to ascribe divinity to the prophesied son, and it was commonly interpreted in the Middle Ages as a prophecy of Christ. The imitation of the passage by Dante hints that he is carrying over with Virgil's form something of the accepted interpretation of Virgil's meaning.*

With the divine character of the *Veltro* thus indicated as *a son to come* in the form of the reborn Dante, the reason, as I believe, becomes clear for Dante's choice of the word *Veltro* to indicate the divine *guise* of himself. Notice, in the first place, that the word VELTRO begins with the form VEL, which we have already identified with Dante. This may be taken as a hint that the entire word is an anagram for the following: T: VELOR! VELOR is the Latin for "I am veiled." The T may be understood, as so often elsewhere in the cryptography of the *Divina Commedia*, as the sign of the cross and therefore as the sign of the divine man Christ. The anagrammatic T: VELOR may mean, therefore: "Christ: I am veiled."

Thus understood as an anagram for T: VELOR, *Veltro* indicates that Dante, as a divine nature, is veiled in Christ. This interpretation of VELTRO as an anagram for T: VELOR! seems to be confirmed by the following interior sequence:

101 e piu saranno ancora infin che il velTro
 102 verra che la fara morir con Doglia
 103 questi non cibera Terra ne peltro
 104 ma sapienZa e amore e virtute
 105 E sua nazione sara tra feltro e feltro

Read T of *veltro*, 101; D of *doglia*, 102; A of *cibera* and the adjacent T of *terra*, 103; N of *sapienza*, 104; E, initial of 105: T: DANTE.

May not this reading indicate the identity of the cross, or Christ, and Dante? May not Dante be considered here,

*See Edmund Gardner, *Dante's Ten Heavens*, appendix.

therefore, as in the T: VELOR, as veiled in the divine character of Christ?

A further confirmation for my interpretation of VELTRO as an anagram for T: VELOR may be found in an acrostic on the first lines of the first four *terzine* of *Inf.* iv. The passage reads:

Ruppemi l' alto sonno nella testa	
Un greve tuono, sì ch' io mi riscossi,	
Come persona che per forza è desta:	
E l' occhio riposato intorno mossi,	4
Dritto levato, e fiso riguardai	
Per conoscer lo loco dov' io fossi.	
Vero è che in su la proda mi trovai	7
Della valle d' abisso dolorosa,	
Che tuono accoglie d' infiniti guai.	
Oscura, profond' era e nebulosa,	10
Tanto che, per ficcar lo viso al fondo,	
Io non vi discerneva alcuna cosa.	

Consider on the first lines of the *terzine* the following marginal letters:

1	R
4	E
7	V
10	O

Read: VERO

This VERO is a *potence*, repeating as it does the VERO, line 7, of the text. But the VERO is only a partial reading. Note on the same lines the following marginal letters:

1	R
4	EL
7	V
10	O

Read: VELOR

Now this VELOR is immediately followed on the second and third lines of the last *terzina*, 11 and 12, by the initials:

11 T
12 I

Read: TI, the Italian spelling for the letter τ.

The VELOR and the τ, coming thus together, suggest that they may be read together as T: VELOR.

The τ, as we have seen, is constantly used by Dante as the sign of the cross, and it is in this canto, line 54, that the cross is alluded to for the first time in *Inferno*. And in this allusion to the cross Dante is veiled again by a cryptographic device. See pp. 100-1.

The following passage, *Inf.* xxxii. 85-96, further confirms my interpretation of VELTRO as T: VELOR:

Lo Duca stette; ed io dissi a colui	85
Che bestemmiava duramente ancora:	
'Qual se' tu, che così rampogni altrui?'	
'Or tu chi se,' che vai per l' Antenora	88
Percotendo,' rispose, 'altrui le gote	
Sì che, se fossi vivo, troppo fora?'	
'Vivo son io, e caro esser ti puote,'	91
Fu mia risposta, 'se domandi fama,	
Ch' io metta il nome tuo tra l' altre note.'	
Ed egli a me: 'Del contrario ho io brama:	
Levati quinci, e non mi dar più lagna:	95
Chè mal sai lusingar per questa lama.'	

The initials of the first lines of these four *terzine* are:

85	L
88	O
91	V
94	E

Read: VELO

Now consider the following marginal letters on the same lines:

85	L
88	OR
91	V
94	E

Read: VELOR

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By taking the τ of *tu*, which is contiguous to *Or*, line 88, we may read: τ : VELOR. There are further hints of τ in the words: *caro esser ti puote*, line 91, and in the words in lines 98 and 99, just below this passage: *tu ti nomi* and *ti rimagna*. The passage is dealing with the question of identity, as appears in the words: *Or tu chi se'*.

The following passage, *Purg.* xxii. 28-39, further confirms the same interpretation:

Veramente più volte appaion cose,	28
Che danno a dubitar falsa matera,	
Per le vere ragion che sono ascose.	
La tua domanda tuo creder m' avvera	31
Esser ch' io fossi avaro in l' altra vita,	
Forse per quella cerchia dov' io era.	
Or sappi ch' avarizia fu partita	34
Tropo da me, e questa dismisura	
Migliaia di lunari hanno punita.	
E se non fosse ch' io drizzai mia cura,	37
Quand' io intesi là dove tu esclame,	
Crucciato quasi all'umana natura:	

The initials of the first lines of these four terzine are:

28	V
31	L
34	O
37	E

Read: VELO

Now consider the following marginal letters on the same lines:

28	V
31	L
34	OR
37	E

Read: VELOR

Crucciato, the first word of line 39, is derived from the word for "cross," and as the cross is a τ , we may take the allusion to the cross as a hint to read: τ : VELOR. The

acrostic corresponds to the sense of the passage, which deals with the apparent and the hidden. Note *appaion cose*, line 28; *falsa matera*, line 29; *ascose*, line 30.

There is an obvious analogy between the *Veltro* and the *dvx* to which I wish to call particular attention, since it is important for the symbolism of these personifications. The coming of the *Veltro* is prophesied in connection with the adulterous *lupa*, who wives with many animals; the coming of the *dvx* in connection with the *puttana*, who sins with the giant. The presence of these prostitute types in the two prophesies concerning the Christ-like child to come is profoundly significant. Both the *lupa* and the *puttana* suggest the type of "fallen mother" as exemplified in Eve. So important for ancient and medieval symbolism was the prostitute as mother that the harlot Rahab was accepted as the ancestress of the Virgin Mary and was commonly considered as the symbol of the church itself. Dante's own treatment of Rahab, *Par. ix. 115 ff.*, shows that he makes use of this symbolism in the *Divina Commedia*.

Now the adulterous *lupa* and the *puttana* are to be considered as the mother through whom the prophesied child is to be born. Evidence for this statement will be given in Chapter VIII. At present I wish merely to indicate as briefly as possible the *raison d'être* of the prostitute mother in the symbolism of ancient myth, early Christianity, and the *Divina Commedia*. The child to be born is to be *reborn*. He is obliged, therefore, in order to be reborn, to *return* to the source of life from which he issued in the first place. The source of life is the mother, and the return of the child to the womb of the mother for the purpose of rebirth must be by way of the sexual act. There is thus implied an act of incest in which the mother, by participating with the son, is constantly represented in ancient myth, religion, and poetry, as prostituting herself. The mother becomes the fallen mother, like Eve; as the mother of the child in the first place, she belongs to the father of the child, but as the mother of the reborn child, who is considered as perpetuating his own life by his own act, she violates her relation with the

father, and thus commits her sin. The sin, for which, indeed, the son reproaches her, is thus none the less the supreme virtue which she has for him. This double nature of her act, which is at once a sin and a virtue, is often expressed in representations of *two* mothers, in one of whom is the sin, and in the other the virtue, of her act.

Bearing in mind this interpretation of the prostitute mother of the divine child, let us turn to the line in the passage in which Dante says of the *Veltro*, *Inf.* i. 105:

E sua nazion sarà tra Feltro e Feltro.

There is an obscurity in these words which, though not cryptographic, shows something of the duplicity of the cryptographic method. The meaning of this line has troubled the commentators, who have offered a variety of explanations. All the explanations agree in one respect, which is that the region *tra Feltro e Feltro* is situated between two *different* places. I suggest, on the contrary, that *Feltro* and *Feltro* are one and the same. According to this interpretation that the two Feltros are really one, Dante's expression: *sua nazion sarà tra Feltro e Feltro*, might be paralleled by some such expression as this: "The spiritual domain of the Pope shall be between Rome and Rome!"

To a devout Roman Catholic this sentence would express his belief that the spiritual domain of the Pope shall include the whole earth. The region between Rome and Rome is, in other words, the entire circumference of the earth—the entire region that a traveler would have to traverse if he started west from Rome and kept on going west till he arrived at Rome again from the east.

When, therefore, Dante says that the birthplace of the divine *Veltro* shall be between *Feltro* and *Feltro* he is simply saying that he shall be born of the universe; he shall be born of the universe, which is indeed, in some more or less pantheistic sense, God, just as Christ, in his human form, was born from the universal God, the Trinity in which he is the *somma sapienza*.

Now the reason that Dante picked the particular town Feltro as the beginning and the end of the circumference of the birthplace of the divine *Veltro* appears, I think, in the allusion which he makes to Feltro in *Par.* ix. 52-53. In speaking, in this canto, of broken vows, Cunizza says:

Piangerà Feltro ancora la diffalta
Dell' empio suo pastor.

The *diffalta* to which she refers was the betrayal by the bishop of Feltro (Feltre) of certain political refugees who had fled to him for the sanctuary of the church. The church was universally regarded as the symbol of the divine mother, and the violation of the sanctuary of the church was to be considered, therefore, as a violation of the mother herself. Such a violation of the mother as symbolized by the church could be expressed, accordingly, as Dante and other medieval symbolists constantly did express it, by some such term as adultery or prostitution.

In support of this interpretation of the *diffalta dell' empio suo pastor* as symbolizing a sexual violation of the divine mother, it is to be noted that *diffalta* is the very word used by Dante in *Purg.* xxviii. 94, for the sin, a sexual sin involving the motherhood of mankind, for which Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden.

Interpreted thus as a symbol of the violated mother, Feltro is appropriately named here as the birthplace of the divinely reborn *Veltro*. The fact that Dante mentions Feltro twice in the phrase: *sua nazione sarà tra Feltro e Feltro*, may be taken as an expression of the dual nature of the adulterous act, which, as I said above, is considered symbolically as at the same time sinful and virtuous. Thus the two Feltros, which are really one, correspond to the two mothers, so common in myths of rebirth, who are really one and the same mother, for the two forms, unregenerate and regenerate, of one and the same son.

In connection with the historical incident for which Dante mentions Feltro in *Par.* ix, and for which, as I suggest, he

chose the town as the symbol of the mother of the divine *Veltro*, there is a detail which may have acted as a further determinant of his choice. The political refugees who sought the sanctuary of the church in Feltro had revolted against the power of King Roberto. Now the sister of King Roberto was a Beatrice, and this Beatrice had been the wife of the predecessor of Roberto, Azzone III d'Este. Beatrice is thus intimately associated as wife and sister with the paternal image of kingship. She was sister and bride of the king, just as the Shulamite, the commonly recognized symbol of the church in the Song of Songs, was called the sister and bride of her kingly lover. Inasmuch as the sedition was directed against the royal power, she may be taken as the outraged wife of the outraged king, and so as a symbol, in the actual historical sedition, of the violated mother. The fact that her name was Beatrice gives the use of the incident by Dante the character of an allusion to the mother symbolism of the Beatrice of the *Divina Commedia*. Dante's Beatrice, as I will show in the chapter on Beatrice, is the symbol of the mother of the divinely reborn Dante himself; and Dante's choice of Feltro as a symbol of the mother was determined, I believe, both by the incident of the violated sanctuary and also by the fact of the appearance, in the incident, of a Beatrice in a mother-like rôle. The incident thus shows, appropriately for the symbolism, two symbols of the violated mother, and one of them, historically, had the name of Dante's own symbol of motherhood, Beatrice.

LONZA

The *Veltro* is mentioned in *Inf.* i, after the mention of three other animals, the *lonza*, the *leone*, and the *lupa*. Dante meets these three animals in his attempt to climb the delectable mountain, and it is after his appeal to Virgil to be saved from them that Virgil prophesies the coming of the *Veltro*, who shall slay the *lupa*, apparently the most dangerous of the three.

The *lonza*, as I will now show, is another of the symbolic guises of Dante. The *lonza* represents Dante in his unregenerate, or human, guise, just as the *Veltro* represents him as reborn and divine. The *lupa*, as I suggested in speaking of the *Veltro*, represents his mother; and the *leone* represents his father.

The *lonza* is described in the four *terzine*, *Inf.* i. 31-42:

Ed ecco, quasi al cominciar dell' erta,	31
Una lonza leggiera e presta molto,	
Che di pel maculato era coperta.	
E non mi si partia dinanzi al volto;	34
Anzi impediva tanto il mio cammino,	
Ch' io fui per ritornar più volte volto.	
Tempo era dal principio del mattino;	37
E il sol montava su con quelle stelle	
Ch' eran con lui, quando l' amor divino	
Mosse da prima quelle cose belle;	40
Sì che a bene sperar m' era cagione	
Di quella fera alla gaietta pelle	

Notice that the first line of the passage begins with ED, which we have already recognized as a signature, and that the last line begins with a D, so that the beginnings of the first and last lines spell ED. The passage is thus significantly bounded.

Consider on the first lines of these four *terzine* the following marginal letters:

31	E
34	E N
37	T
40	M

Read: MENTE

Now consider on the same lines the following marginal letters:

31	ED ECCO QUASI A
34	E N
37	T
40	M

Read: ECCO QUASI ME, DANTE

In the two acrostic readings on the same lines: *MENTE* and *ECCO QUASI ME, DANTE*, there is the same association of *MENTE* and *DANTE* which appears in the acrostics of the *DVX* passage (pp. 122-3). Dante is here identifying himself not only with the *lonza* but also with *MENTE*. The reason that he identifies himself with *MENTE* is that *MENTE* corresponds to Christ, as *sapienza*, in the divine Trinity, which, as Dante tells us in the opening lines of *Inf.* iii, is composed of the *divina potestate*, for the Father, the *somma sapienza*, for the Son, and the *primo amore*, for the Holy Ghost.

In the Trinity thus considered as a group of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost is the name of the mother of the divine family. For the mother symbolism of the Holy Ghost see pp. 330-5, 463. This family, moreover, corresponds to the three categories of the mind: will, intellect, and emotion, so that the Trinity is at once a symbol of the family, as composed of three persons, and a symbol of the mind, which unites the three categories. Dante, by identifying himself with *MENTE*, is again, therefore, identifying himself with Christ. In identifying himself with the *lonza* he is symbolizing himself in his human, or unregenerate, form.

In addition to the acrostic signature there is an interior sequence which appears as follows:

31 Ed ecco quasi al cominciar dell'erta
 32 una lonza leggiara e presta molto
 33 che di pel maculato era coperta
 34 e non mi si partia dinanzi al volto
 35 anzi impediva tanto il mio cammino
 36 ch'io fui per ritornar piu volte volto

Read E of *ed*, 31; N of *lonza*, 32; A of *maculato*, 33; D of *dinanzi*, 34; IO of *mio*, 35; T of *volte*, 36: IO DANTE.

The signature begins on ED, which is Dante's symbol, runs through the N of *lonza*, and through the D of the hinting words *dinanzi al volto*.

LUPA

We have thus seen that Dante is here represented in two forms, unregenerate and regenerate, in the *lonza* and in the *Veltro*. He is represented as the son in a family group of three, of which the mother is represented by the *lupa* and the father by the *leone*. The *lupa* has the same relation to the *Veltro* that the *puttana* has to the *dvx*. The appropriateness of this symbolic representation of the family as *lonza*, *lupa*, and *leone* in the *Divina Commedia* as a dream I cannot develop here. Let it suffice for our present purpose to show the cryptographic justification for identifying the *lupa* with the mother of Dante, just as we have already identified the *lonza* with Dante himself by means of his cryptographic signatures.

The description of the *lupa* is full of suggestions of her maternal character. The use of *gravezza*, for instance, line 52, is capable of being understood in a double sense as referring to pregnancy. In connection with this duplicity of meaning note also the possible duplicity of the line:

E molte genti fe' già viver grame.

In saying of her that she "made many people live sorrowful" Dante may be understood to be saying that she made many people live in the sense of having given birth to them. Her hunger and her eating of her victims are both referable to sexual hunger and to the sexual act on the part of woman as symbolized by the act of swallowing or eating. This symbolism is widespread in ancient myth and medieval fiction, as in Boccaccio's story of the eating of the mandrake. For a very special development of this symbolism in the *Vita Nuova* see the discussion of Dante's dream that his heart is being eaten by Beatrice, Chapter VIII, pp. 369-73. See also the discussion of the incident, recorded in *Purg.* xxiii, of the mother who ate her own son (pp. 209-10). The dangerous character of the *lupa*, which is so strongly emphasized, is to be understood as the danger of the sexual relation which the son imagines she desires with him and

which the son himself, consciously or unconsciously, desires with her. It is no other, in fact, than the danger of the incestuous act through which alone, in despite of the jealous prohibition of the father, the son can hope for his rebirth.

In insisting on her dangerous character Dante does not confine himself to the manifest text. He expresses the idea in an acrostic in the passage, *Inf.* i. 88-99, in which Virgil warns Dante to beware of her:

Vedi la bestia, per cui io mi volsi:	88
Aiutami da lei, famoso saggio,	
Ch' ella mi fa tremar le vene e i polsi.'	
'A te convien tenere altro viaggio,'	91
Rispose, poi che lagrimar mi vide,	
'Se vuoi campar d'esto loco selvaggio:	
Chè questa bestia, per la qual tu gride,	94
Non lascia altrui passar per la sua via,	
Ma tanto lo impedisce che l'uccide:	
Ed ha natura sì malvagia e ria,	97
Che mai non empie la bramosa voglia,	
E dopo il pasto ha più fame che pria.	

The initials of the first lines of these four *terzine* are:

88	v
91	A
94	C
97	E

Read: CAVE

That Dante indeed intends the *lupa* to be a dream-like representation of his own mother in her hostile or dangerous aspect appears from the following interior sequences in passages describing her in *Inf.* i:

47	con la test'ALta e con rabbiosa fame
48	si che parEa che L'AEr ne temesse
49	ed una Lupa che di tutte BraMe
50	semBiava carica nella sua mAgrezza
51	e molte genti fe'gia viver graMe
52	questa mi porse tanto Di grAvezza
53	con la paura che uscìa Di sua vista
54	ch'io perdei la spERanza dell'altezza

Read AL of *alta*, 47; E of *parea*, 48; L of *lupa*, 49; B of *sembiava*, 50: BELLA.

Read L of *alta*, 47; LAE of *l'aer*, 48; B of *brame*, 49: BELLA.

Read M of *brame*, 49; first A of *magrezza*, 50; ER of *viver*, 51; D of *di*, 52: MADRE.

Read M of *grame*, 51; first A of *gravexza*, 52; D of *di*, 53; ER of *speranza*, 54: MADRE.

In the second line of the following passage I have adopted instead of Moore's reading, *venendomi incontro*, a reading for which there is manuscript authority, *venendomi contra*.

58 tal mi fece la BEstia senza pace
59 che venendomi contra A poco a poco
60 mi ripingeva la dove il soL tace
61 mentre ch'io rovinava in basso Loco

Read BE of *bestia*, 58; A following *contra*, 59; L of *sol*, 60; L of *loco*, 61: BELLA.

86 tu sE'solo colui da cui io tolsi
87 lo bello stile che m'ha fatto onore
88 vedi la Bestia per cui io mi volsi
89 aiutami dA Lei famoso saggio

Read E of *se*, 86; second L of *bello*, 87; B of *bestia*, 88; L of *lei* with the adjacent A of *da*, 89; BELLA.

There are suggestions of the sound of this word in *bello*, 87, and in *la be (stia)*, 88.

97 ed ha natuRa si malvagia e ria
98 che mai non empiE la bramosa voglia
99 e dopo il pasto ha piu fAme che pria
100 molti son gli animAli a cui s'aMmoglia
101 e piu saranno AncoRa infin che il velTro
102 verra che la fara Morir con doglia
103 questi non cibera TerRa ne peltro
104 ma sapienza E amoreE e virTute
105 e sua NAzion sara tra feltro E feltro
106 Di quell'umile italia fia salute

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Read R of *natura*, 97; second E of *empie*, 98; A of *fame*, 99; first M of *ammoglia*, 100; T of *veltro*, 101: MATRE.

Read on the vertical line the second A of *animali*, 100; R of *ancora*, 101; M of *morir*, 102; T of *terra*, 103; E of *amore*, 104: MATRE.

Read the first A of *ancora*, 101; M of *morir*, 102; second R of *terra*, 103; first T of *virtute*, 104; E between *feltro* and *feltro*, 105: MATRE.

Read T of *terra*, 103; E preceding *amore*, 104; NA of *nazion*, 105; D of *di*, 106: DANTE.

For the other sequence in this passage see page 175.

A few lines below is another interior sequence, as follows:

111 la onde invidia prima dipartilla
112 ond'io per lo tuo Me' penso e discerno
113 che tu mi segui ed io SARO tua guida
114 e trarrotti di qui per loco etErno

Read from D of *invidia*, 111; M of *me*, 112; AR of *saro*, 113; second E of *eterno*, 114: MADRE.

This sequence ends on the word *eterno*. As we shall see, the *loco eterno*, Hell, is symbolically the womb of the mother.

VIRGIL

Corresponding to the mother symbolism which I have now shown in *Feltro*, the *puttana*, and the *lupa*, and which I will further develop in Chapters VII and VIII, there is consistently worked out in the *Divina Commedia* a father symbolism which appears in connection with the *lonza* and the *lupa* in the figure of the *leone* and which keeps reappearing throughout the entire poem in various other father images. Like the mother images, these father images appear in two aspects, the one hostile and hated, the other benign and loved. The father image toward which Dante gives

his extremest expression of hatred is Filippo Argenti. This figure appears, significantly, in connection with the one direct allusion in the entire works of Dante to his mother, *Inf.* viii. 45. For the development of the father and mother symbolism in connection with Filippo Argenti and the direct allusion to Dante's mother, see Chapter VIII, p. 325.

In the symbolism of myth, religion, and dreams the hostility of the father is to be understood, in so far as it symbolizes the sexual relation, as due to his jealousy of the son on account of the son's incestuous relation with the mother in the accomplishment of the son's rebirth. There is another important aspect of the father symbolism as it appears in ancient myth and religion: the son is considered as the reborn form of the father himself. This idea survives, indeed, in the common expression that "parents live again in their children," and it explains the widespread custom of infanticide among primitive peoples, a modification of which appears in the Passover and in the slaughter of the innocents. The father slays the child because he regards the child as stealing away from him his own identity.

An example in the *Divina Commedia* of a symbol of the father who is presented as benign and as reborn in Dante himself is Virgil. Dante constantly refers to Virgil as father, and in so far as he derives his literary inspiration from the *Æneid*, he represents himself as a reincarnation of Virgil as his "author." This idea is expressed in an acrostic in the passage describing the first appearance of Virgil, in *Inf.* i. In response to Dante's immediate appeal to be saved from the *lupa*, Virgil replies by telling Dante who he is and asking Dante why he does not ascend the *diletto monte*. The seven *terzine* beginning *Inf.* i. 67, read as follows:

Risposemi: 'Non uomo, uomo già fui,	67
E li parenti miei furon Lombardi,	
Mantovani per patria ambedui.	
Nacqui <i>sub Iulio</i> , ancorchè fosse tardi,	70
E vissi a Roma sotto il buono Augusto,	
Al tempo degli Dei falsi e bugiardi.	

Poeta fui, e cantai di quel giusto	73
Figliuol d' Anchise, che venne da Troia, Poichè il superbo Ilion fu combusto.	
Ma tu perchè ritorni a tanta noia?	76
Perchè non sali il diletto monte, Ch' è principio e cagion di tutta gioia?	
'Or se' tu quel Virgilio, e quella fonte	79
Che spande di parlar sì largo fiume?	
Risposi lui con vergognosa fronte.	
'O degli altri poeti onore e lume,	82
Vagliami il lungo studio e il grande amore, Che m' ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume.	
Tu se' lo mio maestro e il mio autore:	85
Tu se' solo colui, da cui io tolsi Lo bello stile che m' ha fatto onore.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these seven terzine:

67	RI
70	NA
73	POETA
76	MA
79	OR
82	O
85	T

Read: MARO RINATO POETA

The full name of Virgil was Publius Virgilius Maro, and Dante uses here the name Maro for a special reason which I will presently explain.

That the POETA in whom Virgil is thus said to be reborn is indeed Dante appears from the following interior sequence in this passage:

70	Nacqui sub iulio anchorche fosse tardi
71	e vissi A roma sotto il buono augusto
72	al tempo degli Dei falsi e bugiardi
73	poeta fui e cantai di quEl giusto
74	figliuol d'anchise che venne da Troia

Read N of *nacqui*, 70, A, 71, D of *dei*, 72, E of *quel*, 73, T of *troia*, 74: DANTE. Note that *nacqui* and *Troia* are both

significant words; *Troia* is a word commonly used to designate a prostitute, so that Dante is here again associated with the prostitute type in his rebirth symbolism, as with the *puttana* and *Taide*.

Notice that the word *Troia* on which this sequence ends is preceded by the words *venne da*, so that the letters of Dante's name are grouped thus:

ven NE DA T roia

In connection with the acrostic: MARO RINATO POETA, I promised to explain Dante's reason for referring to Virgil as MARO. Let me first, however, show another acrostic in the same passage reading MARE. The *terzina* in which Virgil begins to speak is lines 67-69. Consider the following marginal letters of the three lines of this *terzina*:

67	R
68	E
69	MA

Read: MARE

Notice in connection with these letters that the initial letters, which do not include the interior A, spell REM. REM, like the English use of "rebus," means a cryptographic device, and the coincidence of REM and MARE suggests that MARE is some sort of rebus.

Notice further that as if to prove that MARE, the Italian for sea, is to be understood here as the name of Virgil, Dante makes an acrostic on the words in this *terzina* which are actually used by Virgil himself. The only word in the *terzina* which is not included in Virgil's reply to Dante is the initial word: *Risposemi*. Consider, therefore, the following marginal letters of Virgil's own words:

67	NO
68	E
69	M

Read: NOME

Thus Virgil, in describing himself, may be considered to give his **NOME** in the acrostic **REM, MARE**. But this is not the only instance in which Virgil is mentioned as **MARE**. In *Inf.* viii. 7, Dante says of Virgil:

Ed io mi volsi al mar di tutto il senno.

This allusion to Virgil as the *mar di tutto il senno* has not, so far as I know, been recognized as a pun on **MARO**.

The reason that Dante thus insists on the name **MARO** for Virgil is related, I believe, to the famous palindrome: **ROMA-AMOR**. **ROMA** as an anagram for **AMOR** was used by medieval symbolists, if I understand their symbolism, to express the union, prenatal or incestuous, of Christ and his mother Mary. Christ is **AMOR**, as appears in *Par.* xxxiii. 7, in the words of Bernardo addressed to the Virgin Mary:

Nel ventre tuo si raccese l'amore.

Just as Christ, the son, is thus considered **AMOR**, so **ROMA** is considered the mother, since Rome, as the seat of the church, is identified with the church, by which the divine mother is constantly symbolized. The union of the divine mother and the divine son is thus symbolized by a word which spells by exactly the same letters the symbol of the mother and the symbol of the son.

Now **MARO**, as containing exactly the same letters as **ROMA** and **AMOR**, is also an anagram for **ROMA** and **AMOR**: and it is so used by Dante to indicate the *father* by the same letters that indicate the mother and the son.

Thus the family *unit*, father, mother, and son, is indicated by the same letters that may be used, in three different orders, to indicate respectively each of the three persons of which the family unit is composed. The three persons are thus indicated as essentially identical.

This identity of the three persons of the family as composing a unit is expressed in the concept of the Christian Trinity, which, as Dante defines it, *Purg.* iii. 36, is *one substance in three persons*. The three persons of the Trinity are the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the Holy Ghost,

as appears very plainly in early Christian and Gnostic symbolism, is the mother. Though they differ as persons, they are all one substance, exactly as MARO, ROMA, and AMOR, though differing as words, are all one substance in the sense of being composed of the same letters.

It thus appears that by the anagrammatic MARO, AMOR, ROMA, Dante may be suggesting the divine Trinity of which the father is represented by Virgil, the son by Dante himself, and the mother, as I shall show later, by Beatrice. That Dante had the anagrammatic transformations of these three words in mind appears from the fact that all three words are used in the same passage, MARO in acrostic form, *Roma* in line 71, and *amore* in line 83. Moreover, in the preceding passage relating to the *lonza*, the *amor divino* is mentioned, line 39.

The union of the three persons of the family Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—or, as transferred to earth, God (or Joseph), the human Christ, and the Virgin Mary—is thus symbolized by the anagrammatic MARO, AMOR, ROMA. Now it is essential to the understanding of the *Divina Commedia*, and, indeed, of medieval Christianity, to recognize that this unity of the three persons of the divine family was also symbolized in terms of the sexual life. There is just one moment, biologically, when the father, son, and mother are physically united, and that is in the moment of sexual union between the father and the mother, for at this moment the son, with whom the mother is being impregnated, exists in the father and in the mother simultaneously. This biological situation may explain by analogy the mystery of the unity of the three persons of the Godhead.

Virgil is further symbolized as the father by being associated in the following acrostic with the lion, a common father symbol. The passage, *Inf.* ii. 58–69, consists of four *terzine*:

“O anima cortese Mantovana, 58
 Di cui la fama ancor nel mondo dura,
 E durerà quanto il moto lontana:

L' amico mio e non della ventura, 61
 Nella diserta spiaggia è impedito
 Sì nel cammin, che volto è per paura:
 E temo che non sia già sì smarrito, 64
 Ch' io mi sia tardi al soccorso levata,
 Per quel ch' io ho di lui nel Cielo udito.
 Or muovi, e con la tua parola ornata, 67
 E con ciò ch' è mestieri al suo campare,
 L' aiuta sì, ch' io ne sia consolata.

The initials of the first lines of these terzine are:

58 O
 61 L
 64 E
 67 O

Read: O LEO

The initials of the lines of the fourth terzina are:

67 O
 68 E
 69 L

Read LEO

The lines on which these acrostics appear are part of the account of the meeting of Virgil as father and Beatrice as mother, at the entrance of Hell, a meeting, as a sex symbol, which results in the rebirth of Dante. For the development of this symbolism see Chapter VIII.

The initials of the first terzina of the foregoing passage are:

58 O
 59 D
 60 E

Read: DEO

DEO, as the divine father, is thus associated with Virgil as a father image.

The second terzina also contains an acrostic on the following marginal letters:

61 LA
62 NEL
63 S

Read: SNELLA

This refers perhaps to the speed of Beatrice's coming.

The idea of Virgil as a father image is borne out by the acrostic in the following passage, *Par.* xvii. 19-21, which consists of one *terzina*:

Mentre ch' io era a Virgilio congiunto
Su per lo monte che l' anime cura,
E discendendo nel mondo defunto

Consider the following marginal letters of this *terzina*:

19 ME
20 S
21 E

Read: SEME

This cryptogram is interesting in relation to the text. *A Virgilio congiunto* suggests that Dante is of the seed of Virgil as well as of Cacciaguida.

STATIUS

One of the enigmatic figures of the *Divina Commedia* is Statius, who appears to Dante and Virgil after he has been released from the circle of the prodigal on the mountain of Purgatory and who accompanies Dante through the rest of the ascent of the mountain and even shares with Dante the draught of the river Eunoe, to which Dante and Statius are led together by Matelda.

The words in the text which hint at the explanation of the enigmatic character of Statius are addressed to Statius by Virgil, who is referring to Dante:

L' anima sua, ch' è tua e mia sirocchia.
—*Purg.* xxi. 28.

Virgil, Statius, and Dante, it thus appears, are *sister* souls I will show that they are to be regarded, in the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, as composing the three elements of Dante himself regarded as a trinity. In ancient and medieval philosophy the individual is considered sometimes as having a dual nature, human and divine, physical and spiritual; and sometimes as having a triadic nature, as in the concept of the three souls of man; or as in the categories of the mind, intellect, emotion, and will; or as in the symbol of the divine Trinity as a family unit. Statius will thus prove to be the third element of Dante considered as a triad composed of Dante himself, as the son, or intellect, Virgil, as the father, or will, and Statius, as the Holy Ghost, mother, or emotion.

When Statius appears to Dante and Virgil he has just been released from the circle of the prodigal. He is to be considered as *reborn*, and his rebirth is indicated by the quaking of the mountain. This quaking symbolizes the parturition throes of the mountain releasing the newborn soul. That Statius is an aspect of Dante himself is indicated by the appearance, line 68, of a *cinquecento, cinquecento e più* being the number of years that Statius has had to remain in the circle of his purgation. Like the Phoenix, therefore, he is reborn at the end of about five hundred years. And I surmise that like the passage in which the Phoenix is mentioned, the present passage contains along with the overtly mentioned five hundred a concealed ten and five, so that Statius is signed with the cryptic number of the DVX, 515. The concealed ten appears in the allusion to Christ. In medieval symbolism Christ is a ten. God as a trinity is three; the multiplication of trinity by itself, or nine, is the act which produces the human Christ; and ten, as the number following nine, the symbol of the act of begetting, is the symbol of the begotten, or Christ himself. The concealed five appears as the v of Virgil, mentioned with peculiar emphasis by Statius as his poetical father and mother.

The 515 with which this passage describing Statius thus

appears to be stamped is shown again. The *terzina* commencing significantly with *Ed io*, and containing the words: *cinquecento e più*, has for the initials of its lines: E, C, L.

These letters may be transmuted into 515, the E as fifth letter being 5, the C as 100 being 1, and the L as 50 being 5.

Further confirmation that the figure of Statius conceals a reference to Dante appears in the acrostic in the speech in which Statius declares his identity. The passage, *Purg.* xxi. 82-102, consists of seven *terzine*:

'Nel tempo che il buon Tito con l'aiuto	82
Del sommo Rege vendicò le fora,	
Ond' uscì il sangue per Giuda venduto,	
Col nome che più dura e più onora	85
Era io di là,' rispose quello spirto,	
'Famoso assai, ma non con fede ancora.	
Tanto fu dolce mio vocale spirto,	88
Che, Tolosano, a sè mi trasse Roma,	
Dove mertai le tempie ornar di mirto.	
Stazio la gente ancor di là mi noma:	91
Cantai di Tebe, e poi del grande Achille,	
Ma caddi in via con la seconda soma.	
Al mio ardor fur seme le faville,	94
Che mi scaldar, della divina fiamma,	
Onde sono allumati più di mille;	
Dell' Eneida dico, la qual mamma	97
Fummi, e fummi nutrice poetando:	
Senz' essa non fermai peso di dramma.	
E, per esser vivuto di là quando	100
Visse Virgilio, assentirei un sole	
Più che non deggio al mio uscir di bando.'	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these *terzine*:

82	N
85	COL NOME
88	T
91	STAZIO
94	A
97	D
100	E

Read: STAZIO COL NOME DANTE

Since Dante, Virgil, and Statius are sister souls, they form a trinity which has distinct analogies with the Trinity of the Christian Godhead. Virgil is the father, as indeed he is so often called by Dante; and Dante is the son, as we have already seen. It remains, therefore, if the analogy with the Trinity is to hold, for Statius to correspond to the Holy Ghost, or the mother. The mother character of Statius is here suggested by the expression, *Purg.* xxi. 92-93:

Cantai di Tebe, e poi del grande Achille,
Ma caddi in via con la seconda soma.

The burden of his poem about Achilles, which he was carrying at the time of his death and which he had therefore not yet been delivered of, suggests the language of pregnancy, suggesting in turn the mother character of Statius. Another suggestion of his mother-like character is given in the words which immediately follow:

Al mio ardor fur seme le faville,	94
Che mi scaldar, della divina fiamma,	
Onde sono allumati più di mille;	
Dell' Eneida dico, la qual mamma	97
Fummi, e fummi nutrice poetando:	
Senz' essa non fermai peso di dramma.	

In these words Statius speaks of himself as if having been impregnated by the seed of the *Æneid*. Immediately after referring to the *Æneid* in its male aspect as *seme*, he expresses a female character in it by his reference to it as *mamma*, the breast at which he was nourished. This complicated relation of Statius to a poem which he thus designates in terms of father and of mother symbolism together is exactly the relation of the Holy Ghost to God the Father, as at once the wife of God, impregnated with the seed that produces the divine son, and also the daughter of God, who, as the first of all beings, must be conceived as the male and female source together of the existence of the Holy Ghost. These precise relationships were the subject of certain early Christian and Gnostic speculations.

Virgil, Statius, and Dante are thus the trinity of Dante himself as *poet*, and the analogy of the three to father, mother, and son respectively will explain the relative positions of the three in their ascent together of the mount of Purgatory. These positions are most precisely defined by Dante. Before they reach the purifying fire, *Purg.* xxvii. 10-12, Dante walks behind Virgil and Statius; during the passage through the fire Dante walks between them, with Virgil in front and Statius behind; and in the Terrestrial Paradise Dante precedes Virgil and Statius.

Now these relative positions are precisely appropriate to the symbolized sexual relationship of the three. Before the birth of the son—that is, before the three reach the purifying fire—the son, as not yet in existence, is preceded by his father and his mother. In the purifying fire, which symbolizes the sexual union of the father and the mother in the begetting of the son and his conception, the son, as *sperma*, is between the father and the mother. And after the emergence from the fire, which symbolizes the birth of the son, the son precedes his parents, in the sense of perpetuating and replacing them. The treatment of Virgil and Statius in the conclusion of *Purgatorio* carries out this symbolism precisely. It will be remembered that Virgil disappears and that after his disappearance Statius accompanies Dante to drink of the Eunoë. Now the reason that Virgil as the father disappears is simply that the son, once born, has to be reborn, and that in order to be reborn he must replace the father in his sexual union with the mother. This act of incest is a necessary feature of rebirth in ancient and medieval symbolism. Appropriately, therefore, after the disappearance of the father, Statius and Dante as mother and son unite in the mystic draught of the Eunoë, which symbolizes the sexual union through which Dante is to be reborn. Statius is never mentioned again. He is left behind, as a mother symbol, by the son who issues from him and who is to find in Paradise a more perfect symbol of motherhood. Let me repeat here that Statius is the symbol of the mother of Dante merely as poet; in the draught of

the Eunoe Dante and Statius are accompanied by Matelda, who is also a symbol of the mother, just as is Beatrice.

I have thus shown that Statius is the symbol of the motherhood from which Dante drew his poetic inspiration, just as Virgil is the symbol of the poetic fatherhood. Moreover, Statius represents an aspect of Dante himself, just as in the Trinity each person of the Trinity represents an aspect of the Trinity conceived as one substance. There is no contradiction in saying that Statius has the double character which I have here ascribed to him. Statius is at once the poetic motherhood from which Dante derives and Dante himself, exactly as the Holy Ghost in the Trinity is at once the mother of the divine son and the divine son himself in so far as he is to be identified with the Trinity.

ROMEO

There is a concealed 515 in *Par.* vi. 124-142, by means of which Dante signifies that he is alluding to himself in what he says of Romeo. The passage reads:

Diverse voci fan giù dolci note;	124
Così diversi scanni in nostra vita	
Rendon dolce armonia tra queste rote.	
E dentro alla presente margarita	127
Luce la luce di Romeo, di cui	
Fu l' opra bella e grande mal gradita.	
Ma i Provenzali che fer contra lui	130
Non hanno riso, e però mal cammina	
Qual si fa danno del ben fare altrui.	
Quattro figlie ebbe, e ciascuna regina,	133
Ramondo Beringhieri, e ciò gli fece	
Romeo persona umile e peregrina;	
E poi il mosser le parole bieche	136
A domandar ragione a questo giusto,	
Che gli assegnò sette e cinque per diece.	
Indi partissi povero e vetusto;	139
E se il mondo sapesse il cor ch' egli ebbe	
Mendicando sua vita a frusto a frusto,	
Assai lo loda, e più lo loderebbe.'	142

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the *terzine*:

124	D
127	E
130	M
133	QUAT
136	E PO
139	IN
142	A

Read: POEMA. DANTE QUI

The passage relates to Romeo, who made queens of the four daughters of his master and who had been so just that he had given his master, in dealing with his affairs, seven and five for ten. The usual interpretation is that he had given his master twelve for ten, or more than his master had a right to expect. The numbers here mentioned are all, however, used with a double meaning. The *quattro*, line 133, may be considered as D, the fourth letter of the alphabet, and so representing 500. Now notice the wording:

gli assegnò sette e cinque per diece.

Sette may be taken as an anagram for TESTE, the cryptographic heads that show in the integers of the cryptic number 515. Read now *gli assegnò teste*, and there remain of the numbers mentioned a ten and a five, which complete along with the concealed D, or 500, the cryptic signature 515.

In the praise of Romeo and in the pity of his having to beg his living Dante is here really praising and pitying himself.

THE EAGLE

The next of the symbolic guises of Dante which I wish to consider in the present chapter is the Eagle in the heaven of Jupiter. This eagle is formed, as I already mentioned, by the spirits of the just. Visible to Dante as sparks flying about like birds, the spirits of the just form themselves successively into letters spelling the sentence: *Diligite iustitiam*,

qui iudicatis terram. On the last letter of this sentence, M, the spirits pause, and then, by the addition of other spirits, transform the M first into a fleur-de-lys and then into an eagle.

I have already identified the first three letters of the sentence which the spirits form, DIL, as a cryptographic guise of Dante. And I have also identified as a cryptographic guise of Dante the acrostic VEL in the passage which is uttered by the eagle, *Par.* xix. 115-141. Analogous to this passage in its curious symmetry is *Par.* xx. 40-72, also uttered by the eagle. I will show that Dante is referring to himself in this passage, and I will then show that the eagle who utters the passage is one of Dante's symbolic guises. The passage reads as follows:

Ora conosce il merto del suo canto,	40
In quanto effetto fu del suo consiglio,	
Per lo remunerar ch' è altrettanto.	
Dei cinque che mi fan cerchio per ciglio,	43
Colui che più al becco mi s' accosta,	
La vedovella consolò del figlio,	
Ora conosce quanto caro costa	46
Non seguir CRISTO, per l' esperienza	
Di questa dolce vita, e dell' opposta.	
E quel che segue in la circonferenza	49
Di che ragiono, per l' arco superno,	
Morte indugiò per vera penitenza.	
Ora conosce che il giudizio eterno	52
Non si trasmuta, quando degno preco	
Fa crastino laggiù dell' odierno.	
L' altro che segue, con le leggi e meco,	55
Sotto buona intenzion che fe' mal frutto,	
Per cedere al pastor, si fece Greco.	
Ora conosce come il mal dedutto	58
Dal suo bene operar non gli è nocivo,	
Avvegna che sia il mondo indi distrutto.	
E quel che vedi nell' arco declivo,	61
Guglielmo fu, cui quella terra plora	
Che piange Carlo e Federico vivo.	
Ora conosce come s' innamorà	64
Lo ciel del giusto rege, ed al semblante	
Del suo fulgore il fa vedere ancora.	

Chi crederebbe giù nel mondo errante, 67
 Che Rifeo Troiano in questo tondo
 Fosse la quinta delle luci sante?
 Ora conosce assai di quel che il mondo 70
 Veder non può della divina grazia,
 Benchè sua vista non discerna il fondo.'

This passage is remarkable for the repetition of the words: *Ora conosce*, which begin the first *terzina* and every second *terzina* thereafter. This symmetrical repetition points to the cryptographic contents of the passage. Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of all the *terzine* *not* beginning with *Ora conosce*:

40 [ORA CONOSCE]
 43 D
 46 [ORA CONOSCE]
 49 E
 52 [ORA CONOSCE]
 55 LA
 58 [ORA CONOSCE]
 61 E
 64 [ORA CONOSCE]
 67 C
 70 [ORA CONOSCE]

Read: CELA ED

The passage conceals Dante in several interior sequences spelling his name:

48 di questa Dolce vita e dell'opposta
 49 e quel che seguE in la circonferenza
 50 di che ragiono per l'Arco superno
 51 morte indugio per vera peniTenza
 52 ora conosce che il giudizio eterNo
 53 non si trasmuta quANdo DEgno preco
 54 fa crastino lAggiu dell'oDierno
 55 l'alTro che segue con le leggi E meco
 56 sotto buona intenzion che fe mal frutTo

Read D of *dolce*, 48; second E of *segue*, 49; A of *arco*, 50;
 T of *penitenza*, 51; N of *eterno*, 52: DANTE.

Read N of *eterno*, 52; DE of *degno*, 53; A of *laggiu*, 54; T of *altro*, 55: DANTE.

Read AN of *quando*, 53; D of *odierno*, 54; E following *leggi*, 55; second T of *frutto*, 56: DANTE.

Note that the first and the second of these three sequences key on the N of *eterno*.

These signatures are sufficient to prove that Dante is referring to himself in the words of the eagle in this passage. Having already shown that he refers to himself in the other utterance of the eagle, the passage containing the acrostic VEL, and in the writing of the spirits who form the eagle, the passage containing DIL, I will now show that he definitely takes the eagle itself as his symbolic guise. The proof that I have to offer is to be found in the names of the spirits who form the eye and eyebrow of the eagle. These spirits are David, Traiano, Ezechia, Costantino, Guglielmo, and Rifeo. Consider in these names the following initial and contiguous letters:

DAVID
 TRAIAN
 E
 COS
 GU
 RI

Read: RIGUARDAVI COSI DANTE

The head of the eagle is in profile, so that only one eye is visible. The pupil of the eye is formed by the spirit of David. But like Aristotle among the philosophers in *Inf.* iv, David is not mentioned by name. He is indicated as *il cantor dello spirito santo*, line 38, and the anonymous allusion to David in this phrase is capable of being considered an allusion to Dante himself. The *spirito santo* is the name of the mother in the divine Trinity; and as Dante is the singer of the divine mother, the phrase, *il cantor dello spirito santo*, applies as well to him as to David. Moreover, the analogies between David as a name and Dante's cryptic num-

ber, 515, in VID, plus his initials D.A., can hardly have been neglected by Dante; in his search for analogies everywhere it is highly probable that he saw the possibilities in DAVID for suggesting: D.A: VID.

In the light of this identification of the eagle as a guise of Dante, it becomes evident that Dante has a double meaning when he says, *Par.* xix. 11-12, that he heard the eagle utter

nella voce ed 'Io' e 'Mio,'
Quand' era nel concetto 'Noi' e 'Nostro.'

The eagle is composed of many spirits, yet in its voice it said, "I" and "my", as if it were one spirit; such is the patent meaning of the lines. But it is possible to understand Dante as saying here that the eagle uttered in its voice: ED IO, the cryptographic designation of Dante himself, and said "I" and "my" as if speaking for Dante.

With the identity of Dante and the eagle thus established, there remains to be explained the symbolism of the eagle as transformed successively from a fleur-de-lys and an M. This symbolism has never, so far as I know, been explained satisfactorily; certainly it is not sufficient to associate the lily with the armorial device of Florence and the eagle with the emblem of the empire. These associations, which are probable enough, are the mere surface symbolism of the transformations.

It is to be noted that the letter M appears in connection with the eagle in three forms: first, as the letter; second, as the lily; and third, as the eagle. These three forms of the letter represent the three persons of the family as a trinity analogous to the Trinity of the Christian Godhead.

The letter M is in itself, in the first place, the symbol of MAN. I have already referred to the medieval Italian conceit that the word for man, OMO, is written on the human face. The M of this spelling is formed by the line of the nose and the outlines of the cheeks, and the two o's are formed by the eyes. The three letters are supposed to be visible in the letter M alone, in a form of the M which suggests the two o's as made on each side of the central line of the M

by the spaces enclosed by the central line and the outlines of the letter.

Such a form of the letter *m* which gives in itself the two o's appears in the human face when the eye sockets, which form the two o's, are enlarged, as Dante tells us they were in the passage in which he refers to the very conceit in question. Let me quote the passage, as it is important for an aspect of the symbolism of the eagle which I shall have to develop later. Dante is viewing in Purgatory the souls of the gluttonous, who are undergoing a penitential fast. He says, *Purg.* xxiii. 22-33:

Negli occhi era ciascuna oscura e cava, 22
 Pallida nella faccia, e tanto scema,
 Che dall' ossa la pelle s' informava.
 Non credo che così a buccia estrema 25
 Eresitone fosse fatto secco
 Per digiunar, quando più n' ebbe tema.
 Io dicea fra me stesso pensando: 'Ecco 28
 La gente che perdè Jerusalemme,
 Quando Maria nel figlio die' di becco.'
 Parean l' occhiaie anella senza gemme. 31
 Chi nel viso degli uomini legge *omo*,
 Ben avria quivi conosciuto l' emme.

This passage establishes Dante's recognition of the cryptographic conceit that the human face spells *omo* by a form of the letter *m* which supplies of itself the two o's, and that the letter *m* in itself, accordingly, represents *omo*. The same use of the letter *m* has appeared in our interpretation of the passage containing the acrostic *VEL*, *Par.* xix. 129 (see pp. 163-4).

Dante's identification of himself, as typical, with mankind is expressed in his cryptography by a punning use of the letter *m* as representing mankind. The spelled form of *m* is *emme*, and in acrostics and in his use of the isolated letter Dante seems to suggest a punning use of *emme* as *E ME*.

Now *man*, as a generic term, appears in the original family unit in three forms, as father, mother, and son. The cryptographic use of *m* in the transformation of the *m* into a

lily and an eagle will show, accordingly, three forms of the *m* to correspond with the three persons of the family.

The *m* as it first appears is the mother. This *m*, as will be remembered, is mentioned, *Par.* xviii. 93, as the last letter of the Latin *terram*, which is an anagram, with a redundant *r*, for *MATER*. This anagrammatic reading and the fact that the other two forms of the *m*, the lily and the eagle, spring from the *m*, establish the *m* as a symbol of the mother.

The three forms of the letter, as *m*, lily, and eagle appear in the following cut from Toynbee's *Dante Dictionary*.



The lily is formed by a sprout from the central stem of the *m*. This lily form was recognized in medieval symbolism as phallic. As phallic, it represents the male, and as a sprout from the maternal *m*, the son.

The eagle is formed by the addition of a head to the lily-like sprout of the *m*. The eagle, as the emblem of the empire and the bird of Jove, is a paternal symbol. As being formed by the addition of a head to the other two forms of the *m*, it is to be regarded as the head of the family group which the three forms of the *m* represent.

The three persons of the family trinity, as thus represented respectively by a form of the letter *m*, are represented as *identical* in the sense that they are formed from one substance, the letter *m* which appears in each of them. This method of representing the identity of the three persons of the family by symbols of the three persons in which the symbols are formed of the same substance has appeared in the anagrammatic *MARO*, *RÓMA*, and *AMOR*, which we have already examined. These words, which, as it will be remem-

bered, represent respectively father, mother, and son, are formed of identically the same letters. This identity of the three persons is expressly postulated by Dante for the divine Trinity, which, as he says *Purg.* iii. 36:

tiene una sustanzia in tre persone.

With the family trinity of father, mother, and son thus apparent in the three forms of the letter *m*, it remains to show the symbolism of the *son reborn* which Dante develops in connection with the divine eagle. This symbolism of the *son reborn* appears in what Dante says of the *utterance* of the eagle, *Par.* xx. 22-29:

E come suono al collo della cetra	22
Prende sua forma, e sì come al pertugio	
Della sampogna vento che penetra,	
Così, rimosso d'aspettare indugio,	25
Quel mormorar dell' aquila salissi	
Su per lo collo, come fosse bugio.	
Fecesi voce quivi, e quindi uscissi	28
Per lo suo becco in forma di parole,	

The sound is to be understood, in the symbolism of this passage, as ejaculated from the phallic neck in the form of the divine Word, the *logos* which in the Christian story of rebirth is Christ: "the Word was made flesh."—*John* i, 14.

This symbolism of rebirth is repeated in connection with the eagle in the allusions to the falcon, the stork, and the lark. Those allusions will have to be examined in detail, as they are profoundly significant of the symbolism not only of the transmutations of the *m* but of the entire *Divina Commedia*. When the eagle, in the beginning of *Par.* xix, begins to speak, it does so with outstretched wings, as eagle. Then, *Par.* xix. 34, in a pause between its first and its second utterance, the eagle becomes

quasi falcone ch' esce del cappello.

And in a second pause in its utterance the eagle, which has

previously become like a falcon, becomes like a mother stork that circles about her nest after she has fed her young; and Dante himself becomes, as he develops the figure, like the young stork who has just been fed, *Par.* xix. 91-96. And when, after a third pause, the eagle speaks for the last time, it becomes, *Par.* xx. 73:

quale allodetta che in aere si spazia.

The eagle, along with the other birds to which it is likened, forms, then, the following group: eagle, falcon, stork with its young, and lark. These four birds are used by Dante to suggest the trinity of the family, the father, mother, and son, *along with the son reborn*.

The father symbolism of the eagle ejaculating the divine Word, the *logos*, or son, has already been pointed out. And the singing lark, accordingly, to which the eagle is likened, corresponds to the divine word, or son, which the eagle, as father, utters. With the eagle and lark thus accounted for, the falcon and the stork remain as the symbols of the mother in the double aspect of the divine mother to which I have already frequently alluded.

Let us examine first the falcon as the symbol of the incestuous mother through whom the divine son is to be reborn, just as the divine Christ was reborn on earth as man through the Virgin Mary. The key to the mother symbolism of the falcon is to be found in the passage already quoted in connection with the M as written in the faces of men, *Purg.* xxiii. 22-33. In this passage, the reader will remember, Dante mistook the emaciated souls to be

La gente che perdè Jerusalemme,
Quando Maria nel figlio die' di becco.

The apparent allusion here is to an incident in the siege of Jerusalem. According to Josephus, the inhabitants of Jerusalem became so reduced to starvation during this siege that a certain Maria killed her own son and ate his flesh. And when Dante says here that *Maria nel figlio die' di becco*, he is likening the mother of the child to a bird of prey.

Now Dante's allusion to the Maria of this incident is simply a screen; he is alluding, in the last analysis, to the Virgin Mary, who took her divine son into her womb exactly as the other Maria swallowed her son. In other words, the swallowing of the son is here used as a symbol of incestuous intercourse. Swallowing as a symbol of intercourse is common in myth and folklore, as witness the primitive belief in impregnation by eating. The incestuous character of the eating in this incident is emphasized by Dante himself in the allusion to Erysichthon, line 26, who was punished, on account of his sacrilege toward the mother goddess Ceres, with insatiable hunger. Since Ceres was also the goddess of the harvests of the earth, his hunger is a symbol of his hunger for her. A further indication by Dante of the incestuous character of the act of eating the son in this passage appears in the allusion, line 34, to the *pomo*, the apple symbolizing the apple in the garden of Eden. The eating of the apple in the garden of Eden symbolizes, of course, a sexual transgression, and this transgression, as I shall show in Chapter VIII, seems to have been understood as incestuous.

Bearing in mind that Dante likens the Maria who eats her own son—and is therefore incestuous—to a bird of prey, let us return now to the falcon mentioned in *Par. xix*. The falcon is essentially, as a reference to any history of falconry will show, the bird that preys upon the lark. It was specially trained to hunt the lark by the falconers of the Middle Ages, and Dante here mentions the falcon, to be associated with the lark which is mentioned later, as suggesting the incestuous mother as preying and the incestuous son as prey.

The similitude of the eagle to the falcon is succeeded by the similitude of the eagle to the stork, which is obviously maternal in its circling about the nest and feeding its young, the young stork to which Dante likens himself. The incestuous mother, represented by the falcon, is thus replaced by the fostering mother represented by the stork; and the lark, representing the incestuous son, is replaced

by the young stork representing the incestuous son *reborn*. Thus the symbolism of the transformations of the M, as suggesting father, mother, and son in a family trinity, expresses simultaneously the rebirth of the son, who thus adds a fourth figure to the family exactly as Christ as man adds a fourth figure to the Divine Trinity.

CHRIST

There have been so many indications, in the cryptograms which we have already examined, of Dante's identification of himself with Christ in the *Divina Commedia*, that it may not be necessary to give further proof of the identification. In *Purg.* xxxiii, however, immediately after the prophecy of the 515, there is another 515 in connection with a reference to the coming of Christ which quite definitely connects Dante, as a 515, with Christ. After Beatrice has made the prophecy she continues, *Purg.* xxxiii. 52-63:

Tu nota; e sì come da me son porte,	52
Così queste parole segna ai vivi	
Del viver ch' è un correre alla morte;	
Ed abbi a mente, quando tu le scrivi,	55
Di non celar qual hai vista la pianta,	
Ch' è or due volte dirubata quivi.	
Qualunque ruba quella o quella schianta,	58
Con bestemmia di fatto offende a Dio,	
Che solo all' uso suo la credè santa.	
Per morder quella, in pena ed in disio	61
Cinquemili' anni e più l' anima prima	
Bramò Colui che il morso in sè punio.	

The *cinquemili' anni e più*, line 62, which are said to have elapsed between the fall of Adam and the coming of Christ, suggest the five hundred connected with the DVX as again connected with rebirth. To complete the mystic 515 in this passage there is the concealed 5 in the mention of *Dio*, line 59, and the concealed 10 in the allusion to Christ, line 63. The D of *Dio* conceals a 5, since the D, as 500, may be re-

duced to five by disregarding the zeros. The allusion to Christ gives a ten, and so a one. The *cinquemili*' may be reduced to 5 by disregarding, as usual, the zeros. This 515, coming as it does immediately after the 515 of the prophecy, serves once more to identify Dante with Christ.

In connection with the reference to the divine Trinity, *Par.* xv. 46-57, there is another concealed 515 which again shows Dante as identifying himself, if not here with Christ, with God. The passage reads as follows:

La prima cosa che per me s' intese, 46
 'Benedetto sie tu,' fu, 'Trino ed Uno,
 Che nel mio seme sei tanto cortese.'
 E seguitò: 'Grato e lontan digiuno, 49
 Tratto leggendo nel magno volume
 U' non si muta mai bianco nè bruno,
 Soluto hai, figlio, dentro a questo lume 52
 In ch' io ti parlo, mercè di colei
 Ch' all' alto volo ti vestì le piume.
 Tu credi che a me tuo pensier mei 55
 Da quel ch' è primo, così come raia
 Dall' un, se si conosce, il cinque e il sei.

The *trino ed uno*, line 47, added together as a three and one, make 4, which may be transmuted into the fourth letter of the alphabet, or D. This D is then to be taken as 500. The concealed 1 appears in *primo*, line 56, and the five is *cinque* in line 57. There thus appears 515, with a six left over, line 57. But notice that the words expressing the six, *e il sei*, may be taken in a double sense as "And thou art he." Thus the cryptogram says in effect: "515—and thou art he."

LUCIFER

Inasmuch as Dante is both human and divine, both evil and good, he identifies himself not only with Christ but also with Lucifer, the fallen angel who is

Lo imperador del doloroso regno.

The appearance of Lucifer is described in the following passage, *Inf.* xxxiv. 34-60:

S' ei fu sì bel com' egli è ora brutto, E contra il suo Fattore alzò le ciglia, Ben dee da lui procedere ogni lutto.	34
O quanto parve a me gran maraviglia, Quando vidi tre facce alla sua testa! L' una dinanzi, e quella era vermiglia;	37
L' altre eran due, che s' aggiungieno a questa Sopr' esso il mezzo di ciascuna spalla, E si giungieno al loco della cresta;	40
E la destra pareva tra bianca e gialla; La sinistra a vedere era tal, quali Vengon di là, onde il Nilo s' avvalla.	43
Sotto ciascuna uscivan due grandi ali, Quanto si convenia a tanto uccello; Vele di mar non vid' io mai cotali.	46
Non avean penne, ma di vipistrello Era lor modo; e quelle svolazzava, Sì che tre venti si movean da ello.	49
Quindi Cocito tutto s' aggelava: Con sei occhi piangeva, e per tre menti Gocciava il pianto e sanguinosa bava.	52
Da ogni bocca dirompea coi denti Un peccatore, a guisa di maciulla, Sì che tre ne faceva così dolenti.	55
A quel dinanzi il mordere era nulla Verso il graffiar, che tal volta la schiena Rimanea della pelle tutta brulla.	58

Notice first, in connection with this passage, the initials of the first four *terzine*, in which the three faces of Lucifer are described:

34	S
37	O
40	L
43	E

Read **SOLE**

I will return to the significance of this reading, which is extremely important. But I wish to show first the reading

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on the entire passage. Consider, then, on the first lines of the nine *terzine* the following marginal letters:

34	SE
37	O
40	L
43	E
46	SOT
49	NON
52	QUI
55	D
58	A

Read: SOLE: SONO QUI DANTE

On the third *terzina* consider the following marginal letters, lines 40-42:

40	L
41	SO
42	E

Read: SOLE

The repetition of SOLE in the acrostic of this *terzina* and in the acrostic of the four *terzine* shows the emphasis that Dante places on the sun symbolism of the passage.

On the fourth *terzina*, lines 43-45, consider the following marginal letters:

43	E
44	L
45	V

Read: VEL

This VEL calls attention to the whole passage as a veil for the cryptographic readings which we have found and for the symbolism which must now be developed.

The acrostic SOLE, which appears twice in the four *terzine* describing Lucifer, is of the highest importance for the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* in identifying the sun as the symbol of Lucifer. Throughout the *Divina Commedia* the sun is constantly used as the symbol of God, of

Christ, and of Dante; that it should now appear as the symbol of Lucifer implies the essential identity of all these persons.

It is not alone in the *Divina Commedia* that the sun is the symbol of Lucifer; in *Isaiah* xiv. 12-15, is the following passage:

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

“For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

“Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”

This passage must at once be recognized as an expression of Lucifer in terms of the sun myth, exactly as the story of Christ is expressed in terms of the sun myth. Christ is the sun above the horizon, the sun that makes the journey of the sky from east to west; Lucifer is the sunken sun, the sun that makes the journey of the underworld in the night, from west to east; and they are both the same sun. And Dante, whose downward and upward journey in the *Divina Commedia* is precisely synchronized with the journey of the sun, has likewise the sun for his symbol and is likewise identified with Christ on the one hand and Lucifer on the other. The identity of Christ and Lucifer accords with the profound precept that everything is its own opposite. Dante, therefore, who by virtue of his divine nature is all that is good, is by virtue of his human nature all that is evil. For Dante as ELIOS, Greek for sun, see page 349.

Now it must not be forgotten that Lucifer, with his three faces which represent in distorted and discolored form the three persons of the divine Trinity, is a triadic symbol of the three members of the family, father, mother, and son—a triadic symbol which represents the three as united to-

gether. The situation, as we have already seen, in which the three members of the family may be considered to be so united as to form, not three beings, but a single being, is in the act of union by which the father begets the son in the body of the mother: the three in this situation are physically united. In the case of the incestuous son who accomplishes his own rebirth, the father and the son are identical, since the son, in begetting himself, is the father of himself. The sin for which the incestuous son is punished and through which, in spite of the punishment, he accomplishes his rebirth, is in thus usurping the father's place. This sin is the sin of Lucifer; it is the *superbo strupò* for which he was cast from Heaven; and it is in the image of his sin that he is here represented. As a triad Lucifer is represented simultaneously with his mother, either as in incestuous union with her or as in her womb, and with his father, in the sense of replacing him.

Now if Lucifer, as I have indicated in the preceding pages, is to be understood as a guise of Dante, he must be understood to represent Dante, as son, in the same peculiar relation to father and mother in which he stands himself—in a relation, in other words, which represents Dante as the incestuous son who accomplishes his rebirth in disobedience to the divine command. As symbolized in the triadic Lucifer, Dante, as son, is represented as united with father and mother in the sense of being identified with them. This idea of the essential identity of the three members of the family group is expressed by Dante in his representation of them, in *Inf.* i, as *leone*, *lupa*, and *lonza*; distinct as they are as three separate animals, they are identical in the animal nature which they possess in common.

A still clearer symbol of the identity of the three members of the family group appears in Dante's use, *Par.* II, of the three mirrors. These three mirrors, in connection with the light which they equally reflect and which makes with them a group of four, must be understood, it seems to me, as the counterpart of the *leone*, the *lupa*, and the *lonza*, in connection with the *Veltro*, in *Inf.* i; and of the

quattro stelle
Non viste mai fuor che alla prima gente,

in *Purg.* i. The four of these groups represent the father, mother, son, and son reborn; and the three mirrors, as equally reflecting the light as the symbol of the reborn son, symbolize the essential community of the original three in the reproduction (reflection) of the fourth.

Analogous to Lucifer and to the divine Trinity as triadic symbols of the united family, and so of Dante himself as son in relation to father and mother, are the three-headed monster Cerberus, and Geryon, the monster with three bodies. The father symbolism of these fiends appears in the fact that they represent the ruling power of

Lo imperador del doloroso regno.

Their symbolism as the son appears from the fact that they are themselves the prisoners as well as the rulers of Hell. The mother symbolism is indicated for Cerberus in his ravenous hunger, like the sex-hunger of the *lupa*; in his huge belly, like the swelling in pregnancy; and by his being appeased by handfuls of earth (semen) thrown down his throats. His throats have the same female symbolism which we shall find in the next chapter for the gate of Hell. The mother symbolism of Geryon is indicated in his dragon-like shape, the dragon being a common mother symbol, and in his carrying Dante, as in pregnancy, from one stage of his journey to another. The mother symbolism of the act of carrying Dante appears again in the figure of Lucia, who carries him up the slope of Purgatory just as Geryon carries him down into the abyss of Hell. The description of the posture of Geryon in swimming, as like that of a diver

Che in su si stende, e da piè si rattrappa,

must be understood as an allusion to the posture in coitus.

The symbolism may be suggested in the acrostic on the passage including this line, *Inf.* xvi. 121-136:

Ei disse a me: 'Tosto verrà di sopra 121
 Ciò ch' io attendo, e che il tuo pensier sogna
 Tosto convien ch' al tuo viso si scopra.'
 Sempre a quel ver ch' ha faccia di menzogna 124
 De' l' uom chiuder le labbra finch' ei puote,
 Però che senza colpa fa vergogna;
 Ma qui tacer nol posso: e per le note 127
 Di questa commedia, lettor, ti giuro,
 S' elle non sien di lunga grazia vote,
 Ch' io vidi per quell' aer grosso e scuro 130
 Venir notando una figura in suso,
 Maravigliosa ad ogni cor sicuro,
 Sì come torna colui che va giuso 133
 Talora a solver l' ancora ch' aggrappa
 O scoglio od altro che nel mare è chiuso,
 Che in su si stende, e da piè si rattrappa. 136

Consider on the last line of the canto and the first lines of the five preceding *terzine* the following marginal letters:

121	E
124	SE
127	MA
130	CH IO
133	S
136	C

Read: ESCE MASCHIO

It is in connection with Geryon that Dante develops the enigmatic symbolism of the cord, *Inf.* xvi. 106-114:

Io aveva una corda intorno cinta, 106
 E con essa pensai alcuna volta
 Prender la lonza alla pelle dipinta.
 Poscia che l' ebbi tutta da me sciolta, 109
 Sì come il Duca m' avea comandato,
 Porsila a lui aggroppata e ravvolta.
 Ond' ei si volse inver lo destro lato, 112
 Ed alquanto di lungi dalla sponda
 La gittò giuso in quell' alto burrato.

The meaning of this passage, which the commentators have consistently missed, confirms the mother symbolism of Geryon's act of *bearing* Dante.

Consider first the initials of the first lines of the three terzine:

106	I
109	P
112	O

Read: PIO

PIO is a word which appears in the acrostic PIO RIMASI in connection with the mother symbolism of the closing lines of *Purgatorio*.

The cord referred to here is sometimes explained as the cord worn by the Franciscans, whose order, according to Buti, Dante is said to have joined in his youth and to have quitted before the end of his novitiate. But whether the testimony of Buti be accepted or not, the highly elaborated symbolism of the cord in the present passage can hardly be explained as a mere historical allusion to Dante's novitiate in a religious order. It would be much more likely that if Dante were actually referring to the cord worn by the Franciscans, he would refer to it for the sake of its original symbolism. The cord worn by the Franciscans is, as I surmise, a mother symbol by virtue of its forming a circle; and the fact that it is worn about the body of the monk symbolizes his union with the divine mother.

But Dante's use of the cord is to be more fully explained, I believe, in the light of a primitive custom to which I have found references in Frazer's *Golden Bough* and *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*. According to this custom the umbilical cord of a boy is preserved until the age at which he is initiated into the rites of manhood. These rites symbolize rebirth, and one of the ritualistic details consists in throwing the umbilical cord, which has been preserved from his infancy, into the stream or sea. As the stream or sea is a mother symbol, he may thus be supposed to symbolize his reunion with his mother by the very tie which had united them originally. Such a reunion is, of course, of the essence of the rites of rebirth. How, or in what form, such a custom may have come to the knowledge of Dante I hazard no guess;

I am confident, however, that in whatever form it survived in medieval symbolism, it explains the curious manner in which he summons Geryon to bear him, like an evil mother, to the consummation of his incestuous rebirth.

CHAPTER VII
THE SEAL

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THE SEAL

PEREMAS, Latin for "do thou remove," is a word that has appeared several times in the cryptographic readings presented in the previous chapters. The cryptographic use that Dante makes of this word is so complicated that it will now have to be examined in detail.

The first instance of PEREMAS to which I called attention appears in the acrostic on the marginal letters of the first lines of the first four *terzine* of the first canto of *Purgatorio* (see p. 27). The importance of the word is indicated by the prominence of this position. Let me show this acrostic again:

I	PER
4	E
7	MA
10	S

Read: PEREMAS

As I pointed out, the acrostic on these lines is a double acrostic, for in addition to the reading: PEREMAS, there is also on the *initials* of the four lines in question the acrostic: SPEM.

SPEM is thus formed of four letters of the seven letters of PEREMAS, and the remaining three, which are E, R, and A, may be considered as spelling ERA. It thus appears that PEREMAS may be transmuted as an anagram into ERA SPEM.

There is another transformation of PEREMAS which appears very clearly in the first four *terzine* of *Par. viii*:

Solea creder lo mondo in suo periclo
 Che la bella Ciprigna il folle amore
 Raggiasse, volta nel terzo epiciclo; 4
 Perchè non pure a lei facean onore
 Di sacrificio e di votivo grido
 Le genti antiche nell' antico errore;
 Ma Dione onoravano e Cupido, 7
 Questa per madre sua, questo per figlio,
 E dicean ch' ei sedette in grembo a Dido;
 E da costei, ond' io principio piglio, 10
 Pigliavano il vocabol della stella
 Che il sol vagheggia or da coppa or da ciglio.

Consider on the first lines of these *terzine* the following marginal letters:

1 S
 4 PER
 7 MA
 8 E

Read: PEREMAS

But notice that on the first *three* *terzine* the letters read: SPERMA; and that on all four *terzine* the very letters which give: PEREMAS give: E SPERMA.

The reader will bear in mind the sense of the text, which treats of the amorous, and will note especially the words: *il folle amore raggiasse*, an expression of love in relation to light which I hope this chapter may make clear. The *terzina* immediately following this passage, 13–15, is very suggestive; the words: *salire in ella*, as expressing the entrance into a female form, will prove to be consistent with the general sex symbolism of the poem.

There is still another transmutation of PEREMAS which I wish to show before going into the question of what these transmutations signify. The first three *terzine* of *Inf.* iii are a unit in themselves, comprising the inscription over the gate of Hell. These *terzine* read as follows:

Per me si va nella città dolente,
 Per me si va nell' eterno dolore,
 Per me si va tra la perduta gente.

Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore; 4
 Fecemi la divina potestate,
 La somma sapienza e il primo amore.
 Dinanzi a me non fur cose create 7
 Se non eterne, ed io eterno duro:
 Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate!

Consider on all the lines of this passage the following marginal letters:

1 PER ME SI VA
 2 PER ME SI VA
 3 PER ME SI VA
 4 GIUSTI
 5 F
 6 LA SO
 7 DI
 8 SE NO
 9 LA

Read: PER ME SI VA, PER ME SI VA, PER ME SI VA.

DANTE SI FA SUO SIGILLO

Now in what form can the phrase: PER ME SI VA, three times repeated, be considered as the seal which Dante makes? The answer to this question is the fact that the letters of the phrase: PER ME SI VA are a transmutation of the letters in PEREMAS VI. PEREMAS, the word which we have seen in so many cryptograms, is the seal of Dante.

And just as the phrase: PER ME SI VA, may be transmuted into: PEREMAS VI, it may also be transmuted, first, into: VI ERA SPEM, and, second, into: VI E SPERMA.

The explanation of these anagrammatic transmutations is the subject of the present chapter.

Let us consider first the word: SPEM. *Spem*, or "hope," is one of the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and love (in the King James version of the English Bible they are called: faith, hope, and charity). These three virtues correspond to the three persons of the divine Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The correspondence of the three theological virtues to the three persons of the Trinity is apparent in Dante's indication, in the inscription over the gate of Hell, of the Father as power, the Son as wisdom, and the Holy Ghost as love. Power is equivalent to will, wisdom to intellect, and love to emotion. Thus expressed, therefore, the three persons of the Trinity correspond to the three categories of the mind: will, intellect, and emotion. To the father, as will, corresponds faith; to the son, as intellect, corresponds hope; and to the Holy Ghost, as emotion, corresponds love.

The correspondence of faith to will appears in the fact that, as it is expressed in Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, article on *Faith*: "faith . . . may be defined as the personal acceptance of something as true or real . . . on grounds that, in whole or in part, are different from those of theoretic certitude. . . . The moment of will enters into the assent of faith . . ."

The correspondence of hope to intellect appears in the fact that hope is expectation based on knowledge. The correspondence of love to emotion is self-evident: love is emotional, as distinguished from the voluntary character of faith and the intellectual character of hope.

These correspondences were generally recognized in medieval philosophy; and they are implied in the anagrammatic appearance of *SPEM* in the seal of Dante. Dante is taking for his device the particular virtue of the divine Son and is therefore once more identifying himself with Christ.

With the relation of *SPEM* to Christ thus established, it remains to establish the relation of *SPEM* to the *SPERMA* which appears with *SPEM* in the acrostic *PEREMAS*, the seal of Dante. The "hope" of Christ is hope in his second coming, or, in other words, in his rebirth. *SPERMA* is a symbol of birth, and it is to be considered here, therefore, as the symbol of moral rebirth, borrowed from the biological facts of physical birth. Christ, who in early symbolism is frequently represented as phallus, as in his symbol of the fish, is likewise *SPERMA* in the sense that he is to be *reborn*. In the appearance of *SPERMA*, therefore, in the seal of Dante, as his symbol,

Dante is expressing the idea that he, like Christ, is to be reborn, and that he possesses within himself the means of his rebirth.

Dante's use of such a symbol as his seal is not peculiar to him. Sexual, and, more particularly, phallic symbolism, was commonly used in heraldic devices in the Middle Ages. An instance is the lily of Florence, the *fleur-de-lys*, which is a symbol of the phallic triad.

Let us now turn back to the phrase: *PER ME SI VA*, which appears in the inscription over the gate of Hell. This phrase, by which the gate of Hell is described, may be transmuted, as I have already shown, into: *PEREMAS VI* and *VI E SPERMA*.

In describing the gate of Hell by the phrase: *PER ME SI VA*, which says, anagrammatically, that *VI E SPERMA*, Dante indicates, as corresponding to the *male* symbolism of *SPERMA*, the *female* symbolism of the gate of Hell. In other words, the gate of Hell, though which *si va*, is the opening through which the *sperma* passes into the female body of the earth, thence to be reborn from the central cavity of the earth, which is the womb of the earth, or Hell proper.

The symbolism of Hell as the womb and of the gate of Hell as vulva is not confined to the *Divina Commedia*. It underlies, indeed, all primitive and early Christian ideas of the various abodes of the soul after death. This symbolism becomes quite explicit in the saying of Tertullian: "Woman is the gate of Hell." But it has never been recognized, so far as I have been able to discover, that in the *Divina Commedia* the geography of Hell is based on a precise parallel between the structure of the earth and the structure of the female body. And this same parallel, indeed, is elaborated in the *Divina Commedia* in the structure of Purgatory and of Heaven.

HELL

The concept of the earth as mother earth is common to all peoples in all ages; the earth is the mother of all the life that swarms upon it. And as a corollary of this concept of the earth

as mother is the concept of the grave, or of Hell, or whatever supposed abode of the dead is in the interior of the earth, as the womb of the earth, from which man emerges in birth and to which he returns in death. The desire to live is probably the origin of the belief in a life after death, and this belief is rationalized in many myths which represent the abode of the dead as the womb from which the dead were born in the first place and from which they are to be reborn.

In the myths in which the abode of the dead is symbolized as the womb of the earth, the entrance of the dead into the grave, or Hell, is constantly symbolized as the sexual act. It is the reunion of the son with the mother in an act of incest which is to result in the rebirth of the son. This symbolism of Hell as the womb, and of the entrance of the soul into Hell, or of the entrance of the corpse into the grave, as sexual union of mother and son, is inherent in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. Explicit association of Hell and the womb of the Virgin Mary may be found in Hans Schmidt's *Jona*.

It is not strange, therefore, that the same symbolism should appear in the *Divina Commedia*. Dante simply borrowed the symbolism from earlier pagan and Christian sources; he elaborated it, however, with a precision of detail which is unique, I believe, in the history of literature.

The female structure of Dante's earth, in the centre of which his Hell is situated, appears in the following parallel:

<i>Selva oscura</i> , <i>Inf.</i> i. 2.	Pubic hair.
<i>Il diletto monte</i> , <i>Inf.</i> i. 77.	Mons Veneris.
The gate of Hell, <i>Inf.</i> iii.	Vulva.
The river Acheron, <i>Inf.</i> iii. 78.	Bodily streams, seminal, lacteal, urinary, and fecal.
<i>La proda . . . della valle d'abisso dolorosa</i> , <i>Inf.</i> iv. 7-8.	Entrance of vagina.
<i>Lavia lunga</i> , by which the poets descend from the <i>proda</i> , <i>Inf.</i> iv. 22.	Vagina.
<i>Un nobile castello</i> , where there was <i>lumiera</i> , <i>Inf.</i> iv. 108.	Clitoris.

- Descent from the first circle to the second circle, *Inf.* v. 1-2. Continuation of vagina.
L'entrata to the city of Dis, *Inf.* viii. 81. Cervix.
 The city of Dis, which Dante enters, *Inf.* ix. 106. Uterus.

Let us now examine the course of Dante's journey through this female structure.

In connection with the *selva oscura*, *Inf.* i. 2, is to be noticed the *lago del cor*, *Inf.* i. 20. The *selva oscura* is the place where Dante, in the poem, is symbolized as having just been born; and the water symbolism of the *lago del cor* is analogous to the waters of the flood. The waters of the flood, in the Biblical account of Noah, are the amniotic fluid which accompanies the birth that the story of the flood symbolizes. The *lago del cor*, therefore, completes the birth symbolism of the opening lines of *Inferno*.

Immediately after his birth as thus symbolized, Dante attempts to ascend the delectable mountain, a mother symbol; and the fears which beset him are his fears of the act of incest which the ascent symbolizes.

The entrance of Dante, as SPERMA, into the female body of the earth is described in terms of coitus symbolism. Immediately before he arrives at the gate of Hell Dante says of himself, *Inf.* ii. 127-132:

Quali i fioretti dal notturno gelo	127 .
Chinati e chiusi, poi che il Sol gl' imbianca,	
Si drizzan tutti aperti in loro stelo;	
Tal mi fec' io di mia virtute stanca:	130
E tanto buono ardire al cor mi corse,	
Ch' io cominciai come persona franca:	

This description of Dante's *virtute stanca* becoming like the little flowers which stand erect on their stem is phallic symbolism for the erection with which Dante enters the vulva of the earth, the gate of Hell. And in the description of the act of entering, the phallic symbolism is continued, *Inf.* iii, 19-21; Virgil, as Dante says, *la sua mano alla mia pose*

. . . and *mi mise dentro*. Dante, in other words, enters the gate of Hell as phallus and continues the journey as SPERMA.

Immediately after the entrance, the coitus symbolism is continued with the most precise details. The *tumulto, il qual s'aggira*, *Inf.* iii. 28, progresses from *voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle*, line 27, to a climax, just before passing the stream of the Acheron, which Dante describes in the following lines, *Inf.* iii. 130-136:

Finito questo, la buia campagna	130
Tremò sì forte, che dello spavento	
La mente di sudore ancor mi bagna.	
La terra lagrimosa diede vento,	133
Che balenò una luce vermiglia,	
La qual mi vinse ciascun sentimento:	
E caddi, come l' uom cui sonno piglia.	136

The trembling, the sweat, the sighing, the flash of red that overcomes all feeling, and the swoon, all preceding the moment in which the seminal stream Acheron is passed (i.e. passes) belong unmistakably to the description of an orgasm.

In his further descent through the female interior of the earth Dante proceeds like phallus and SPERMA. He dallies in the "noble castle," the clitoris, a spot of comparative pleasure and repose; and passes thence to the region where the souls of the incontinent are punished, *Inf.* v, by being borne convulsively on winds which symbolize the convulsive movements of the vagina. He reaches next the region in which the gluttonous are punished, a region in which

Grandine grossa, e acqua tinta, e neve
 Per l'aer tenebroso si riversa:
 Pute la terra che questo riceve.
 —*Inf.* vi. 10-12.

These lines symbolize the seminal rain which the earth, as the female symbol, receives. To be noted is the reference to smell in *pute*; the odor symbolism is consistently developed throughout *Inferno*.

From the region of the gluttonous Dante passes to the

shore of the Styx, one of the rivers of Hell, which forms a marsh, or lake, about the city of Dis (the uterus). This lake is another seminal symbol which corresponds to the English use of "lake" in the vocabulary of physiology.

When Dante has passed the Styx he enters the uterine city of Dis. But his entrance into the city is obstructed by the Furies, who call on Medusa to come and turn him into stone. The danger from Medusa consists in the sight of her. Virgil expresses this danger in the following words addressed to Dante, *Inf.* ix. 55-57:

Volgiti indietro, e tien lo viso chiuso;
Chè se il Gorgon si mostra, e tu il vedessi.
Nulla sarebbe del tornar mai suso.

The episode is so important for the symbolism of the poem that, after telling how Virgil covered Dante's eyes with his own hands, the poem continues with the well-known cryptic lines, *Inf.* ix. 61-63:

O voi, che avete gl' intelletti sani,
Mirate la dottrina che s'asconde
Sotto il velame degli versi strani.

The foregoing episode and the reference to the "hidden doctrine" have never been satisfactorily explained. They become clear by considering, as I have suggested, Hell as the symbol of the mother and Dante's act of entering Hell as the sexual act, by which he commits incest as a means of rebirth.

The incestuous character of the act is here indicated by Dante in the reference, *Inf.* ix. 54, to the assault of Theseus. The reference is to the descent into the lower regions which Theseus made in order to carry off Proserpine, the wife of Pluto, the king of the lower region. As the wife of the god, Proserpine represents the mother whom the human son attempts to separate from the jealous father and appropriate to himself. This attempt symbolizes an attempted act of incest.

The danger in which Dante stood of being turned into stone is a symbolical use of the so-called lithopaedion. A

lithopaedion is a foetus calcified in the womb of its mother. If Dante, as foetus in the womb of the city of Dis, should be turned into stone, i.e. become a lithopaedion, he could never be reborn.

The *dottrina che s'asconde* in the whole episode is a reference to incest as a means of rebirth. The mother, who is here symbolized by the *regina dell'eterno pianto*, *Inf.* ix. 44, and also by her surrogate, Medusa, *is not to be seen!* She is not to be seen because it must not be the visible human mother with whom the act of incest is to be committed, but the divine mother who is invisible. In other words, Dante, in his journey to rebirth, must not be conceived by her, but by her better counterpart, the mother whom he finds at the end of his journey through Hell.


Dante is here signifying that the incest by which his rebirth is accomplished has nothing to do with the physical act between human mother and human son; he is signifying that the incest to which he refers is a symbol of the spiritual process by which a man may return to the divine source of life itself, the divine mother from whom he and all mankind are born. If she should become visible, that is, if she, as the divine mother, should become confused with her visible form in the actual human mother and so be identified by the poet-son with his human mother, the symbolized incest would become dangerous in the sense of becoming a physical, instead of a spiritual, fact.

In connection with Medusa as the mother whom Dante is not permitted to see, it may be noted that a similar symbolism seems to be suggested at the end of *Par.* xxv and at the beginning of *Par.* xxvi. It is recorded in these passages that, when Dante turns to look at Beatrice, his sight is "quenched." Beatrice, as I shall prove in the next chapter, is the symbol of his mother, and I suggest that the reason that his sight is here "quenched" is to prevent his looking upon his mother with illicit, or too physical, affection, just as he had been prevented by the hands of Virgil from looking upon the mother image of Medusa. Certainly an association of the temporary blindness in the incident in *Paradiso* with the

covering of his eyes at the approach of Medusa seems to be suggested by the acrostic on the first three lines of *Par.* xxvi, in which Dante refers to his *viso spento*:

Mentr' io dubbiava per lo viso spento,
Della fulgida fiamma che lo spense
Uscì un spiro che mi fece attento.

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

1 ME
2 D 
3 US

Read: MEDUS

Now notice the passage at the end of the preceding canto, *Par.* xxv. 130-139:

A questa voce l' infiammato giro	130
Si quietò con esso il dolce mischio, Che si faceva del suon del trino spiro,	
Si come, per cessar fatica o rischio,	133
Li remi pria nell' acqua ripercossi Tutti si posan al sonar d' un fischio.	
Ahi quanto nella mente mi commossi,	136
Quando mi volsi per veder Beatrice, Per non poter vedere, ben ch' io fossi	
Presso di lei, e nel mondo felice!	139

Consider the following marginal letters on the last line of the canto and on the first lines of the three preceding terzine:

130 A
133 SI
136 A
139 PRESS

Read: PRESSA SIA

Dante is near Beatrice but he cannot see her, so that the wish expressed in the cryptogram: "May she be near," is appropriate to the text.

Analogous to Medusa as a mother symbol are the bird-like Harpies who inhabit the *bosco*, *Inf.* xiii. The forest is used as a

mother symbol in three important passages in the *Divina Commedia*: the *selva oscura*, *Inf. i*, the *divina foresta*, *Purg. xxviii*, and the *bosco*. The mother symbolism of the Harpies, as well as of the *bosco*, is indicated in the following interior sequence, *Inf. xiii. 9-13*:

9 tra cecina e corneto i luoghi colti
 10 quivi le brutte arpie lor nidi fanno
 11 che cacciar delle strofate i troiani
 12 con tristo annunzio di futuro danno
 13 ali hanno late e colli e visi umani

Read A of *cecina*, 9; E of *brutte*, 10; R of *strofate*, 11; T of *futuro*, 12; M of *umani*, 13: MATRE.

Associated with the hostile, or dangerous, mother is the hostile or dangerous father in his guise as lion. He has already appeared as the lion in *Inf. i*. He appears again in an acrostic on the passage in which Dante hears but is not permitted to see Medusa—the passage which begins with one of the most significant of Dante's cryptic hints, *Inf. ix. 61-72*:

O voi che avete gl' intelletti sani, 61
 Mirate la dottrina che s' asconde
 Sotto il velame degli versi strani.
 E già venia su per le torbid' onde 64
 Un fracasso d' un suon pien di spavento,
 Per cui tremavano ambedue le sponde;
 Non altrimenti fatto che d' un vento 67
 Impetuoso per gli avversi ardori,
 Che fier la selva, e senza alcun rattento
 Li rami schianta, abbatte, e porta fuori. 70
 Dinanzi polveroso va superbo,
 E fa fuggir le fiere e li pastori.

Consider on the first lines of these four terzine the following marginal letters:

61 O
 64 E
 67 N
 70 LI

Read: LIONE

Now let us return to Dante's journey in *Inferno*. The gate of the city of Dis is finally opened to Dante by a mysterious personage, *del ciel messo*, of whom Dante says, *Inf.* ix. 88-90:

Ahi quanto mi pareo pien di disdegno!
 Venne alla porta, e con una verghetta
 L'aperse, che non ebbe alcun ritegno.

The identity of this personage is one of the mysteries of the *Divina Commedia*. That he is important for the symbolism of the poem is indicated by the acrostic on the *terzina* just quoted. Consider on the three lines the following marginal letters:

88	A
89	VE
90	L

Read: VELA

This personage veils, as I believe, Dante himself. As someone *del ciel messo* he is the same as the DVX, who is designated, *Purg.* xxxiii. 44, as *messo da Dio*. The *verghetta* is his phallic symbol, which opens the female gate. Notice that the initials of the three lines of this *terzina*, in which the opening of the gate is described, are A, or I; v, or 5; and L, or 50. They make, without the zero, the cryptic 515. This same number appears in *terzina* 82-84, in which the mysterious personage is described. The initials of the three lines of this *terzina* are:

82	D	OR	500
83	M	OR	1000
84	E	OR	5

With the zeroes omitted, these numbers again give the cryptic 515 in association with the mysterious personage, who represents the divine power of the symbolized sexual act of Dante. Consider the following marginal letters of this *terzina*:

82 DA
 83 M
 84 E

Read: ME, D . . . A . . .

Dante thus indicates himself by his initials. In the present guise Dante is thus analogous to Mercury with the phallic caduceus, who is the phallic personification of Jupiter. He is also analogous to Gabriel at the annunciation with the phallic lily, who is the phallic personification of the divine father in the Christian story of the birth of Christ.

With Dante thus inside the uterine city of Dis, it remains for us to examine the manner of his exit from it; this exit, as I shall show, symbolizes his delivery from the uterus in the sense of his being at last *reborn*.

In the center of the city of Dis, in the lowest spot of Hell, stands Lucifer, the *imperador del doloroso regno*. When Dante sees him he becomes, through fear, *gelato e fioco*, *Inf.* xxxiv. 22:

Com' io divenni allor gelato e fioco,	22
Nol domandar, Lettor, ch' io non lo scrivo,	
Però ch' ogni parlar sarebbe poco.	
Io non morii, e non rimasi vivo:	25
Pensa oramai per te, s' hai fior d' ingegno,	
Qual io divenni, d' uno e d' altro privo.	

In these cryptic words, which should be examined with particular care, the reader is adjured to think for himself what Dante then *became*, since Dante himself will not write it.

What was it, then, that Dante became, if he was here neither dead nor alive? The only condition which may be considered as neither dead nor alive is the foetal condition, and Dante is saying here that in the presence of Lucifer he became a foetus. This interpretation is confirmed by the interior sequences in the passage:

22	com'io divenni allor gelaTO E Fioco
23	nol domandar letTOr ch'io NON lo scrivo
24	pERO ch'ogni parlar sarebbE poco
25	io non morii e non rimasi VIVO
26	pensa oramai per te s'hai Fior d'ingegno

Notice first that in the words *gelato e fioco*, line 22, the letters of FETO are grouped together, thus: (gela)TO E F(ioco).

Now read from F of *fioco*, 22; TO of *lettor*, 23; E of *pero*, 24: FETO.

Read, in a vertical line, from TO of *gelato*, 22; NON, 23; final E of *sarebbe*, 24; VIVO, 25; F of *fior*, 26: FETO NON VIVO.

It is therefore as a foetus that Dante, clinging to Virgil, is carried by Virgil, climbing down the shaggy sides of Lucifer, to a spot from which they seem to Dante to begin to climb up again. Dante imagines that they are climbing back from this spot to where he has been before. But, as he afterwards learns, the spot is the center of gravity, i.e., the center of the earth; and therefore, in continuing still in the same direction toward the southern side of the earth, the poets have to begin to climb instead of continuing to descend. Such is the apparent meaning of the spot by which Dante becomes confused.

That the spot has some deeper symbolism is indicated by the words which Dante addresses to the reader in regard to it, *Inf.* xxxiv. 91-93:

E s' io divenni allora travagliato,
La gente grossa il pensi, che non vede
Qual è quel punto ch' io avea passato.

What Dante means to indicate here is that the *punto* which he passed is the *pene* of Lucifer. It must be remembered that Lucifer is standing in Hell in such a position that his genitals are exactly at the centre of the earth and so at the centre of gravity. Dante, who, at the sight of Lucifer, became FETO, must now have become SPERMA again in order to pass through the *pene* of Lucifer into the cavity below.

That Dante means the *pene* as the mysterious *punto* which he passed should be apparent in the words in which he refers to it, lines 91-93. *Travagliato*, line 91, has a double meaning referring to coitus, and *gente grossa* has a double meaning referring to pregnancy. The verb for *gente grossa* is *pensi*, line 92, which is an anagram for *penis*, and which is

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in addition the word on which terminate three interior sequences spelling: PENE. They appear as follows:

90 E vidili le gambe in su tenere
 91 e s'io divENni allora travagliato
 92 la gENTE grossa il PENsi che non vede
 93 qual e quel Punto ch'io avea passato
 94 lEVati su disse il maEstro in piede

Read from the E, initial of line 90; EN of *divenni*, 91; P of *pensi*, 92: PENE.

Read from EN of the same word, *pensi*, 92; P of *punto*, 93; E of *levati*, 94: PENE.

Read EN of *gente*, 92; P of *punto*, 93; E of *maestro*, 94: PENE.

In addition to the sequences, the three *terzine* in which they appear, *Inf.* xxxiv. 88–99, contain an acrostic:

Io levai gli occhi, e credetti vedere	88
Lucifero com' io l' avea lasciato,	
E vidili le gambe in su tenere.	
E s' io divenni allora travagliato,	91
La gente grossa il pensi, che non vede	
Qual è quel punto ch' io avea passato.	
'Levati su,' disse il Maestro, 'in piede:	94
La via è lunga e il cammino è malvagio,	
E già il sole a mezza terza riede.'	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these three *terzine*:

88	IO
91	ES
94	L

Read: ELIOS

The initials of the lines of the first *terzina* of the foregoing passage are:

88	I
89	L
90.	E

Read: ELI

ELI is God the father, and Lucifer is not only an aspect of Christ as the fallen son, but also an aspect of God the father in that he is emperor of the nether world.

The acrostic ELIOS is thus associated with Lucifer in his final appearance in the poem, just as the acrostic SOLE is associated with Lucifer in his first appearance. The interior sequences spelling PENE in the passage containing the acrostic ELIOS point to the phallic symbolism of the sun in the penetrating power of its light. I have already referred to this symbolism, and I shall have to develop it further in connection with the sex symbolism of Paradise.

It is of the highest importance to notice that Dante, in passing through the PENE of Lucifer, must biologically, have been reduced to SPERMA, the significant word that appears in his seal. He starts in the poem as OMO; he then becomes FETO; and finally SPERMA. In this succession of changes Dante reverses in his journey through Hell the natural order by which he was, in his origin, first SPERMA, then FETO, and finally OMO. The journey through Hell is thus a retrogression by which Dante retraces the successive stages of his development as a human being; he returns to his original condition as SPERMA in the body of the father symbolized here as Lucifer, in order that he may make a fresh start on the *cammin di nostra vita*, in order, in other words, that he may be born again. This backward course through the successive stages of the natural evolution of a human being is expressed by Dante as a universal tendency; he defines this idea in the *Convivio*, iv. 12, 138, when he says, in words that should never be forgotten in connection with the *Divina Commedia*, that *il sommo desiderio di ciascuna cosa, e prima dalla Natura dato, è lo ritornare al suo Principio*.

This statement that the supreme desire of everything is to return to its source is a rationalization of the desire to return to the mother as the source of life.

After Dante has retrogressed from OMO to FETO and finally to SPERMA in *Inferno*, he reverses the process and progresses, in the final lines of the final canto, from SPERMA to new-born man. The importance of the final lines of *Inf.*

xxxiv is not sufficiently appreciated; I wish therefore to call attention to the geography of the region through which they describe Dante as passing after he leaves Lucifer.

On his journey from the centre of the earth, where he leaves Lucifer, to the surface of the southern hemisphere, where he emerges on the shore of the island of Purgatory, Dante passes first a *foro d'un sasso*, *Inf.* xxxiv. 85; then a *natural burella*, line 98; then *la buca d'un sasso*, line 131, through which descends a stream along a *cammino ascoso*, line 133; and finally, at the end of the *cammino ascoso*, a *pertugio tondo*, through which Dante emerges to the surface of the earth.

Now it must be observed that this *interior* between the centre of the earth and the southern hemisphere is a *duplicate* of the interior of Hell, which is between the centre of the earth and the northern hemisphere.

The *pertugio tondo*, at the surface of the southern hemisphere, corresponds to the gate of Hell, at the surface of the northern hemisphere.

The *cammino ascoso*, with the stream in it, corresponds to the course which Dante follows in Hell from the gate of Hell to the gate of the city of Dis.

The *buca d'un sasso*, through which the stream descends from this hidden way to the centre of the earth, corresponds to the gate of the city of Dis.

The *natural burella* corresponds to the city of Dis.

The *foro d'un sasso*, through which Dante emerges in leaving Lucifer, is the *southern end* of a cylindrical hole in the rock in which Lucifer is placed with his feet at the southern end and his head emerging from the northern end. Lucifer is *erect* in this hole, which is a female symbol, in an eternal act of copulation. This *foro d'un sasso* is the opening which connects the interior of Hell with the southern interior of the earth, and belongs, accordingly, to them both in common. The fact that the genitals of Lucifer are situated at the center of gravity, and so at the center of the universe, indicates the central importance of the sexual life in Dante's symbolism. In Dante's universe there exists a detailed parallel between

its physical structure and laws and its spiritual structure and laws; the physical center of gravity is to be understood, accordingly, as corresponding to the spiritual center of gravity. The lowest point in the universe, in other words, is the symbol of the lowest moral value, and corresponds to the sexual nature of man, as symbolized by the genitals. This symbolism is apparent in medieval charts showing the human body as the microcosm of the universe considered as the macrocosm. In these charts of the human body as a repetition *in parvo* of the universe the genitals are definitely shown as corresponding to the center of gravity.

The interior extending from the centre of the earth to the southern hemisphere is, as I have now shown, similar in structure to the interior of Hell. And these two interiors have likewise a similar symbolism. The *pertugio tondo* corresponds to the vulva; the *cammino ascoso* to the vagina; the *buca d'un sasso* to the cervix; and the *natural burella* to the uterus. The *foro d'un sasso*, in which Dante sees Lucifer's feet, is the southern end of a cylindrical passage by which the southern interior and Hell are connected; it is therefore repeated by a similar *foro d'un sasso* at the northern end, through which the upper part of Lucifer emerges. The southern interior is thus an exact counterpart of the interior of Hell and, accordingly, a geographical symbol of the mother.

From the mother region of Hell, therefore, Dante is ejected, as SPERMA, by the agency of the father figures of Lucifer and Virgil, into the mother region of the southern interior; and in his brief passage through the southern interior Dante must be supposed to be transformed successively, by the process of gestation, from SPERMA to FETO and from FETO once more to OMO, the reborn man who is now prepared to continue the ascent to God. Having entered the gate of Hell by an act of incest, Dante emerges from the *pertugio tondo*, the counterpart of the gate of Hell as a symbol of the vulva, by the act of birth, which is here, for Dante, rebirth.

It is evident from the foregoing interpretation of the two interiors of the earth that the earth, as Dante describes it, is to be considered as *two mothers*, or as a dual mother. This

symbolism of the interior of the earth as two mothers, or as a dual mother, is repeated by Dante in his description of the *surface* of the earth, which he divides as *land* in the northern hemisphere and *water* in the southern hemisphere, both land and water being symbols, and contrasting symbols, of the mother. The dual motherhood of the earth corresponds to the conception of the two mothers, good and evil, to which I have already referred as existing in myths of rebirth. Dante's symbolism of the dual character of the earth as mother is derived in the first place, I believe, from the Pythagorean doctrine of *two earths*, the earth and the counter earth, *Antictona*, which Dante discusses and rejects in a highly significant way in the *Convivio*, iii. 5, 29 ff. For my interpretation of Dante's symbolism of the surface of the earth as a dual mother, see pp. 267-75.

The cylindrical hole in the rock in which Lucifer stands at the center of the earth opens into each of the interiors symbolizing the two mothers; it is, therefore, the organ which they possess in common and by which they are connected. It corresponds, not to any physical conformation in the female body, but to the function whereby the SPERMA which is received by one aspect of the mother is transformed and delivered by the other aspect of the mother.

In the passage of the son from one mother to the other through this opening there is signified the *death* of the son in the mother whom he leaves at the moment of his *birth* in the mother whom he enters. Death and birth are thus synonymous terms, and the ambivalence of these two states is of the highest importance in the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*. Dante develops this ambivalence throughout his poem with the greatest precision. The eternal existence of man is a series of deaths which are deaths in one mother and births in the other; existence thus alternates between the two mothers exactly as the sun is described in the passage just referred to in the *Convivio* as alternating between the two *mother* cities, *Maria* and *Lucia*, which Dante, in discussing the Pythagorean doctrine of the earth and the counter earth, imagines to be situated at the two poles of the earth. These

successive existences of the individual in the two mothers between whom he alternates is an expression by Dante of the Pythagorean metempsychosis, or "wheel of birth;" and it is in this sense that Dante's successive existences in Earth, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise are to be understood. This succession of existences is analogous to the successive revolutions of the sun, which is forever alternately above the earth and below the earth, and forever alternating, in the summer and winter solstices, between the north and the south poles of the earth.

PURGATORY

Dante's symbolism of Hell as the mother is repeated in his symbolism of Purgatory as the mother. With the difference that Hell is situated in the interior of the earth and Purgatory on the surface of the earth, the female physiology of Purgatory is strictly parallel to the female physiology of Hell.

Dante's Purgatory is a mountain on an island. As an island, Purgatory is thus related to the classical conception of the abode of the dead in the Blessed Isles. The Blessed Isles were supposed to lie somewhere in the west; they are a development of the sun myth, representing the spot where the sinking sun enters the earth in the evening in order to be reborn the following morning. The island is thus the symbol of the female organ by which the incestuous son, in the sun myths, enters the body of the mother.

As a mountain, Purgatory is related to the common conception of sacred mountains where the gods and the spirits of men were supposed to dwell. Such mountains appear in the classical Olympus and the Teutonic Venusberg, in which especially the mother symbolism is manifest in the fact that the mountain is the dwelling place of the mother goddess. The mountain is, indeed, one of the preeminent symbols of motherhood; the analogy between mountain and mother which underlies this symbolism is to be found in the Mons Veneris, the breast, and the swelling of pregnancy. The

mountain as a birthplace is developed with curious elaboration by Dante himself in his reference to the birth of Jupiter, *Inf.* xiv. And as the mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary is constantly likened to a mountain in early Christian literature.* Compare in *Purg.* xxii. 104-105, the words:

del monte
Che sempre ha le nutrici nostre seco.

There is another indication of the mother symbolism of Dante's Purgatory in the shape which he gives it. Purgatory is a truncated cone with terraces, exactly like the Tower of Babel. The mother symbolism of the Tower of Babel is not, perhaps, commonly recognized; this symbolism is manifest, however, in the fact that the Tower was intended to be the means by which the builders were to ascend from Earth to Heaven, exactly as Purgatory for Dante is the efficient means of ascent. The ascent from Earth to Heaven is the equivalent of rebirth; and as the instrument of rebirth, Purgatory, like the Tower of Babel which it resembles in shape, is the symbol of the mother. This interpretation of the mother symbolism of the Tower of Babel is confirmed by the comparison in the *Song of Songs*, of the Shulamite, commonly accepted as a symbol of the Virgin Mary and of the church, to a tower, and by the constant use of the tower as a symbol of the Virgin Mary in medieval Christian literature. The mother symbolism of the tower, or of the Tower of Babel in particular, is apt to be disregarded on account of its more obvious phallic symbolism, based on its phallic shape. But like so many symbols, the tower is ambivalent; it symbolizes in a single image both the means of rebirth, as uterus, and the being who is to be reborn, as phallus.

That Dante had the mother symbolism of the Tower of Babel in mind appears from the cryptograms contained in the passage in which he describes Nimrod, the builder of the Tower of Babel. At the sight of Dante Nimrod utters a cry

*See Hirn: *The Sacred Shrine*; also the articles on Mountains, Mountain Gods, and Mountain Mother in Hastings: *Encyc. of Religion and Ethics*.

which is commonly regarded by the commentators as pure gibberish, *Inf.* xxxi. 67:

Rafel mai amech izabi* almi.

These words are a prayer; the proof that they are a prayer is to be found both in their meaning as a cryptogram and in the acrostic on the passage in which they appear. Let me show first the acrostic on the first lines of the four *terzine* beginning with the line in question, *Inf.* xxxi. 67-78:

'Rafel mai amech izabi almi,'	67
Cominciò a gridar la fiera bocca, Cui non si convenian più dolci salmi.	
E il Duca mio ver lui: 'Anima sciocca,	70
Tienti col corno, e con quel ti disfoga, Quand' ira o altra passion ti tocca.	
Cercati al collo, e troverai la sogà	73
Che il tien legato, o anima confusa, E vedi lui che il gran petto ti dogà.'	
Poi disse a me: 'Egli stesso s' accusa;	76
Questi è Nembrotto, per lo cui mal coto Pure un linguaggio nel mondo non s' usa.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these *terzine*:

67	R
70	E
73	CE
76	P

Read: PRECE

In view of this suggestion that the words: *Rafel mai amech izabi almi*, are a prayer, it may not be surprising that they yield, as a cryptogram, the name of the person to whom the prayer is addressed. Consider the initials of these words:

*Moore reads: *sabi*. I have adopted the reading *izabi* of Toynbee, Casini, Polacco, and others. The syllable *i* is necessary for the scansion.

R
M
A
I
A

Read: MARIA

The acrostic is an invocation of the divine mother.

The prayer itself appears in the initial and contiguous letters of the words of the "gibberish" line, as follows:

RAFEL	R
MAI	M
AMECH	AME
IZABI	I
ALMI	A

Read: MIRA A ME

The prayer, addressed to Maria, is that she should have regard for the suppliant.

Since the words of this line are a pure invention of Dante, they permit him complete freedom in turning them to cryptographic purposes. This freedom in the formation of the words themselves accounts for the superficial nonsense of the words and for the profound and diversified cryptographic use of them. For we have not yet exhausted the cryptographic significance of this line. Consider in the words of the line the following telestic and contiguous letters:

RAFEL	EL
MAI	MAI
AMECH	CH
IZABI	ABI
ALMI	ALMI

Read: CHIAMI MIA BELLA

Thus the very words which yield as an acrostic the name of the divine mother, Maria, yield in the telestic reading the name of the mother of Dante. It is as if Dante, when he heard Nimrod calling MARIA in the acrostic, explained to

Nimrod in the telestic that the MARIA whom he is calling is the same as BELLA. Thus Maria and Bella are expressly identified. Presented as they are together in two cryptograms contained in the same words, they represent the mother in her dual character. This identification of Maria and Bella as the divine and the human form of the mother will be developed in the next chapter.

It was in punishment of the impiety of Nimrod's act, as builder of the Tower of Babel, by which he strove to ascend into Heaven, that

Pure un linguaggio nel mondo non s'usa.

This reference to the fact that only one language is not used in the world may be taken as a hint of the use of cryptography.

The symbolism of the Tower of Babel is fundamentally incest symbolism. To ascend into Heaven is to enter the symbol of the mother. It is appropriate, therefore, to the character of Nimrod that his prayer is addressed to the divine mother Maria and that he beseeches her to have regard for him.

The analogies which suggest the mother symbolism of Purgatory are confirmed by the precise parallel which Dante establishes between the structure of Purgatory and the structure of the female body. At the beginning of *Purgatorio* Dante is to be considered as having just been reborn from Hell, exactly as at the beginning of *Inferno* he is to be considered as having just been born on earth. The parallel between the structure of Hell and the structure of Purgatory in terms of the female body may be shown as follows:

The sea, referred to as <i>mar sì crudele</i> , <i>Purg.</i> i. 3.	Amniotic fluid. Cf. <i>lago del cor</i> , <i>Inf.</i> i. 20.
The <i>giunchi</i> , the reeds which fringe the shore, <i>Purg.</i> i. 102.	Pubic hair. Cf. <i>selva oscura</i> , <i>Inf.</i> i. 2.
The <i>più lieve salita</i> of the mountain, <i>Purg.</i> i. 108, which Dante is directed to ascend and which he begins to ascend in <i>Purg.</i> iii.	Mons Veneris. Cf. <i>il dilettoso monte</i> , <i>Inf.</i> i. 77.

- The narrow *calla* through which Dante passes at the foot of the mountain into Purgatory from the shore, *Purg.* iv. 22. Vulva. Cf. gate of Hell, *Inf.* iii.
- The ascent from the narrow opening to the Valley of the Princes, *Purg.* vii. Entrance of vagina. Cf. the passage from the gate of Hell to the *nobile castello*, *Inf.* iii. iv.
- Valley of the Princes, *Purg.* vii. Clitoris. Cf. *nobile castello*, *Inf.* iv. 108.
- Ascent from the Valley of the Princes to the gate of Purgatory proper, *Purg.* vii-ix. Vagina. Cf. descent from the *nobile castello* to the gate of the city of Dis, *Inf.* v-vii.
- Gate to Purgatory proper, *Purg.* ix. 76. Cervix. Cf. gate to the city of Dis (Hell proper), *Inf.* viii.
- Purgatory proper, *Purg.* x-xxvii. Uterus. Cf. city of Dis, *Inf.* ix-xxxiv.

The significance of these parallels, as pointing to the mother symbolism of Purgatory, is unmistakable. The stream symbolism which we found in Hell, and which must be considered not only as seminal and lacteal but also as urinary and fecal, is represented in Purgatory by Lethe and Eunoe. This confusion of the seminal stream with the lacteal, the urinary, and the fecal appears not only in primitive myth but also in unconscious fantasies, as in dreams. The four-fold aspect of the stream symbolism appears in the Biblical account of the Garden of Eden, from which four streams flowed.

Immediately after the rebirth of Dante on the shore of Purgatory Virgil washes the face of Dante; this washing is analogous, indeed, to the washing of the new-born child, and especially analogous to the rite of baptism as a symbolic imitation of birth.

Before Dante reaches the entrance to Purgatory, the

entrance which, as I said, symbolizes the vulva and which he enters as by a sexual act, there is suggested the erection symbolism which we saw in the reference to the stem of the flowers, *Inf.* ii. 129, before his approach to the gate of Hell. This suggestion appears in these lines, *Purg.* iii. 12-15:

La mente mia che prima era ristretta,
Lo intento rallargò, sì come vaga,
E diedi il viso mio incontro al poggio,
Che inverso il ciel più alto si dislaga.

This description of his mind parallels the description of his drooping courage, in the passage in *Inf.* ii, which became like the flowers erect on their stem.

The entrance itself into Purgatory is described, *Purg.* iv. 19-21, in terms which suggest its symbolism:

Maggiore aperta molte volte impruna
Con una forcatella di sue spine
L'uom della villa, quando l'uva imbruna.

The allusion to an opening which a man *impruna* with his *spine* is obviously capable of a double meaning. Consider the following marginal letters of this *terzina*:

19 MA
20 CO
21 L

Read: COLMA

This reference to a climax may be understood as symbolical of the sexual act.

The coitus symbolism of Dante's passage through the *calla* is expressed by *le piume del gran disio* which the ascent through the passage requires and also by the following lines, *Purg.* iv. 31-33:

Noi salivam* per entro il sasso rotto
E d' ogni lato ne stringea lo stremo,
E piedi e man volvea il suol di sotto.

The pressing of the walls of the opening upon the body

*Moore reads: *salavam*, an obvious misprint.

passing through it and the attitude of the hands and feet indicate the sexual character of the act. The phallic symbolism in the passage is further indicated by the acrostic on the three lines of the *terzina* in question. Consider the following marginal letters on these lines:

31	N
32	E
33	E P

Read: PENE

Dante is the PENE in the sex symbolism of passing through the opening of the mother-mountain.

The female symbolism of the Valley of the Princes appears in the allusion to it as a *grembo*, *Purg.* vii. 68, a word that is repeated in describing the guardian angels as coming from the *grembo di Maria*, *Purg.* viii. 37; in the hymn to the Virgin Mary, *Purg.* vii. line 82; in the entrance of the serpent, *Purg.* viii. 98, into the *grembo*—the serpent, which is likened to the serpent that tempted Eve, being certainly phallic; and in the pleasant sleep in the *grembo*. The symbolism of the Valley of the Princes is developed with an abundance of detail into which I have no time to go.

The character of Dante's sojourn in the Valley of the Princes is expressed in the dream which he had there. In this dream, which is described in *Purg.* ix, Dante seemed to be carried away by an eagle up to the fire. That this eagle is a symbol of the mother with whom incest is suggested by the fire to which she carries him, should be evident from the mother symbolism which I have already shown in the eagle in *Par.* xviii and following (see pp. 201-11). The eagle in the passages in *Paradiso* appears indeed as a composite symbol of the family triad. In the present instance its symbolism is determined as maternal by the act of carrying the child. Dante's allusion to the "mother," *Purg.* ix. 37, immediately on wakening, proves that he intends the mother symbolism in the dream.

The coitus symbolism of Dante's passage through the gate to Purgatory proper is indicated by the convulsive move-

ment of the rock through which he passes immediately beyond the gate, *Purg.* x. 7-9, and in the allusion to the moon regaining its bed, line 15. The moon, on account of its waxing and waning as in pregnancy, is one of the supreme symbols of the mother in ancient and medieval symbolism. But here again I am obliged to forego developing in detail the symbolism of the gate and of Dante's passage through it.

I wish, however, as more particularly pertaining to the cryptography of the *Divina Commedia*, to call attention to the seven P's which the angel cuts on the forehead of Dante and directs him to wash off. The letter P is generally supposed to stand for the Italian word for sin: *peccato*; and the seven P's to stand, thus, for the seven so-called mortal sins. I am convinced that this explanation of the seven P's, correct though it may be for the mere manifest meaning, does not go to the root of Dante's symbolism.

Considering the sex symbolism of the poem, I suggest that Dante intends the letter P as the phallic symbol which it was recognized to be. The letter P is the shape of the Greek letter for R, which appears in variations of the so-called *crux ansata*:



This cross is a monogram composed of the first two letters of the name of Christ according to the Greek spelling: ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ. But the symbolism of the forms in this cross is much older than the date of Christ. This cross, indeed, was first associated with Osiris. The P, or, as here, the Greek letter for R, is not only the complete phallic shape; it is also the shape of a key; and the phallus as the key which opens the female door is an ancient and wide-spread conception. That Dante here intends the P to represent a key is indicated by the reference which the angel makes to keys immediately after he has cut the P's on Dante's forehead.

The use of the P suggests here, therefore, by virtue of its appearing in the *crux ansata* as a monogram of Christ, the

Christlike character of Dante's journey; and by its being a symbol of the phallus as key, the P suggests here also the sexual character of this journey.

The seven P's as phallus suggest the seven *acts* of creation, which are recorded in the seven days of creation and symbolized in the phallic seven branched candlestick. The words with which the angel directs Dante to wash the "wounds" of the seven P's have a double meaning. He says, *Purg.* ix. 113-114:

Fa che lavi,
Quando sei dentro, queste piaghe.

In the double meaning of these words, there is a reference to the sexual act which Dante is to perform when he is *dentro*, the sexual act, seven times repeated, as in the creation of the world, whereby he is to recreate himself.

Having penetrated into the womb, or Purgatory proper, of the Purgatorial mother, Dante passes from the womb of Purgatory into the womb of the Terrestrial Paradise. His passage from womb to womb thus symbolized is accomplished by an arduous progress through a wall of fire, *Purg.* xxvii, and the ascent of a stairway from the top step of which the Terrestrial Paradise opens out.

The progress through the wall of fire and the ascent of the stairway symbolize the passage of Dante as SPERMA from the Purgatorial mother into the motherlike Terrestrial Paradise. This passage is exactly analogous to his passage via Lucifer from Hell to the southern interior of the earth; and just as we saw that Dante was reduced to the condition of SPERMA before passing from Hell to the southern interior of the earth, he must likewise be considered here, in the uppermost terrace of Purgatory, as having been reduced to SPERMA in order to pass from Purgatory to the Terrestrial Paradise.

The retrogressive character of the ascent of the mountain of Purgatory, disguised as a progress from the greater sinfulness of the lower cornices to the lesser sinfulness of the higher, must not be overlooked. For just as Dante has retrogressed in Hell to the original *evil* in man, so here in Purgatory he

retrogresses to man's original sinlessness, as exemplified in the condition of Adam in the Terrestrial Paradise before the fall. Here, as in Hell, Dante is illustrating the general principle which he enunciates in the *Convivio* that the supreme desire of everything is to return to its source. That this desire may express itself as incest desire is apparent from the fact that in incest desire the child seeks to return to its source in the mother.

The retrogressive ascent of Purgatory to the original sinlessness of man is symbolized, as I have said, by Dante's retrogression from human form to the form of SPERMA, as which he is passed through the fire and up the stairway. His form as SPERMA is indicated, as I have already shown in my treatment of Statius (pp. 195-200), by his being, during the passage through the fire, *between* his poetical father Virgil and his poetical mother Statius, the proper position of SPERMA at the moment of conception. The fire and the stairway, as commonly both in dreams and conscious symbolism, is coitus symbolism. Coitus and the act of birth are ambivalent in rebirth symbolism, since both coitus and birth are a passage through the vulva.

Dante, then, is not *reborn* in Purgatory. He is merely prepared for rebirth by being reduced to the primitive condition in which he is capable of rebirth, and then passed into the womb of the mother, the Terrestrial Paradise, by whom his rebirth is accomplished. Thus the Terrestrial Paradise, as the mother in whom Dante enters by a sexual act in order to be conceived anew, corresponds to the southern interior of the earth, in which Dante is reconceived after having been reduced to the original form of SPERMA in Hell. The Terrestrial Paradise as a mother symbol is the counterpart of Purgatory; Purgatory and the Terrestrial Paradise together are the two mothers, or the dual mother, analogous to the dual mother of the earth as symbolized by the northern interior of the earth, or Hell, and the southern interior of the earth.

That the Terrestrial Paradise is indeed a mother symbol is self-evident from its being the Garden of Eden. The mother is

preeminently the garden, and has been universally so symbolized. The mother symbolism of the Terrestrial Paradise is developed, as I shall show in the next chapter, in the episode of Dante's sleep with Beatrice. In this sleep is signified the union of Dante and Beatrice, whereby he enters her womb as he has entered the womb of the Terrestrial Paradise; and it is in the womb of Beatrice that he is carried to Paradise.

PARADISE

The mother symbolism of Hell and Purgatory is repeated in the structure of Dante's Paradise. The symbolism of Heaven, or the sky, as mother is much more ancient, however, than Dante. The sky is a womb-like enclosure of all the life beneath it, and this similitude is expressed in the symbolism of all peoples in all ages; it is apparent in certain variations of the sun myth, where the sky is the mother of the sun.

It must not be forgotten, moreover, that the primitive conceptions of the earth and the sky as mother were rationalized into a philosophic form in which the universe, or macrocosm, is considered as exactly analogous in structure to the human body, the microcosm, or little universe. According to Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, to which the reader should refer, "the idea of such an analogy is present in the Aristotelian philosophy, and was developed by the Stoics in connection with their doctrine of *pneuma*, the divine reason, which is also the warm vital breath that animates and purposively pervades the universe."

The analogy between the universe and the *mind* of man underlies all forms of idealism. But preceding this idealistic conception of the macrocosm and the microcosm, and continued in connection with it, there was worked out in the greatest detail the analogy between the structure of the universe and the structure of the human body. This physical correspondence underlies the structure of the universe in the *Divina Commedia*; it is expressed by Dante in the phrase,

questa è forma
 Che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante;

—*Par.* i. 104–105:

and in his reference to Paradise as the *deiforme regno*, *Par.* ii. 20.

The universe is made in the image of God, exactly as man is made in the image of God, as expressed in *Genesis* i. 27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Now if the universe is made in the image of God, and man is in the image of God, it follows that the universe and man, being both in the image of God, must resemble each other. In other words, the universe must be the image of man.

Moreover, if the universe is the image of God as the Christian Trinity, it must have a *male* aspect, as corresponding to God the Father, and in its male aspect it must have an aspect corresponding not only to God as father but also to God as Son. And it must also have a *female* aspect corresponding to God as Holy Ghost, or divine mother. That there is a female aspect of the God described in Genesis is implied in the sentence from Genesis where it is said that God, creating man in his own image, created man *male and female*.

The foregoing observations have the strictest pertinence to the structure of Dante's universe, which has a male, or *penetrating and conceptual*, form corresponding to the father and the son of the divine Trinity; and a female form corresponding to the mother or Holy Ghost, of the divine Trinity. The unity of the Divine Trinity, thus expressed as a family, is expressed by their union in the moment in which the divine son is conceived; it is at this moment, as a biological fact, that father, mother, and son are together and therefore one.

Rational as the idea thus appears to be, from the point of view of ancient and medieval philosophy, that the universe has a female form as well as a male form, it should not be surprising that Dante expresses this female form in the structure of his Paradise, just as he expresses it in the struc-

ture of Hell and Purgatory, and that he expresses the male form in the symbolism of his journey as SPERMA through the female form of Paradise.

Let us now examine the correspondences between the structure of Paradise and the structure of the female body, correspondences which in turn reveal the parallel between the structure of Paradise and the structure of Hell and of Purgatory. The parallel is clear, but in order to recognize the parallel it is necessary to recognize the method by which the symbolism in *Paradiso* is expressed. Beyond the division of Paradise into ten regions, it has no specific topography, and therefore the *organi del mondo*, to use a suggestive phrase of Dante's, are not materially localized in *Paradiso*, as they are in *Inferno* and in *Purgatorio*. The various regions of Paradise are differentiated by the different kinds of thought expressed in them; it is from the symbolism of ideas rather than from topographical symbolism that the meaning of Paradise is to be inferred. The following parallel columns will show the extent to which the structure of Paradise resembles the structure of the female body and the structure of Hell and Purgatory.

<i>Lo gran mar dell' essere, Par.</i> i. 113.	Amniotic fluid. Cf. <i>lago del cor, Inf.</i> i. 20, and <i>mar sì crudele, Purg.</i> i. 3.
<i>Foglie of the alloro, the foliage of the laurel on the mountain, Par.</i> i. 15, 26. <i>Parnaso, Par.</i> i. 16.	Pubic hair. Cf. <i>selva oscura, Inf.</i> i. 2, and the <i>giunchi, Purg.</i> i. 102. Mons Veneris, Cf. <i>il diletto monte, Inf.</i> i. 77, and the <i>più lieve salita, Purg.</i> i. 108.
<i>Foce, Par.</i> i. 44, reinforced by the allusion to the passage to Colchos, <i>Par.</i> ii. 16, these allusions referring to Dante's entrance into the sphere of the moon.	Vulva. Cf. gate of Hell, <i>Inf.</i> iii, and the narrow <i>calla, Purg.</i> iv. 22.

- Rivo*, *Par.* i. 137, together with *acque*, *Par.* iii. 11, *acqua*, *Par.* iii. 123, and *santo rio*, *Par.* iv. 115.
- Passage from the sphere of the moon to the sphere of Mercury, *Par.* v.
- The *peschiera*, *Par.* v.
- Passage from the sphere of Mercury to the sphere of Venus, *Par.* viii.
- Entrance into the sphere of Venus. The conical shadow of the earth which extends through the first three heavens, coming to an apex at the sphere of Venus, reduplicates in its form the hollow cone of Hell and the solid cone of the mountain of Purgatory. Thus the shadow of the earth represents the organs already named; the circle of the
- Bodily streams, seminal, lacteal, urinary and fecal. Cf. Acheron, *Inf.* iii. 78, and Lethe and Eunoe, *Purg.* xxviii. 130-131, and elsewhere.
- Entrance of vagina. Cf. the passage from the gate of Hell to the *nobile castello*, *Inf.* iii, iv; and the ascent from the narrow opening to the Valley of the Princes, *Purg.* vii.
- Clitoris. Cf. *nobile castello*, *Inf.* iv; and the Valley of the Princes, the *grembo*, *Purg.* vii.
- Vagina. Cf. descent from the *nobile castello* to the gate of the city of Dis, *Inf.* v-vii; and the ascent from the Valley of the Princes to the gate of Purgatory proper, *Purg.* vii-ix.
- Cervix. Cf. gate to the city of Dis (Hell proper), *Inf.* viii; and gate to Purgatory proper, *Purg.* ix. 76.

cone in the sphere of the moon represents the vulva; the shadow from the sphere of the moon to the sphere of Venus, the vagina; and the apex of the cone, the cervix.

The third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth circles. The uterine character of the heavens beyond the shadow of the earth is suggested by the allusion, *Par.* ix, 82, to *la maggior valle in che l'acqua si spanda*. For the development of the symbolism of *la maggior valle*, see pp. 267-73.

Uterus. Cf. city of Dis, *Inf.* ix-xxxiv; and Purgatory proper, *Purg.* x-xxvii.

The passage of Dante through the heavens thus symbolized as the female body is expressed in terms of sexual union and birth. The expression of this union and birth, or rebirth, is throughout *Paradiso* principally in terms of the phallic symbolism of the sun and of light, the penetrating power of the sun. Especially clear is this symbolism in the following lines, describing the actual entrance into the sphere of the moon, *Par.* ii. 34-36:

Per entro sè l'eterna margarita
Ne recepette, com'acqua recepe
Raggio di luce, permanendo unita.

The entrance of light into a transparent body is one of the common symbols of the sexual union whereby the Virgin Mary conceived her divine child. The light enters the object without rupturing its surface; the unruptured surface through which the light enters corresponds, in medieval symbolism, to the unruptured hymen of the Virgin, whereby she received the divine child into her womb without losing the sign of her virginity. The light is phallic, and the object through which it passes is the female.* The entrance of the

*See Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*.

light into "the eternal pearl," as described in the *terzina* just quoted, recalls the acrostic readings on the opening lines of *Par. i.* which are: VELA PENE, on a passage treating of the "light" of God, and IN UNA PERLA (see pp. 29-30). That the light which enters the pearl in the present passage has the phallic symbolism which I suggest is proved by the acrostic on the three lines of the *terzina*:

34 PE
35 NE
36 RAGGIO DI LUCE

Read: PENE: RAGGIO DI LUCE

The phallic symbolism of light in the *Divina Commedia*, and especially in *Paradiso*, is so important that Dante has not limited himself to the foregoing acrostic to indicate his meaning. There are, indeed, several acrostics showing the same reference to the ray of light as phallic.

Following are the last four lines of *Par. v.*:

Per più letizia sì mi si nascose 136
 Dentro al suo raggio la figura santa,
 E così chiusa chiusa mi rispose
Nel modo che il seguente canto canta. 139

Consider the following marginal letters of these four lines:

136 PE
137 D
138 E
139 NE

Read: PENE ED

ED is Dante's signature and it is also a copulative conjunction. Note the word *raggio* in line 137.

For further cryptographic evidence of the symbolism of light, see pp. 106-10, 290.

The light symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* is further developed in such a way that the act of seeing is phallic just as the ray of light is phallic. Sight is supposed to penetrate

a transparent object as light penetrates it; and Dante as one who sees God is the same as Dante who unites himself with God in a union symbolized as sexual. The symbolism of Medusa in *Inf.* ix now becomes clear. As I suggested in speaking of her appearance at the gate of the city of Dis, Medusa is a symbol of the mother identified with the mother symbol of Hell itself. The danger for Dante of seeing her is that the act of sight, as penetrating an object, is the symbol of sexual union.

The sex symbolism of Dante's progress through the female form of Paradise is further developed in the *focce*, *Par.* i. 44, which is mentioned in connection with Dante's entrance into Heaven and which I regard as a veiled allusion to the vulva. The *focce* is the spot through which the sun rises at the vernal equinox, the season assigned to the Creation and the Annunciation. Dante is thus to be considered as symbolized by the sun at the moment when it passes through the *focce* as vulva in its union with the divine mother, the sky, and in its rebirth.

The phallic character of the sun is further expressed in the description of the sparks which it emits, *Par.* i. 60:

Qual ferro che bogliente esce del foco.

There is further phallic symbolism in the likening of Dante's ascent to Heaven to the flight of an arrow, *Par.* i. 119, *Par.* v. 91. The arrow, like the arrow in the myth of Cupid, is phallic.

The sex symbolism of the *peschiera* in the sphere of the moon appears from the common phallic symbolism of the fish, which was, on account of its phallic symbolism, also accepted in medieval symbolism as the symbol of Christ himself in his regenerating power.

The identification of Christ with the fish was expressed in early Christian symbolism by considering the five letters of the Greek word for fish, 'ΙΧΘΥΣ, as the initials of five words giving the name and title of Christ (see pp. 6, 95, 399).

The *peschiera*, as a female symbol, is the place where the

fish swims. Dante has emphasized by an acrostic the passage in which the *peschiera* is described, *Par. v. 97-111*:

E se la stella si cambiò e rise,	97
Qual mi fec' io, che pur di mia natura	
Trasmutabile son per tutte guise!	
Come in peschiera, ch' è tranquilla e pura,	100
Traggoni i pesci a ciò che vien di fuori	
Per modo che lo stimin lor pastura;	
Sì vid' io ben più di mille splendori	103
Trarsi ver noi, ed in ciascun s' udia:	
'Ecco chi crescerà li nostri amori.'	
E sì come ciascuno a noi venia,	106
Vedeasi l' ombra piena di letizia	
Nel fulgor chiaro che da lei uscia.	
Pensa, lector, se quel che qui s' inizia	109
Non procedesse, come tu avresti	
Di più sapere angosciosa carizia;	

The initials of the first lines of these five *terzine* are:

97	E
100	C
103	S
106	E
109	P

Read: PESCE

The passage on which this acrostic appears contains, lines 98-99, the remarkable words, already referred to:

pur di mia natura
Trasmutabile son per tutte guise.

The lines immediately following this acrostic are:

E per te vederai, come da questi
M' era in disio d' udir lor condizioni,
Sì come agli occhi mi fur manifesti.

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

112	E P
113	MERA
114	S

Read: PEREMAS

This is a double acrostic, as appears by considering the following marginal letters on the same lines:

112 E
113 ME
114 S

Read: SEME

The uterus of the anthropomorphic Paradise of Dante is, as I have suggested, to be found in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth circles of Paradise—the entire region between the first two circles of Paradise, through which the shadow of the earth extends, and the spaceless Empyrean. This region corresponds to the City of Dis in *Inferno* and Purgatory proper in *Purgatorio*. The determining sex symbolism of this region is to be found in the ninth canto of *Paradiso*, where Dante enters the sphere of Venus, just as the determining sex symbolism of the City of Dis as uterus is to be found in the ninth canto of *Inferno*, and as the determining sex symbolism of Purgatory proper is to be found in the ninth canto of *Purgatorio*. Paralleling the Venus of the uterine region of Paradise is the Proserpine, mother goddess of the underworld, in the uterine region of Hell. The number nine of these cantos is in itself significant. Nine is the number associated with the mother, on account of the nine months of gestation.

The ninth canto of *Paradiso* should be reread with especial attention to its curious insistence on illicit love in relation to the history of the church. Notice the allusion to the harlot Rahab, *Par.* ix. 116, who in medieval symbolism is considered as the type of the church and so of the divine mother. Notice also that the canto ends on the word *adulterio*, which recalls the *superbo strupo*, *Inf.* vii. 12.

In connection with this *adulterio* notice the acrostic that appears on the last seven lines of the canto, *Par.* ix. 136-142:

A questo intende il papa e i cardinali: 136
Non vanno i lor pensieri a Nazzarette,
Là dove Gabriello aperse l' ali.

Ma Vaticano e l' altre parti elette	139
Di Roma, che son state cimiterio	
Alla milizia che Pietro seguette,	
Tosto libere fien dell' adulterio.'	142

Consider on the last line of the canto and the first lines of the two preceding *terzine* the following marginal letters:

136	A
139	MA
142	TO

Read: AMATO.

Now consider on all the lines of the same passage the following marginal letters:

136	A QUE
137	NON
138	LA D
139	MA
140	DI
141	AL
142	TOSTO LIBE

Read: SONO QUI L'AMATO DI BELLA. DANTE

Notice also the allusion to *Feltro, Par. ix. 52*, which we have already seen to be so important for the symbolism of the adulterous mother. But the most remarkable confirmation of the uterine symbolism of the sphere of Venus appears, *Par. ix. 82*, in the description by Folco of the Mediterranean as

La maggior valle in che l'acqua si spanda.

For the elucidation of the symbolism implied by this line I must refer the reader to pp. 267-73, as it must be developed in connection with the mother symbolism of the earth.

From the uterus of the revolving spheres of Paradise Dante passes to the motionless Empyrean, from space to the spaceless, from the material Paradise to the immaterial, where all existence is *luce intellettuale piena d'amore*.

The passage from the ninth heaven into the Empyrean is analogous to the passage, in *Inferno*, from the northern interior of the earth, or Hell, into the southern interior, via the FENE of Lucifer. The passage from the material to the immaterial heaven is likewise analogous to the passage, in *Purgatorio*, from Purgatory to the Terrestrial Paradise.

And analogously the Empyrean is the symbol of the mother, as the southern interior of the earth and the Terrestrial Paradise are symbols of the mother. And just as the mother symbolism of the southern interior of the earth reduplicates the mother symbolism of Hell, and as the mother symbolism of the Terrestrial Paradise reduplicates the mother symbolism of Purgatory, so the mother symbolism of the Empyrean reduplicates the mother symbolism of the nine material heavens. Thus the Empyrean together with the material heavens of the nine spheres represents the divine mother in her dual aspect.

The principal symbolic features of the Empyrean are the river of light and the circle of the mystic rose. The river of light in the Empyrean corresponds to the *ruscelletto* in the southern interior of the earth, and to the mystic rivers, Eunoe and Lethe, in the Terrestrial Paradise. The mother symbolism of the river of light appears from the fact that it suggests to Dante, *Par.* xxx. 82-87, a reference to the mother's milk:

Non è fantin che sì subito rua	82
Col volto verso il latte, se si svegli	
Molto tardato dall' usanza sua,	
Come fec' io, per far migliori spegli	85
Ancor degli occhi, chinandomi all' onda	
Che si deriva perchè vi s' immegli.	

The circle of the mystic rose in the Empyrean corresponds to the *pertugio tondo* in the southern interior of the earth. The female symbolism of the rose is obvious, since the rose has been universally used as the symbol of the vulva. Dante intensifies this symbolism by his reference, *Par.* xxxii. 18, to *le chiome del fior*, a suggestion of hair in connection with

The incestuous character of the act here described is apparent in the address to her, *Par.* xxxiii. 1, as

Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio.

The implications of this phrase are clear. The Virgin Mary is the daughter of God; through God her father she conceived and bore her divine son; and through her son she conceived and bore her son a second time. For the cryptographic device in this passage see pp. 347-8.

In Paradise, according to the medieval mystics and also according to the *Divina Commedia*, it is always noon. Noon is the hour symbolizing the sun in the sexual act, and the hour of noon as eternal in Paradise thus indicates that the divine father and the divine mother are eternally united in the act of eternally begetting the divine son. The idea that Christ is eternally begotten in Paradise is explicit in Gnostic doctrine. The union of the three, and consequently the unity of the Trinity, is thus expressed in terms of the one biological situation where the three members of the family group are physically united.

The sexual character of the act of sight by which Dante penetrates the mystic rose is further expressed by Dante in the closing lines of the poem, describing the consummation of his mystic vision:

Tale era io a quella vista nuova:	136
Veder voleva, come si convenne	
L' imago al cerchio, e come vi s' indova;	
Ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne,	139
Se non che la mia mente fu percossa	
Da un fulgore, in che sua voglia venne.	
All' alta fantasia qui mancò possa;	142
Ma già volgeva il mio disiro e il <i>velle</i> ,	
Sì come rota ch' egualmente è mossa,	
L' amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.	145

Considering the phallic symbolism of the penetrating power of sight, which is consistently developed throughout the *Divina Commedia*, I surmise that there is a play on *penne*, line 139, for *pene*. The whole description of the consum-

mation of Dante's desire in this passage, with the *fulgore*, *in che sua voglia venne*, together with the lack of power and the contentment which follow the *fulgore*, is obviously expressed in the metaphor of orgasm. Let me refer here, as confirming this interpretation, to the acrostic, shown earlier, pp. 30-1, on the marginal letters of lines 136, 139, 142, and 145: L'AMATA, inside which appears the acrostic: SALMA. The corpse in the grave is constantly symbolized in myth as phallus.

EARTH

I have already referred, in discussing the symbolism of the sphere of Venus, to Dante's description of the Mediterranean in *Par.* ix. This description of the Mediterranean, which has never been satisfactorily explained, can be understood only in terms of the mother symbolism of the earth. Let us briefly examine how this symbolism is expressed by Dante. According to Dante's description the Mediterranean extends about 90 degrees of the earth's circumference, and 90 degrees, of course, is much more than the actual extent of the Mediterranean. Norton's note on this passage reads as follows: "In the rude system of geography current in Dante's day the Mediterranean was held to extend from west to east, 'counter to the sun,' from the pillars of Hercules to Jerusalem, over ninety degrees of longitude. Hence its western end, which formed the horizon at sunrise, would be under the zenith at noon."

Such a reference to "the rude system of geography current in Dante's day," is characteristic of the general misunderstanding of Dante's symbolism, and, indeed, of the mystical symbolism of the Middle Ages. Dante can hardly be supposed to have been ignorant of the fact that Jerusalem is not on the shore of the Mediterranean or that the Mediterranean extends much less than 90 degrees. To understand "the rude system of geography," therefore, it is necessary to recognize that it is based quite consciously by Dante, not on geographical observations, but on a philosophic symbolism in which the earth is conceived as anthropomorphic.

In order to show how Dante expresses his conception of the earth as a mother image in what he says of the geography of the earth, let us consider briefly the surface of the earth as he describes it. One of his most curious ideas is expressed in *Convivio* iii, where he imagines that a city called *Maria* is situated at the North Pole, and that a city called *Lucia* is situated at the South Pole. The two cities are called, it will be observed, by names which are definitely associated in the works of Dante with his mother symbolism; and the sun, *padre d'ogni mortal vita*, is described as alternately approaching and withdrawing from these cities in its annual alternations between summer and winter. It is impossible within the present limits to elucidate in detail the symbolism of the polar cities; it will suffice for our present purposes, however, to suggest that these two cities, in their alternating relations with the sun, symbolize the two aspects of the mother in the earth as a mother image. Thus the surface of the earth, as a mother image, in its relation to the sun, as a father image, or as an image of the incestuous son who dies in the autumn and is reborn in the spring, is represented as being a dual mother, or two mothers, exactly as we have seen that the interior of the earth, in relation to Dante's journey through its two divisions, Hell and the southern interior, is represented in *Inferno*.

Dante's symbolism of the surface of the earth as a dual mother is further expressed in his idea that the surface of the earth is equally divided between dry land and water. The dry land, according to this conception, is confined exclusively to the northern hemisphere; and the southern hemisphere is composed, with the single exception of the island of Purgatory, wholly of water. The dry land, as the source of vegetation, and the sea, in its tidal swelling as in pregnancy and in its analogy to the amniotic waters of birth, are both mother images. The reason that these two mother images are conceived as being so distinctly separated into the northern and the southern hemispheres is that they may thus be brought into the proper relation with the annual birth and death of the sun, as expressed in the alternating seasons.

The sun is the symbol of man; it dies in the autumn and remains in death throughout the winter; it is reborn in the spring and remains in life throughout the summer. In the autumn and in the winter, which correspond to the death of the annual sun, the sun is conceived as in the womb of the mother image of the waters of the southern hemisphere. In the spring and in the summer, which correspond to the rebirth and new life of the annual sun, the sun is conceived as in the womb of the mother image of the dry land of the northern hemisphere. The eternal life of the sun, as the incestuous son who accomplishes his own rebirth, is thus conceived as an eternal cycle of existences which alternate between the wombs of the two mother images, land and water. As these two mother images, land and water, both belong to the earth as a single mother image, they correspond to the dual function of the mother in first receiving the child into her womb, as in sexual union, and in then expelling the child from her womb, as in birth. The two mothers represent the two functions of motherhood.

I have thus explained several curious details of Dante's geography as belonging to the mother symbolism of the earth in connection with the annual death and rebirth of the sun. But it is not only in its annual course that the sun is symbolized as dying and as being reborn; the same death and rebirth symbolism appears, both in the *Divina Commedia* and universally in myth, in connection with the *diurnal* course of the sun. Just as the sun is supposed to die in the autumn and to remain in death throughout the winter, so it is supposed to die in the evening and to remain in death throughout the night. And just as it is supposed to be reborn in the spring and to remain in life throughout the summer, so it is supposed to be reborn in the morning and to remain in life throughout the day. Dante's own use of the diurnal course of the sun for his rebirth symbolism will explain, as I will now briefly show, some of the remaining curiosities of his geography.

In Dante's conception of the earth, Jerusalem, the highest point of the northern hemisphere of land, is situated at its

exact centre; and ninety degrees west of Jerusalem are the Pillars of Hercules, the modern Gibraltar. Throughout the ninety degrees between Jerusalem and the Pillars of Hercules extends the Mediterranean. At exactly the antipodes of Jerusalem, and therefore a hundred and eighty degrees from Jerusalem, is the Mountain of Purgatory. Jerusalem and Purgatory have thus a common horizon, which passes, at a distance of ninety degrees from each, through the Pillars of Hercules.

It thus appears that Jerusalem and the Mountain of Purgatory are like the polar cities, *Maria* and *Lucia*, in two important particulars: they are antipodal to each other and they have, in consequence, a common horizon which divides the earth into two equal parts. They are further like the polar cities *Maria* and *Lucia* in being both mother images: Jerusalem is supremely the mother city of the Old Testament, and it has, indeed, the same symbolism in relation to the life of Christ; and Purgatory is essentially the mother image of spiritual rebirth. Jerusalem and Purgatory must be considered, accordingly, by virtue of their inherent mother symbolism, as dividing at their common horizon the whole earth into two equal parts which represent, respectively, the two aspects of the mother in the earth considered as a single mother image.

Now in noting the parallelism between *Maria* and *Lucia* on the one hand and Jerusalem and Purgatory on the other, it must not be overlooked that the parallelism is not complete. *Maria* and *Lucia* are north and south of each other, whereas Jerusalem and Purgatory are east and west.

It follows, therefore, that the sun, in alternating between *Maria* and *Lucia*, travels north and south, as in its annual course, whereas in alternating between Jerusalem and Purgatory it travels west and east, as in its diurnal course. Jerusalem and Purgatory must accordingly be considered as mother images in relation to the *diurnal* course of the sun, just as we have seen that *Maria* and *Lucia* must be considered as mother images in relation to the *annual* course of the sun.

In the light of this mother symbolism of Jerusalem and

Purgatory, and of the hemispheres of which they are respectively the centres, in relation to the diurnal course of the sun, Dante's geographical allusions to the Mediterranean and to Jerusalem become comprehensible; he is suggesting, in relation to the diurnal course of the sun, that the surface of the earth has a structure like the structure of the female body, just as he shows the same structure in the topography of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Jerusalem, as the centre of the mother symbol of the dry land, represents, like the gate of Hell, the vulva. The Mediterranean, as *la maggior valle* of the dry land, represents, like the northern interior of the earth, or Hell, the womb of the hemisphere of dry land. The Pillars of Hercules, as being the exit from the *maggior valle* to the waters of the Purgatorial hemisphere, represent, like the narrow passage between Hell and the southern interior of the earth in *Inferno*, the passage from the womb of the hemisphere of dry land to the womb of the hemisphere of water.

Through the organs, thus symbolized, of the surface of the earth, the sun, in its diurnal course, passes westward from Jerusalem. The sex symbolism which I have here suggested for Jerusalem in connection with the diurnal course of the sun is emphasised by the fact that the sun is alluded to particularly as at noon above Jerusalem. The reference may be found not only in *Par.* ix. 86, but also in the allusion, *Par.* xxiii. 11-12, to the zenith above Jerusalem as

la plaga
Sotto la quale il sol mostra men fretta.

To understand the allusion to the sun as at noon above Jerusalem and as tarrying in that position longest, it must be remembered that in the mystical symbolism of the Middle Ages the moment of noon, when the sun is directly above the earth, symbolizes sexual union. It is on account of this symbolism, indeed, that it is eternal noon in Paradise, where the blessed condition of union with God is symbolized in terms of the sexual life. In view of the symbolism of noon as sexual union, noon above Jerusalem suggests Jerusalem as

the symbol of the organ with which the union of the phallic sun would naturally be made.

Immediately after entering the mother earth at her symbolical centre, Jerusalem, the phallic sun, as the incestuous son who is to accomplish his own rebirth, passes westward into the *maggior valle*, which, as has been noted already, has an extent of ninety degrees. By disregarding the zero of this number, there appears, as confirming the uterine symbolism of the *maggior valle*, the number nine. But the ninety degrees are further required by the symbolism as indicating the horizon, or boundary, between the hemisphere of Jerusalem, as a mother image, and its antipodal hemisphere. From the *maggior valle* the sun passes westward, through the Pillars of Hercules, into the sea of the hemisphere of water; it is thus symbolized as expelled from the one womb and received into the other, exactly like Dante in his passage from Hell to the southern interior of the earth. From the Pillars of Hercules the sun passes westward to Purgatory, and thence again to the hemisphere of land and to Jerusalem, in an endless series of rebirths.

In connection with the mother symbolism of the surface of the earth as it is thus developed by Dante, the reason that Jerusalem is chosen as the city situated at exactly the center of the hemisphere of dry land and immediately under the zenith is to associate Christ, since he lived and died in Jerusalem, with the sun as his supreme symbol. This association, however, is much older than Dante. It shows, indeed, in the Biblical accounts of the crucifixion as occurring at noon and of his death on the cross as occurring at sunset. The symbolism of crucifixion is the same as the symbolism of the sun at noon; it signifies the union of the divine son with the divine mother, through whom he is to accomplish his rebirth. His rebirth is identical with his death. This symbolism was widely recognized in medieval mysticism, and is clearly expressed by Dante himself. In referring to the crucifixion in *Par.* xi. 32-33, Dante refers at the same time to

La sposa di colui, ch'ad alte grida
Disposò lei col sangue benedetto.

These lines imply that the crucifixion symbolizes sexual union as of bridegroom and bride. The bride is the divine mother with whom the divine son unites in his death on the cross, a death which symbolizes the incestuous act which is to result in his rebirth.

The death of Christ at sunset indicates that the parallel between Christ and the sun is to be carried out in detail; Christ's death, like the setting of the sun, is the passage into the womb of the grave, or of the divine mother, after the act of union with her. Thus the death of Christ, as synchronous with the dying day, is expressed in terms of the sun's diurnal course, just as his rebirth at Easter, in the birthtime of the year, is expressed in terms of the sun's annual course. The synchronization with the course of the sun which thus appears in the life of Christ appears likewise in the *Divina Commedia*, as I have already suggested in Chapter II, in the events of Dante's dream journey. He descends into Hell in the evening, he rises to his new life in Purgatory on Easter morning, and he is in Paradise at noon.

Another significant instance of Dante's use of the earth as a mother image appears in his account, *Inf.* xxxiv. 121-126, of the manner in which Hell was created. According to this account, Lucifer, when he was cast out of Heaven, fell to earth on the southern hemisphere, which was originally covered with land. The earth opened out into the abyss of Hell to receive him; and the land of the southern hemisphere, in fear of him, withdrew and left the southern hemisphere, where he had entered the earth, covered with water. This account of the fall of Lucifer and the creation of Hell is obviously a symbolic representation of the incestuous act for which he was cast out of Heaven. He was cast forth as SPERMA is cast forth; and the surface of the earth, as the frightened mother, retreated from him, and yet opened up, as in the sexual act, to receive him, and then, as with the amniotic waters of pregnancy, covered the region where he had entered with the sea. Thus the punishment of Lucifer is a repetition of the sin for which he is punished; he is held in the womb which, as the incestuous son, he has violated.

In connection with the mother symbolism of the earth I wish to refer briefly to a confirmatory detail in the opening lines of *Inferno*, where Dante says:

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura.

According to Scartazzini, the words *Mi ritrovai* mean: *mi accorsi d'essere*; and they are almost invariably translated: "I found myself." It thus appears in Scartazzini's comment and in the various translations that the *reiterative* sense which actually appears in the form of the verb *ritrovai* is not to be considered as intended by Dante. There can be no doubt, however, that in their quite literal sense the words *Mi ritrovai* mean: "I found myself again;" and it is in this literal sense that I believe the words must be understood.

Now as soon as the words *Mi ritrovai* are understood to mean, as they are written: "I found myself again," the second line of *Inferno* assumes an extraordinary significance. For in thus saying: "I found myself again in a dark wood," Dante implies that he has been in the dark wood before.

The implications of the reiterative sense of the words:

Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,

appear at once in considering the *Divina Commedia* either as the dream which it purports to be or as a conscious allegory. In dreaming, as Dante here suggests, that he finds himself in a wood where he has been before, Dante is reproducing a very common dream experience: the phantasy of being twice in the same place. This phantasy is so common in dreams that Freud has classified the dreams in which it appears as the dream of the *déjà vu*. Now the place which, in all dreams of the *déjà vu*, the dreamer thus imagines that he is revisiting has been analyzed by Freud to be the body of the mother, in whom the dreamer has already been as the child in her womb. In the opinion of Freud, accordingly, the dream of the *déjà vu* is an incest phantasy. In view of the reiterative sense of *Mi ritrovai* it would thus seem that the *Divina Commedia* is a dream of the *déjà vu*, in which the *selva oscura*, as *déjà vue*, must be understood to symbolize the

mother of the dreamer. This interpretation of the opening lines of *Inferno* is confirmed, not only by what we have already discovered of the symbolism of the *selva oscura* as the mother of Dante and of the NATI whom he represents, but also by the symbolism of the entire poem, in which Dante represents himself as returning to the womb of his mother in his return to the various mother images of his anthropomorphic universe.

EXAMPLES OF PEREMAS

The foregoing survey, necessarily brief, of the sex symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* confirms, I believe, the importance which I attach to PER ME SI VA, the thrice repeated phrase in the inscription over the gate of Hell, as an anagram for PEREMAS VI, VI E SPERMA and VI ERA SPEM.

The anagrammatic permutations of the phrase: PER ME SI VA, have the most profound implications for the meaning of the *Divina Commedia*. The phrase itself implies that the gate of Hell is the vulva, for this phrase describing the gate of Hell says, in one of its permutations, that VI E SPERMA.

And in another of its permutations it says that VI ERA SPEM, thus showing SPERMA and SPEM as related symbols, symbols, as we have seen, of Christ, of Dante, and of humanity in general.

And the permutation: PEREMAS VI, instructs the reader to remove from the poem its hidden meaning.

I will now show a few examples of PEREMAS as it appears in cryptograms in the *Divina Commedia*. Other examples have been shown in earlier chapters.

The following passage, *Inf.* xxv. 13-24, consists of four *terzine*:

Per tutti i cerchi dell' inferno oscuri	13
Non vidi spirto in Dio tanto superbo,	
Non quel che cadde a Tebe giù da' muri.	
Ei si fuggì, che non parlò più verbo:	16
Ed io vidi un Centauro pien di rabbia	
Venir chiamando: 'Ov'è, ov' è l' acerbo?'	

Maremma non cred' io che tante n' abbia, 19
 Quante bisce egli avea su per la groppa,
 Infin dove comincia nostra labbia.
 Sopra le spalle, dietro dalla coppa, 22
 Con l' ali aperte gli giacea un draco,
 E quello affoca qualunque s' intoppa.

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four terzine:

13 PER
 16 E
 19 MA
 22 S

Read: PEREMAS

As in *Purg.* i. 1-13, the initial letters of the same lines are:

13 P
 16 E
 19 M
 22 S

Read: SPEM

The following passage, *Inf.* xx. 97-111, consists of five terzine:

Però t' assenno, che se tu mai odi 97
 Orignar la mia terra altrimenti,
 La verità nulla menzogna frodi.
 Ed io: 'Maestro, i tuoi ragionamenti 100
 Mi son sì certi, e prendon sì mia fede,
 Che gli altri mi sarian carboni spenti.
 Ma dimmi della gente che procede, 103
 Se tu ne vedi alcun degno di nota;
 Chè solo a ciò la mia mente rifiede.'
 Allor mi disse: 'Quel che dalla gota 106
 Porge la barba in sulle spalle brune,
 Fu, quando Grecia fu di maschi vota
 Sì che appena rimaser per le cune, 109
 Augure, e diede il punto con Calcanta
 In Aulide a tagliar la prima fune.

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the terzine:

97 PER
100 E
103 M
106 A
109 S

Read: PEREMAS

Now consider the following marginal letters on the same lines:

97 PER
100 ED IO
103 M
106 A
109 S

Read: ED IO SPERMA

There is a hint in line 99: *La verità nulla menzogna frodi*,
“let no falsehood defraud the truth.”

The following passage is *Inf.* xvi. 43–54:

Ed io, che posto son con loro in croce, 43
 Jacopo Rusticucci fui: e certo
 La fiera moglie più ch' altro mi nuoce.'
S' io fussi stato dal foco coperto, 46
 Gittato mi sarei tra lor disotto,
 E credo che il Dottor l' avria sofferto.
Ma perch' io mi sarei bruciato e cotto, 49
 Vinse paura la mia buona voglia,
 Che di loro abbracciar mi facea ghiotto.
Poi cominciai: 'Non dispetto, ma doglia 52
 La vostra condizion dentro mi fisse
 Tanto che tardi tutta si dispoglia,

Consider first the initials of first lines of the four terzine:

43 E
46 S
49 M
52 P

Read: SPEM

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Now consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the first three terzine:

43 E
46 S
49 MA PER

Read: PEREMAS

Notice that the passage begins with *Ed io* and that it is bounded on the first and last lines by the following marginal letters:

43 ED
54 TAN

Read: DANTE

There may be an additional hint in the words *mi fissi tanto*, lines 53-54, as if meaning that Dante fixes his signature here.

The following passage, *Inf.* xviii. 34-54, consists of seven terzine:

Di qua, di là, su per lo sasso tetro	34
Vidi Demon cornuti con gran ferze, Che li battean crudelmente di retro.	
Ahi come facean lor levar le berze	37
Alle prime percosse! già nessuno Le seconde aspettava nè le terze.	
Mentr' io andava, gli occhi miei in uno	40
Furo scontrati; ed io sì tosto dissi: 'Di già veder costui non son digiuno.'	
Perciò a figurarlo i piedi affissi:	43
E il dolce Duca meco si ristette, Ed assentì ch' alquanto indietro gissi:	
E quel frustato celar si credette	46
Bassando il viso, ma poco gli valse: Ch' io dissi: 'Tu che l' occhio a terra gette,	
Se le fazion che porti non son false, Venedico se' tu Caccianimico;	49
Ma che ti mena a sì pungenti Salse?'	
Ed egli a me: 'Mal volentier lo dico;	52
Ma sforzami la tua chiara favella, Che mi fa sovvenir del mondo antico.	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the *terzine*:

34 DI QUA
37 A
40 MENTR
43 P
46 E
49 S
52 E

Read: PEREMAS QUI DANTE

Notice that the passage begins with the words *di qua*, and that the passage is bounded by the initials of the first and the last *terzine*: DE, and that the first line of the last *terzina* begins with ED.

Those who regard Dante as too serious to descend to verbal tricks will note that *salse* in line 51 has long been recognized as a pun on the proper name of the ravine where the bodies of criminals were thrown and the word for "pickle."

The following passage is *Par.* xxiii. 13-24:

Sì che veggendola io sospesa e vaga,	13
Fecimi qual è quei, che disiando	
Altro vorria, e sperando s' appaga.	
Ma poco fu tra uno ed altro quando,	16
Del mio attender, dico, e del vedere	
Lo ciel venir più e più rischiarando:	
E Beatrice disse: 'Ecco le schiere	19
Del trionfo di CRISTO, e tutto il frutto	
Ricolto del girar di queste spere.'	
Pareami che il suo viso ardesse tutto,	22
E gli occhi avea di letizia sì pieni,	
Che passar mi convien senza costrutto.	

Consider first the initials of the first lines of the *terzine*:

13 S
16 M
19 E
22 P

Read: SPEM

Now consider the following marginal letters on these four lines:

13 S
16 M
19 E
22 PARE

Read: PEREMAS

Notice that if E, the fourth letter of line 22, is omitted the marginal letters read: SPERMA.

The following passage, *Purg.* xxxiii. 67–90, consists of eight terzine:

E se stati non fossero acqua d' Elsa	67
Li pensier vani intorno alla tua mente, E il piacer loro un Piramo alla gelsa,	
Per tante circostanze solamente	70
La giustizia di Dio nello interdetto Conosceresti all' arbor moralmente.	
Ma perch' io veggio te nello intelletto	73
Fatto di pietra, ed, impietrato, tinto Sì che t' abbaglia il lume del mio detto,	
Voglio anco, e se non scritto, almen dipinto,	76
Che il te ne porti dentro a te, per quello Che si reca il bordon di palma cinto.'	
Ed io: 'Sì come cera da suggello, Che la figura impressa non trasmuta, Segnato è or da voi lo mio cervello.	79
Ma perchè tanto sopra mia veduta	82
Vostra parola disiata vola, Che più la perde quanto più s' aiuta?'	
'Perchè conoschi,' disse, 'quella scuola	85
Ch' hai seguitata, e veggi sua dottrina Come può seguitar la mia parola;	
E veggi vostra via dalla divina	88
Distar cotanto, quanto si discorda Da terra il ciel che più alto festina.'	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the terzine:

67 E
 70 PER
 73 MA
 76 V
 79 ED IO SI
 82 MA
 85 PER
 88 E V

There is an extraordinary symmetry in this passage which appears from the fact that the marginal letters of the first three *terzine* spell: PEREMA, and the marginal letters of the last three *terzine* spell: PEREMA. Read first on the marginal letters of the first lines of the *terzine*, 67-79: PEREMAS VI ED IO. Now read on the marginal letters of the first lines of the *terzine*, 79-88: PEREMAS VI ED IO. These two readings key on the marginal letters of line 79. ED IO is, of course, Dante's signature.

This passage follows the *enigma forte* and the allusion to the Sphinx. There are several distinct references in the passage to a hidden meaning. Beatrice tells Dante that his intellect is *fatto di pietra*, and that the light of her speech dazzles him. Moreover, in the *terzina* preceding the passage quoted, she says, line 64, *dorme lo ingegno tuo*, with the implication that on account of his sleeping wits Dante is unable to understand the hidden meaning of her words.

There are two expressions in the passage under consideration in which I find a direct reference to the cryptographic device which the passage contains. The first is the command of Beatrice that Dante bear in mind her words, which he is unable to understand:

per quello
 Che si reca il bordon di palma cinto.

The word *bordon* has a double meaning; it means, first, "pilgrim's staff," and it means also "margin." In obedience to this command Dante carries away the words of Beatrice, as recorded in the text, with the margin *di palma cinto*—

wreathed, that is, with the curves of the curiously symmetrical acrostic.

The second expression in the text in which I find a distinct allusion to the cryptographic device is the reply of Dante to the command of Beatrice; he replies that his brain is now stamped with her

Sì come cera da suggello,
Che la figura impressa non trasmuta.

Now this impression of a figure stamped on Dante's brain is symbolized by the PEREMAS on lines 79-88, which repeats the PEREMAS on lines 67-79. Moreover, this PEREMAS, since it is *come cera da suggello*, reverses the form of the first PEREMAS, without, as the text suggests, "transmuting" it. This reversal of the form of the figure in its imprint is accurately paralleled by the letters PEREMA which appear respectively on lines 67-73 and lines 82-88. The figure first appears thus:

67	E
70	PER
73	MA

The cryptographic "impression" of this figure, which must necessarily be reversed, appears thus:

82	MA
85	PER
88	E

Notice that the passage in which this cryptographic complex is found is bounded by the initial E of the first line, 67, and the initial D of the last line, 90.

The *suggello* here with the seal-like acrostic PEREMAS suggests the SIGILLO in connection with PER ME SI VA (see pp. 224-5).

The following passage, *Par. vii. 1-27*, consists of nine *terzine*:

*Osanna sanctus Deus Sabaoth,
Superillustrans claritate tua
Felices ignes horum malachoth!*

Così, volgendosi alla nota sua,	4
Fu viso a me cantare essa sustanza,	
Sopra la qual doppio lume s' addua:	
Ed essa e l' altre mossero a sua danza,	7
E quasi velocissime faville,	
Mi si velar di subita distanza.	
Io dubitava, e dicea: 'Dille, dille,'	10
Fra me, 'dille,' diceva, 'alla mia donna	
Che mi disseta con le dolci stille';	
Ma quella riverenza che s' indonna	13
Di tutto me, pur per BE e per ICE,	
Mi richinava come l' uom ch' assonna.	
Poco sofferse me cotal Beatrice,	16
E cominciò, raggiandomi d' un riso	
Tal, che nel foco faria l' uom felice:	
'Secondo mio infallibile avviso,	19
Come giusta vendetta giustamente	
Vengiata fosse, t' ha in pensier miso;	
Ma io ti solverò tosto la mente:	22
E tu ascolta, chè le mie parole	
Di gran sentenza ti faran presente.	
Per non soffrire alla virtù che vuole	25
Freno a suo prode, quell' uom che non nacque,	
Dannando sè, dannò tutta sua prole;	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the *terzine*:

1	O
4	C
7	E
10	I
13	MA QUE
16	POC
19	SE
22	MA
25	PER

The marginal letters on the last three *terzine* spell: PEREMAS. The marginal letters on the first six *terzine* spell: ECCO QUI POEMA. The complete reading, therefore, is: PEREMAS. ECCO QUI POEMA.

Consider the following marginal letters of the sixth *terzina*:

16 PO
17 E
18 TA

Read: POETA

This entire passage is an intricacy of suggestive double meaning. In lines 10 and 11 *dille* is thrice repeated. For the development of the important cryptographic play on this word in connection with the name of Beatrice, see pp. 350-1.

The following passage, *Par.* xiv. 133-139, consists of the last seven lines of the canto:

Ma chi s' avvede che i vivi suggelli 133
D' ogni bellezza più fanno più suso,
E ch' io non m' era lì rivolto a quelli,
Escusar puommi di quel ch' io m' accuso 136
Per escusarmi, e vedermi dir vero:
Chè il piacer santo non è qui dischiuso,
Perchè si fa, montando, più sincero. 139

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line of the canto and of the first lines of the two preceding *terzine*:

133 MA
136 ES
139 PER

Read: PEREMAS

In *Purg.* xxxi. 98, is the Latin phrase: *Asperges me*. Like other Latin phrases which we shall examine in Chapter IX, these two words contain a cryptogram. Consider the following initial and contiguous letters:

ASPERGES ASPER
ME ME

Read: PEREMAS

These words occur in the passage which describes the bathing of Dante by Matelda.⁴ For an explanation of the symbolism of this bathing see page 364.

The following passage, *Par.* xxiii. 55–66, consists of four *terzine*:

Se mo sonasser tutte quelle lingue	55
Che Polinná con le suore fero	
Del latte lor dolcissimo più pingue,	
Per aiutarmi, al millesmo del vero	58
Non si verria, cantando il santo riso,	
E quanto il santo aspetto faceva mero.	
E cosí, figurando il Paradiso,	61
Convien saltar lo sacrato poema,	
Come chi trova suo cammin reciso.	
Ma chi pensasse il ponderoso tema,	64
E l' omero mortal che se ne carica,	
Nol biasmerebbe, se sott' esso trema.	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the *terzine*:

55	S
58	PER
61	E
64	MA

Read: PEREMAS

The acrostic on the initials is:

55	S
58	P
61	E
64	M

Read: SPEM

Consider the following marginal letters of the second *terzina*:

58	PE
59	N
60	E

Read: PENE

Consider the following marginal letters of the third *terzina*:

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61 E
62 C
63 CO

Read: ECCO

Consider the following marginal letters of the fourth
terzina:

64 M
65 E
66 NO

Read: NOME

The following passage, *Par.* xiii. 64–81, consists of six
terzine:

E queste contingenze essere intendo	64
Le cose generate, che produce	
Con seme, e senza seme il ciel movendo.	
La cera di costoro, e chi la duce,	67
Non sta d' un modo, e però sotto il segno	
Ideale poi più e men traluce:	
Ond' egli avvien ch' un medesimo legno,	70
Secondo specie, meglio e peggio frutta;	
E voi nascete con diverso ingegno.	
Se fosse a punto la cera dedutta,	73
E fosse il cielo in sua virtù suprema,	
La luce del suggel parrebbe tutta;	
Ma la natura la dà sempre scema,	76
Similmente operando all' artista,	
Ch' ha l' abito dell' arte, e man che trema.	
Però se il caldo amor la chiara vista	79
Della prima virtù dispone e segna,	
Tutta la perfezion quivi s' acquista.	

The initial letters of the first lines of the first four terzine
are:

64 E
67 L
70 O
73 S

Read: SOLE

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the last three terzine:

73 SE
76 MA
81 PER

Read: PEREMAS

The PEREMAS and the SOLE key on the initial s of line 73. Notice that the marginal letters of the lines in which PEREMAS is found also spell SPEM or SPERMA.

Analogous to the use of PEREMAS, as an anagram for E SPERMA, to express the sex symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, there sometimes occur, in cryptographic form, words expressing copulation and fecundation, such as PENE, and SOLE as a symbol of PENE. Several examples have already been shown. Other examples follow.

Following are the first five terzine of *Inf. x*:

Ora sen va per un secreto calle	
Tra il muro della terra e li martiri	
Lo mio Maestro, ed io dopo le spalle.	
'O virtù somma, che per gli empì giri	4
Mi volvi, comincia, 'com' a te piace	
Parlami, e satisfammi a' miei desiri.	
La gente che per li sepolcri giace	7
Potrebbe veder? già son levati	
Tutti i coperchi, e nessun guardia face.'	
Ed egli a me: 'Tutti saran serrati,	10
Quando di Josaffat qui torneranno	
Coi corpi che lassù hanno lasciati.	
Suo cimitero da questa parte hanno	13
Con Epicuro tutti i suoi seguaci,	
Che l' anima col corpo morta fanno.	

The initials of the first lines of these terzine are:

1 O
4 O
7 L
10 E
13 S

Read: o SOLE

The first four initials also read O LEO.

There may be a hint in *secreto calle*, line I. SOLE and LEO may echo, as symbols, the sense of *O virtù somma*, addressed to Virgil.

Consider the following marginal letters of the lines of the first *terzina*:

1	O
2	T
3	LO

Read: LOTO

Loto is used, like the English "clay," to designate mankind. The same word is found in the first lines of *Inf.* ii, see p. 42.

The following passage, *Inf.* x. 22-33, consists of four *terzine*:

'O Tosco, che per la città del foco	22
Vivo ten vai così parlando onesto,	
Piacciati di restare in questo loco.	
La tua loquela ti fa manifesto	25
Di quella nobil patria natio,	
Alla qual forse io fui troppo molesto.'	
Subitamente questo suono uscìo	28
D' una dell' arche: però m' accostai,	
Temendo, un poco più al duca mio.	
Ed ei mi disse: 'Volgiti: che fai?	31
Vedi là Farinata che s' è dritto:	
Dalla cintola in su tutto il vedrai.'	

The initial letters of the first lines of these four *terzine* are:

22	O
25	L
28	S
31	E

Read: SOLE

Notice that the passage with the acrostic SOLE begins with the words *O Tosco*, addressed to Dante. Dante thus identifies himself with the sun, as a symbol of his power to penetrate the city of Hell, which, as we have seen, is the womb.

The following passage, *Inf.* xxiv. 43-54, consists of four *terzine*:

La lena m' era del polmon sì munta	43
Quando fui su, ch' io non potea più oltre,	
Anzi mi assisi nella prima giunta.	
'Omai convien che tu così ti spoltre,'	46
Disse il Maestro, 'chè sedendo in piuma	
In fama non si vien, nè sotto coltre,	
Senza la qual chi sua vita consuma,	49
Cotal vestigio in terra di sè lascia,	
Qual fummo in aer ed in acqua la schiuma:	
E però leva su, vinci l' ambascia	52
Con l' animo che vince ogni battaglia,	
Se col suo grave corpo non s' accascia.	

The initial letters of the first lines of the *terzine* are:

43	L
46	O
49	S
52	E

Read: SOLE

The following passage, *Par.* xxxiii. 124-126, consists of one *terzina*:

O luce eterna, che sola in te sidi,
Sola t' intendi, e da te intelletta
Ed intendente te, ami ed arridi!

Consider the following marginal letters of the lines of this *terzina*:

124	O L
125	S
126	E

Read: SOLE

This SOLE coincides with the sense of the text: *O luce eterna*. The first word of the last line, *Ed*, suggests a cryptic identification of Dante with SOLE. For the extraordinary complex of cryptograms in the passage that includes these lines see Chapter III, pp. 106-111.

The following passage, *Purg.* xv. 118–129, consists of four *terzine*:

Lo Duca mio, che mi potea vedere	118
Far sì com' uom che dal sonno si slega,	
Disse: 'Che hai, che non ti puoi tenere?	
Ma se' venuto più che mezza lega	121
Velando gli occhi, e con le gambe avvolte	
A guisa di cui vino o sonno piega?'	
'O dolce Padre mio, se tu m' ascolte,	124
Io ti dirò,' diss' io, 'ciò che mi apparve	
Quando le gambe mi furon sì tolte.'	
Ed ei: 'Se tu avessi cento larve	127
Sopra la faccia, non mi sarien chiuse	
Le tue cogitazion, quantunque parve.	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the *terzine*:

118	LO
121	M
124	O
127	ED

Read: L'OMO ED

Now consider the initials of the same lines:

118	L
121	M
124	O
127	E

Read: LOME

Lome, as a form of *lume*, is used by Dante, *Inf.* x. 69. Thus by the cryptographic device of a double acrostic on the same lines, Dante, as "the man," associates himself with light as the symbol of the male power. Consonant with the acrostic LOME are the words: *vedere*, 118, and, line 122, *velando gli occhi*. Notice also, as hinting at a cryptographic concealment, the words: *larve sopra la faccia*, lines 127–128. For the one other use of *larve* in the *Divina Commedia*, and the cryptogram which appears in the passage, *Par.* xxx. 91–99, see p. 138.

Confirming the acrostic LOME as the symbol of the pene-

trating power of L'OMO ED is the acrostic on the three lines of the last *terzina* of the passage. Consider on these lines the following marginal letters:

127 E
128 SO
129 L

Read: SOLE

The following passage, *Par.* xix. 40-51, consists of four *terzine*:

Poi cominciò: 'Colui che volse il sesto	40
All' estremo del mondo, e dentro ad esso	
Distinse tanto occulto e manifesto,	
Non potè suo valor sì fare impresso	43
In tutto l' universo, che il suo verbo	
Non rimanesse in infinito eccesso.	
E ciò fa certo che il primo superbo,	46
Che fu la somma d' ogni creatura,	
Per non aspettar lume, cadde acerbo:	
E quindi appar ch' ogni minor natura	49
È corto recettacolo a quel bene	
Che non ha fine, e sè con sè misura.	

Consider the initial letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

40 P
43 N
46 E
49 E

Read: PENE

The acrostic PENE read in connection with the passage in which it appears makes the passage fairly bristle with double meanings. Note especially the reference to *tutto l'universo*, line 44, the female form in which *non potè suo valor sì fare impresso*. Notice also the allusion to the fall of the *primo superbo*, line 46. I leave the reader to work out for himself the further implications of the passage in the light of the acrostic PENE.

Following is one *terzina*, *Purg.* xiv. 10-12:

E disse l' uno: 'O anima, che fitta
Nel corpo ancora in ver lo ciel ten vai,
Per carità ne consola, e ne ditta

Consider the following marginal letters of the lines of this *terzina*:

10 E
11 N
12 PE

Read: PENE

Notice the sense of the text as confirming this acrostic PENE. The soul is *fitta nel corpo*, and is going thus to Heaven. This is exactly the symbolism of the entire *Divina Commedia*, in which Dante uses for the symbol of his journey to Heaven the PENE in the female body of the universe.

The following passage, *Par.* x. 146-148, consists of the last three lines of the canto:

Moversi e render voce a voce in tempra
Ed in dolcezza ch' esser non può nota,
Se non colà dove gioir s' insempra.

Consider the following marginal letters of the lines:

146 M
147 E
148 SE

Read: SEME

La sposa di Dio appears in the passage immediately preceding, line 140.

The following passage is *Par.* xxiii. 1-3:

Come l' augello intra l' amate fronde,
Posato al nido dei suoi dolci nati,
La notte che le cose ci nasconde.

Consider the following marginal letters of the lines:

1 CO
2 PO
3 LA

Read: COPOLA

The sense of the acrostic is consistent with the implications of the text.

The following passage, *Par.* xxiii. 109–120, consists of four *terzine*:

Così la circolata melodia	109
Si sigillava, e tutti gli altri lumi	
Facean sonar lo nome di MARIA.	
Lo real manto di tutti i volumi	112
Del mondo, che più ferve e più s' avviva	
Nell' alito di Dio e nei costumi,	
Avea sopra di noi l' interna riva	115
Tanto distante, che la sua parvenza	
Là dov' io era ancor non m' appariva.	
Però non ebber gli occhi miei potenza	118
Di seguitar la coronata fiamma,	
Che si levò appresso sua semenza.	

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the four *terzine*:

109	COSI
112	LO
115	A
118	P

Read: SI COPOLA

Lo real manto, line 112, is, as usually interpreted, the ninth Heaven. It is also the symbol of the womb, as its number suggests, and as the text explicitly develops. Immediately preceding the words *lo real manto* is the phrase: *sonar lo nome di Maria*. The passage ends with the words *sua semenza*, "her offspring." And following the passage is the figure of the child and its mother. On the four lines following *lo real manto* consider the following marginal letters:

113 DE
 114 N
 115 A
 116 T

Read: DANTE

The following passage, *Par.* xxvi. 133-142, consists of the last ten lines of the canto:

Pria ch' io scendessi all' infernale ambascia,	133
<i>I s' appellava in terra il Sommo Bene,</i>	
Onde vien la letizia che mi fascia;	
<i>El si chiamò da poi, e ciò conviene,</i>	136
Chè l' uso de' mortali è come fronda	
In ramo, che sen va ed altra viene.	
Nel monte che si leva più dall' onda,	139
Fu' io con vita pura e disonesta	
Dalla prim' ora a quella che seconda,	
Come il sol muta quadra, l' ora sesta.'	142

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line of the canto and of the first lines of the three preceding terzine:

133 P
 136 E
 139 NE
 142 COME

Read: COME PENE

Now consider the following marginal letters of the lines which give the two names of God:

134 I S
 135 O
 136 EL

Read: ELIOS

Next consider the following marginal letters of the last two lines of the passage:

141 DA
 142 CO

Read: CODA

The significance of this acrostic CODA becomes more clear if it is read in connection with the acrostic on the first four *terzine* of the next canto, *Par.* xxvii. 1-12:

'Al Padre, al Figlio, allo Spirito Santo'	
Cominciò 'Gloria' tutto il Paradiso,	
Sì che m' inebbriava il dolce canto.	
Ciò ch' io vedeva mi sembiava un riso	4
Dell' universo; per che mia ebbrezza	
Entrava per l' udire e per lo viso.	
O gioia! o ineffabile allegrezza!	7
O vita intera d' amore e di pace!	
O senza brama sicura ricchezza!	
Dinanzi agli occhi miei le quattro face	10
Stavano accese, e quella che pria venne	
Incominciò a farsi più vivace;	

The initials of the first lines of these four *terzine* are:

I	A
4	C
7	O
10	D

Read: CODA

The foregoing acrostics should be considered together. Dante is identifying the early names of God, *I* and *El*, with his symbols, PENE and SOLE and with the God of the Christian Trinity. The passage at the end of *Par.* xxvi is full of sex symbolism. The descent into the *infernale ambascia*, line 133, suggests copulation. The *monte che si leva* repeats the meaning of the acrostic COME PENE. There may be a suggestion of copulation in the two acrostic readings: CODA. The symbolism of the sun as God, which appears in the acrostic ELIOS, is carried out in *il sol*, *Par.* xxvi. 142. *Elios* is a word which Dante uses, *Par.* xiv. 96; it may be formed from the Hebrew *Eli* or the Greek *ἥλιος*. The sun, as Dante says, *Par.* x. 28, is

Lo ministro maggior della natura.

The story of Ugolino, *Inf.* xxxiii, contains cryptograms which indicate the phallic symbolism of light in connection

with the mother symbolism of the tower. Note first the four *terzine*, *Inf.* xxxiii. 46–57:

Ed io sentii chiavar l' uscio di sotto	46
All' orribile torre; ond' io guardai	
Nel viso a' miei figliuoi senza far motto.	
Io non piangeva; sì dentro impietrai:	49
Piangevan elli; ed Anselmuccio mio	
Disse: "Tu guardi sì, padre: che hai?"	
Perciò non lagrimai, nè rispos' io	52
Tutto quel giorno, nè la notte appresso,	
Infin che l' altro sol nel mondo uscìo.	
Come un poco di raggio si fu messo	55
Nel doloroso carcere, ed io scorsi	
Per quattro visi il mio aspetto stesso;	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

46	ED IO
49	IO
52	P
55	CO

Read: COPIO. ED IO

Now what is it that, as Dante says in the acrostic, he copies? The answer to this question reveals the fundamental reason for Dante's introduction into the *Divina Commedia* of the story of Ugolino. It was not enough for Dante that the story is touching in its literal aspect; he must make it serve, just as he makes every other detail of the poem serve, his symbolic purpose. Reduced to its briefest terms, the story is as follows: Ugolino, together with his four sons, is shut up in a tower. The key was turned in the lower entrance of the tower and the five were left to starve to death. This story is used by Dante as a symbol of the entire theme of *Inferno*, at the end of which it appears. The first step for the interpretation of the story depends on the recognition of the widespread use of the tower as a symbol of the mother. The mother symbolism of the tower appears in the association of the tower with the Shulamite in the *Song of Songs*, as was

commonly recognized by the Christian symbolists of the Middle Ages; and the same symbolism was recognized, as we have already seen, in connection with the Tower of Babel. That Dante intends the mother symbolism of the tower in which Ugolino and his sons were imprisoned appears from the acrostic on the *terzina* in which the tower is first mentioned, *Inf.* xxxiii. 22-24:

Breve pertugio dentro dalla muda
La qual per me ha il titol della fame,
E in che conviene ancor ch' altri si chiuda,

Consider on these three lines the following marginal letters:

22 B
23 LA QUAL
24 E

Read: QUA BELLA

According to this acrostic, therefore, the tower is associated with Bella, the mother of Dante.

The mother symbolism of the tower is further implied in an acrostic on the lines 55-57, describing the entrance into the tower of a *poco di raggio*.

Consider on these lines the following marginal letters:

55 COME
56 NE
57 PE

Read: COME PENE

This acrostic confirms the mother symbolism of the tower by implication, since it shows that the light which penetrates the tower is to be interpreted as a phallic symbol. It follows from the phallic symbolism of the light which penetrates the tower that the tower must be a female symbol.

In the tower as the symbol of the mother, therefore, the father and the sons are enclosed together, as in the biological situation of the union of the father and the mother in the act by which the sons are conceived, and also as in the situation necessary to rebirth, where the son, like the father, is enclosed

in the maternal womb by an act of union. In view of this symbolism of the tower several details of the Ugolino story take on a new significance. Let me refer especially to the turning of the key in the *uscio di sotto*, line 46; the key is phallic, the *uscio di sotto* represents the vulva, and the interior of the tower represents the uterus. Thus the tower is a reproduction in miniature of Dante's Hell, the prisoners in the tower, as in the womb, correspond to the souls of the damned, and the father and sons together in the same womb express the incest and rebirth symbolism of the poem. The astronomical allusions in the story of Ugolino, to the moons, line 26, and to the rising sun, line 54, and the allusion to the *muda*, lines 22-23, as having *il titol della fame*, confirm the mother and rebirth symbolism of the story, which must be understood as a sort of summary of the whole *Inferno*.

The symbolism of the story of Ugolino is the fundamental determinant for Dante's use of it in the *Divina Commedia*. And a similar determinant is to be assigned for the use of every episode in the poem. Let me illustrate by a reference to the story of Paolo and Francesca and the story of Ulysses. In regard to the story of Paolo and Francesca I need only point out that it is a story implying incest, as in the love between brother and sister (sister-in-law). I have already referred, in connection with the further sex symbolism of this story, to the correspondence of the winds on which the souls of the lovers are borne to convulsive vaginal movements, and also, perhaps, to flatus as associated with primitive and infantile conceptions of anal birth. The incest symbolism of the story of Ulysses is developed in more detail and is confirmed by some interesting acrostics. According to Ulysses' account of his last journey he departed from Ithaca, his home, in a small vessel, and sailed through the Pillars of Hercules and the western ocean, until he arrived in sight of the mountain of Purgatory, where he was overwhelmed with a storm and drowned. To understand the symbolism underlying the story of the "mad flight" of Ulysses, it must be remembered that the vessel, as in the story of the Ark, and the sea are among the preeminent symbols of the mother.

The mother symbolism of the sea and of the Pillars of Hercules has already been developed in the discussion of the *maggior valle*. The mother symbolism of the mountain of Purgatory, at which the journey ends, has likewise been developed in detail. In connection with the sea as a mother symbol, sailing the sea, or travelling, is to be understood as the symbol of sexual union. It represents, indeed, the course of SPERMA through the maternal body. That the sea is, indeed, to be understood as a symbol of the mother in the "mad flight" of Ulysses is curiously but distinctly implied by Ulysses himself, who tells how he could not be restrained from the journey by his ties to father, son, or wife. The omission of any allusion to his mother, in this list of his home ties, is unmistakably a hint that it is his mother who is calling him from the sea. So important is the sea symbolism here, and the symbolism of sailing the sea, that Dante calls attention to it by acrostics spelling the Greek words for "sea" and "I sail."

The story of Ulysses appears in *Inf.* xxvi. Lines 70–81 of this canto are as follows:

Ed egli a me: 'La tua preghiera è degna	70
Di molta lode, ed io però l' accetto;	
Ma fa che la tua lingua si sostegna.	
Lascia parlare a me: ch' io ho concetto	73
Ciò che tu vuoi: ch' ei sarebbero schivi,	
Perch' ei fur Greci, forse del tuo detto.'	
Poichè la fiamma fu venuta quivi,	76
Dove parve al mio Duca tempo e loco,	
In questa forma lui parlare audivi:	
'O voi, che siete due dentro ad un foco,	79
S' io meritai di voi mentre ch' io vissi,	
S' io meritai di voi assai o poco,	

The initials of the first lines of the *terzine* are:

70	E
73	L
76	P
79	O

Read: PLEO

Πλέω is Greek for "I sail."

Now in connection with this acrostic PLEO read lines 85-96, in which Ulysses begins the story of his voyage:

Lo maggior corno della fiamma antica	85
Cominciò a crollarsi mormorando, Pur come quella cui vento affatica.	
Indi la cima qua e là menando,	88
Come fosse la lingua che parlasse, Gittò voce di fuori, e disse: 'Quando Mi diparti' da Circe, che sottrasse	91
Me più d' un anno là presso a Gaeta, Prima che sì Enea la nominasse; Nè dolcezza di figlio, nè la pieta	94
Del vecchio padre, nè il debito amore, Lo qual dovea Penelope far lieta,	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these *terzine*:

85	L
88	I
91	M
94	NE

Read: LIMNE

Λιμνη is Homeric Greek for "sea." It may be that Dante's alleged ignorance of Greek has been too much insisted on.

Following are the last ten lines of *Par.* xxii:

Quindi m' apparve il temperar di Giove	145
Tra il padre e il figlio; e quindi mi fu chiaro Il variar che fanno di lor dove.	
E tutti e sette mi si dimostraro	148
Quanto son grandi, e quanto son veloci, E come sono in distante riparo.	
L' aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci,	151
Volgondom' io con gli eterni Gemelli, Tutta m' apparve dai colli alle foci:	
Poscia rivolsi gli occhi agli occhi belli.	154

Consider the marginal letters of the last line of the canto and of the first lines of the three preceding *terzine*:

145 QUI
 148 E
 151 L
 154 PO

Read: QUI PLEO

The following passage, *Purg.* viii. 58–69, consists of four
 terzine:

'O,' diss' io lui, 'per entro i lochi tristi	58
Venni stamane, e sono in prima vita,	
Ancor che l' altra sì andando acquisti.'	
E come fu la mia risposta udita,	61
Sordello ed egli indietro si raccolse,	
Come gente di subito smarrita.	
L' uno a Virgilio, e l' altro ad un si volse	64
Che sedea lì, gridando: 'Su, Corrado,	
Vieni a veder che Dio per grazia volse.'	
Poi volto a me: 'Per quel singular grado,	67
Che tu dei a colui, che sì nasconde	
Lo suo primo perchè, che non gli è guado,	

The initials of the first lines of these terzine are:

58 O
 61 E
 64 L
 67 P

Read: PLEO

The idea of sailing is appropriate to Sordello's words, *lontane acque* and *larghe onde*, in the lines immediately preceding and following this passage.

The following passage, *Inf.* x. 127–136, consists of the last ten lines of the canto:

'La mente tua conservi quel ch' udito	127
Hai contra te,' mi comandò quel Saggio,	
'Ed ora attendi qui:' e drizzò il dito.	
'Quando sarai dinanzi al dolce raggio	130
Di quella il cui bell' occhio tutto vede,	
Da lei saprai di tua vita il viaggio.'	

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Appresso volse a man sinistra il piede: 133
 Lasciammo il muro, e gimmo in ver lo mezzo
 Per un sentier ch' ad una valle fiede,
 Che infin lassù facea spiacer suo lezzo. 136

Consider the following marginal letters of the last line of the canto and of the first lines of the three preceding *terzine*:

127 LA
 130 QU
 133 A
 136 C

Read: L'ACQUA

This word appears in the following acrostic reading and relates perhaps, to Dante's water symbolism.

The following passage, *Purg.* vi. 76-87, consists of four *terzine*:

Ahi serva Italia, di dolore ostello, 76
 Nave senza nocchiere in gran tempesta,
 Non donna di provincie, ma bordello!
 Quell' anima gentil fu così presta, 79
 Sol per lo dolce suon della sua terra,
 Di fare al cittadin suo quivi festa;
 Ed ora in te non stanno senza guerra 82
 Li vivi tuoi, e l' un l' altro si rode
 Di quei che un muro ed una fossa serra.
 Cerca, misera, intorno dalle prode 85
 Le tue marine, e poi ti guarda in seno
 Se alcuna parte in te di pace gode.

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the four *terzine*:

76 A
 79 QU
 82 E
 85 C

Read: ACQUE

Cf. the image of a vessel in a storm.

Further cryptographic confirmation of the sex symbolism of the journey of Dante, as phallus and SPERMA, appears in the "gibberish" which Pluto utters at the approach of Dante, *Inf.* vii. 1:

Pape Satan, pape Satan, aleppe.

Before showing the cryptograms contained in this line, let us examine the possible meaning that may be attached to the words themselves.

Pape is generally recognized as the Italian equivalent of the Latin *papae*, an interjection used, as in Boethius, to express astonishment. Possibly this is the correct interpretation, though I surmise that the word is a deformation, in the *voce chioccia* of Pluto, of *papa*, as for high priest and indeed for father. *Aleppe* is recognized as *aleph*, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This "A" is commonly interpreted as another exclamation, like the English or Italian "Ah!" Holbrook, in his *Dante and the Animal Kingdom*, suggests that *aleppe* as A stands here for Christ; and he refers to such a use of the letter in patristic literature. In the opinion of Holbrook, then, Pluto is using the name of Christ as a blasphemy: "Ho, Satan! Ho, Satan! Christ!"

I agree that *aleppe* stands here for Christ, but the word, I am convinced, is not used as an exclamation of blasphemy. Dante is descending into Hell as Christ descended into Hell. Since such a descent into Hell by a living man was quite *fuor del modern' uso*, Pluto mistakes Dante for Christ himself and calls a warning to Satan, from whom Christ would naturally be supposed to be coming to deliver some of Satan's victims, exactly as Christ had delivered the souls of the patriarchs on his descent into Hell after the crucifixion. But it is not wholly a mistake on the part of Pluto, for Dante is constantly making the same identification himself.

Of the highest importance for the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* is the reference, in the words here addressed to Pluto by Virgil, to the sin for which Satan, or Lucifer, was punished as the *superbo strupo*. The "proud adultery" is the original sin which was committed first by the divine Lucifer,

“son of the morning” and in reality the same as Christ; and afterwards repeated by Adam and Eve. In the divine group of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, adultery is necessarily incest. The descent of Christ into Hell symbolizes incest as the means of rebirth. It is on account of the incest symbolized by the descent of Christ into Hell that Pluto, mistaking Dante for Christ, calls out his warning to *Father* Satan. Satan, who was the incestuous son in Heaven, becomes in Hell the father against whom the sin is again committed, and would naturally be warned as *father* against the son who is coming to commit the sin.

The symbolism of the descent of Christ into Hell is plainly enough indicated in Virgil's reference to it, *Inf.* xii. 34-45:

Or vuo' che sappi, che l' altra fiata	34
Ch' io discesi quaggiù nel basso inferno,	
Questa roccia non era ancor cascata.	
Ma certo poco pria, se ben discerno,	37
Che venisse Colui che la gran preda	
Levò a Dite del cerchio superno,	
Da tutte parti l' alta valle feda	40
Tremò sì, ch' io pensai che l' universo	
Sentisse amor, per lo quale è chi creda	
Più volte il mondo in Caos converso:	43
Ed in quel punto questa vecchia roccia	
Qui ed altrove tal fece riverso.	

The difficult path that is guarded by the beast, the descent of the divine son into the foul female valley, the tremors of love in it, the delivery of the creatures that it contained, and the chaos to which that love reduces the world—such are the features of the passage that make it unmistakably recognizable as the expression of a typical phantasy of sexual union with the mother earth and rebirth.

It is noteworthy, in connection with Dante's account of the descent of Christ into Hell, that Eve, “the mother of all living,” is not included with Adam among the spirits whom he delivers from Hell. The fact that Eve is not delivered from Hell confirms my identification of Hell with the mother; Eve cannot be delivered from Hell since Eve, as “the mother

of all living," and Hell are one and the same, the womb from which "the children of God" are delivered.

The preceding explanation of the words of Pluto, correct as I believe it to be as far as it goes, is only partial; it does not touch the meaning of the line as a cryptogram.

Consider in the words of Pluto the following final and contiguous letters:

PAPE	E
SATAN	TAN
PAPE	E
SATAN	TAN
ALEPPE	ALEPPE

Read: ANTE, ANTE, ALEPPE

If a D were added to each ANTE, the reading would be: DANTE, DANTE, ALEPPE (OR CHRIST).

That a concealed D is to be supplied in order to complete the signature appears from the acrostic on the first four lines of the canto:

‘Pape Satan, pape Satan aleppe,’
Cominciò Pluto colla voce chioccia.
E quel Savio gentil, che tutto seppe,
Disse per confortarmi: ‘Non ti nocchia

Consider on these lines the following marginal letters:

1	PA
2	C
3	E
4	D

Read: PACE D

Thus the complete telestic reading on the words of Pluto is: DANTE, DANTE, CHRIST. Dante and Christ are confused, or, as constantly in the *Divina Commedia*, identified.

There is another telestic reading on the same words. Consider the following final and contiguous letters:

PAPE	PE
SATAN	N
PAPE	E
SATAN	N
ALEPPE	PE

Read down on the first three words: PENE. Read up on the last three words: PENE. The two readings key on E of the third word.

Just as in the first telestic reading Dante and Christ are associated, so Dante is here associated with PENE. Phallic symbolism for Christ appears in his well-known symbols, the fish and the key.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

In the foregoing analysis of Dante's Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, I have shown that the structure of each of these regions corresponds to the structure of the female body. And I have also shown that the structure of the female body appears in each of these regions twice. In Hell there are, first, the interior of Hell itself, extending from the surface of the northern hemisphere to the centre of the earth, and, second, the interior that extends from the centre of the earth to the surface of the southern hemisphere. In Purgatory there are, first, the Mountain of Purgatory, and second, the Terrestrial Paradise that crowns the mountain of Purgatory. In Paradise there are, first, the nine moving spheres, and, second, the motionless Empyrean beyond the nine moving spheres. This reduplication of the female structure in Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, respectively, makes each of these regions in itself a symbol of the mother in her dual aspect of good and evil, the good aspect of retaining the child in her womb and the evil aspect of expelling the child. Dante assigns, as I have shown, the same dual aspect to the earth, dividing as he does the surface of the earth between the mother symbol of land and the mother symbol of water.

This division of each of the various abodes of man, Earth,

Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, into two parts is an idea that derives from sources more remote than Dante; it appears, indeed, in the story of the Garden of Eden.

Now the Garden of Eden, as the region in which man passed the first period of his life on earth, is simply a symbol for the womb, and the happy existence in the Garden of Eden is simply the life of the child in the womb of its mother. The expulsion from the Garden of Eden, which, according to the account of Genesis, was due to the sin of eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, corresponds to the expulsion of the child from the womb in delivery. Thus the Biblical account of the earth at the time of Creation, as divided between the Garden of Eden and the region outside the Garden of Eden, is exactly analogous to Dante's account of Earth, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, respectively, as a symbol of the dual character of the mother.

That the story of the Garden of Eden symbolizes the life of the child in the womb appears from the fact that in this account of the happy condition of man in his original state, the hunger of man, as in the intra-uterine existence, was satisfied without labor, and that the loss of the happy condition was somehow connected with the acquiring of consciousness, as in the eating of the fruit of the tree of *knowledge*. But the conception of the perfect life as the prenatal life in the womb is not confined to the story of the Garden of Eden. It appears, indeed, in the classical myth of the Golden Age, as described by Hesiod, and in analogous myths of widely scattered races. If it is possible, as is now often maintained, that unconscious memories of the intra-uterine life survive in the adult man, the wide-spread conception of the intra-uterine life as the original happy state may be derived from these memories. But in any event, the precise expression of this conception in the *Divina Commedia* corresponds to a universal belief.

Among the myths of the original happy condition of man is the myth that the original human beings were male and female in the same body. This myth of androgynous beings adds another confirmation to the interpretation of the story

of the Garden of Eden as referring to intra-uterine existence; for in the period of pregnancy, a son in the womb of his mother might easily be considered to form with the mother a single being that is both male and female. This myth of an original androgynous being survives, in a modified form, indeed, in the Biblical account of the creation of man; for in the account of the creation of Eve from a rib of Adam it is implied that Eve had existed in Adam before she was separated from him.

The account of the creation of Eve is obviously obstetrical; it is consistent, therefore, with the myth of an original androgynous being, in that the male Adam is here portrayed in the female rôle of giving birth. But there is a further implication in the Biblical account of the creation of Eve that is of the highest importance for the interpretation not only of the symbolism of the Garden of Eden but also of the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, in which, as I believe, the symbolism of the Garden of Eden is consciously reproduced.

The Biblical account that Eve was taken from the body of Adam is simply a way of saying, consistent with the assumed priority of man, that Adam was taken from the body of Eve. In other words, Eve is to be understood as the mother of Adam, exactly like the Garden of Eden itself, in which she is the central female figure.

This is not the place, however, to develop the symbolism of Eve as the mother of Adam in detail. Let it suffice for our purposes, therefore, to recall that she is designated as "the mother of all living," and to recognize that if she is indeed to be understood as the mother of Adam, she must at the same time be understood to have lived in an incestuous relation with him. What I wish principally to show at present is that, whether or not Eve herself be the mother of Adam, the Garden of Eden must certainly be recognized as the symbol of the mother of Adam, and that his expulsion from the Garden of Eden was due to a sexual fault committed in it. This fault, therefore, was incestuous. The incestuous character of the fault is expressed in the character of the punish-

ment, which was Adam's expulsion from the Garden, as in birth, "to till the ground from whence he was taken." Punishment, in all ancient symbolism, is a repetition of the sin for which the punishment is imposed; for Adam, therefore, to be doomed to till the ground from whence he was taken means that he was doomed to till, in the symbolic sense of the word, his mother Earth.

After the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the original happy condition of man, man is left with the desire to return to it; and the desire to return to the Garden of Eden, or to the original happy condition, is the desire to return to the mother—a return that is to be accomplished, in the symbolism of ancient myth and religion, by an incestuous reunion that shall result in the rebirth of the incestuous son in the womb from which he has been expelled. The rebirth symbolism as involving a return to the intra-uterine existence, an existence which is thus to be recognized in the Hebrew account of the Garden of Eden, in the classical myth of the Golden Age, and, indeed, in many myths of original happiness, is fundamental in the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*.

I have already quoted, as expressing in general terms Dante's conception of the universal desire to return to the mother, the following words from the *Convivio*: *Il sommo desiderio di ciascuna cosa, e prima dalla Natura dato, è lo ritornare al suo Principio*. The importance which he attaches to this idea appears from the fact that he develops it with the utmost explicitness in his commentary on the canzone: *Amor, che nella mente mi ragiona, Convivio iii. 3*. I urge the reader to refer to this passage, as the importance of its implications for Dante's mother symbolism can scarcely be exaggerated. In a significant phrase in this passage Dante even ascribes to inanimate nature the same tendency to return to its source: *Le corpora composte prima, siccome sono le miniere, hanno amore al loco, dove la loro generazione è ordinata, e in quello crescono, e da quello hanno vigore e potenza*.

In the further development of the idea in the same passage, Dante makes use of an ancient myth for its mother symbol-

ism. This myth is the myth of Antaeus, who was the son of the earth. In the struggle between Antaeus and Hercules Antaeus lost his strength whenever Hercules lifted him from the earth; he regained his strength every time Hercules permitted him to touch the earth again. The touching of the earth, from which Antaeus was born, was, accordingly, for Antaeus, a return to his mother. And it is obvious that the use of this myth, as symbolizing incest and rebirth, is conscious and deliberate on the part of Dante, for it occurs in a philosophic analysis in prose of his own poetical meaning. The conscious use which he makes of this myth goes far to prove that he has the same conscious and deliberate purpose in the use of all the myths which he has included in the *Divina Commedia*. It proves, indeed, that for Dante myths are important as having meaning, and that all the myths which he includes in the *Divina Commedia* must be consistently interpreted to show the meaning which Dante attaches to them.

CHAPTER VIII

BEATRICE

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THE identity of Beatrice is the key to the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*. For a general discussion of the various theories as to her identity the reader may refer to the essay on "Beatrice" in Moore's *Studies in Dante*. These theories Moore reduces to three types, which he designates respectively as the *historica*!, the *ideal*, and the *symbolical*. The advocates of these types he designates respectively as Realists, Idealists, and Symbolists.

"The Realists (properly so called)," says Moore, "maintain that the Beatrice of Dante was none other than the historical Beatrice Portinari, transfigured by degrees 'from glory to glory' in the imagination of the poet, till her image becomes little short of divine . . . But there are certain spurious Realists," he adds, with the emphasis of the orthodox, "whom we feel tempted to call 'Separatists,' who admit that the Beatrice of Dante was a real contemporary person whom Dante loved, perhaps called Beatrice, perhaps not; but maintain that she was in any case a separate person from Beatrice Portinari: admitting, however, that beyond that negative assertion nothing more can now be known, or even guessed, concerning her."

According to the "Idealists," "the Beatrice of Dante is merely 'la donna idealizzata,' 'the ideal of womanhood'; the 'ewig-Weibliche,' the embodiment (we ought hardly to say 'incarnation') of female perfection, not realized, and never to be realized, on this earth."

According to the "Symbolists," Beatrice is merely the

personification of some abstract quality, or entity, such as Wisdom, Theology, or Imperial Power. A symbol, as Moore uses the term, "is a pure invention of the imagination—an arbitrarily chosen figure or type under which something else is represented, the thing so represented being the sole reality." According to this definition, then, Beatrice as symbolical has no relation whatever to womanhood, whether historical or ideal. Such a definition of symbolism means nothing more, indeed, than mere personification.

With none of the theories as Moore defines them can I agree. His definition of symbolism, adequately as it may represent the ideas of the commentators who maintain that the figure of Beatrice is a mere personification of some abstract quality, is inadequate to the true nature of symbolism, especially as symbolism was understood by the medieval mystics.

According to Moore's definition, the "sole reality" of a symbol is the thing which it symbolizes. For the mystical symbolist, on the contrary, the symbol as well as the thing symbolized must have a reality of its own, and the likeness which he discovers in the symbol and the thing symbolized is his ground for asserting their essential *identity*. Definition of symbolism is beyond the scope of the present volume. I will confine myself at present, therefore, to a mere statement of my belief that there are certainly symbolical elements in the character of Beatrice: but that these symbolical elements do not preclude, as Moore states, the reality of Beatrice as a woman. But whether or not that woman was Beatrice Portinari is another question.

The theory of the "Idealists" that the Beatrice of Dante is merely the expression of the poet's conception of perfect womanhood in the abstract is inconsistent with the character of the *Divina Commedia* as an allegory. By Dante's own definition, given in the *Convivio* and the letter to Can Grande, the *Divina Commedia*, as allegory, has four meanings, *literal*, *allegorical*, *moral*, and *anagogical* or *mystical*; and by the "anagogical or mystical meaning" Dante signifies the *symbolical*. The meaning which the "Idealists" attach to

Beatrice as simply perfect womanhood corresponds to the moral meaning, and it is inconceivable that the central figure of the allegory, which Dante expressly declares has four meanings, should have only the moral meaning. The possibility of interpreting the character according to its multiplicity of meanings is precluded by the "Idealists," and also, indeed, by the "Symbolists."

BEATRICE PORTINARI

The "Realist" identification of the Beatrice of Dante with Beatrice Portinari has nothing in its favor except the dubious testimony of Boccaccio, given almost fifty years after the death of Dante. In view of the fabulating character of his "Life" of Dante, one of the curiosities of the history of criticism is that Boccaccio's statement about Beatrice Portinari as the original of the Beatrice of Dante has been accepted with so much credulity. Boccaccio's statement is as follows:

"Perciocchè questa è la primiera volta che di questa donna nel presente libro si fa menzione, non pare indegna cosa alquanto manifestare, di cui l'autore in alcune parti della presente opera intenda, nominando lei . . . Fu adunque questa donna (secondo la relazione di fededegna persona, la quale la conobbe, e fu per consanguinità strettissima a lei) figliuola di un valente uomo chiamato Folco Portinari, antico cittadino di Firenze: e comechè l'autore sempre la nomini Beatrice dal suo primitivo, ella fu chiamato Bice: ed egli acconciamente il testimonia nel Paradiso, laddove dice: 'Ma quella riverenza, che s'indonna Di tutto me, pur per B e per ICE.' E fu di costumi e di onestà laudevole, quanto donna esser debba, e possa; e di bellezza e di leggiadria assai ornata; e fu moglie d'un cavaliere de' Bardi, chiamato messer Simone, e nel ventiquattresimo anno della sua età passò di questa vita, negli anni di Cristo MCCXC."

In regard to this statement, apparently so straightforward, I ask the reader to notice, first, that Boccaccio provides a

convenient loop-hole for himself in basing his statement on the authority of an anonymous *fededegna persona*; and, second, that immediately after making the identification, he refers to the strange use which Dante makes in *Par.* vii. 14, of the first and last letters of the name of Beatrice: BE . . . ICE.

The passage to which Boccaccio refers is *Par.* vii. 10-15:

Io dubitava, e dicea: 'Dille, dille,'	10
Fra me, 'dille,' diceva, 'alla mia donna	
Che mi disseta con le dolci stille';	
Ma quella riverenza che s' indonna	13
Di tutto me, pur per BE e per ICE,	
Mi richinava come l' uom ch' assonna.	

Now Dante's use here of the letters BE and ICE is, as I shall show later, cryptographic: he is manifestly, of course, as Boccaccio suggests, alluding to *Bice* as a form of the name *Beatrice*; but the manifest allusion is couched in such a way as to express a hidden meaning which suggests that Beatrice is someone quite different from Beatrice Portinari. It is certainly curious, therefore, that Boccaccio, after identifying Beatrice with Beatrice Portinari, should refer to what is really a cryptographic play on the letters of her name, a play which contradicts the identification (see pp. 346-7). Why, if Boccaccio wished *merely* to say that Dante used the form *Bice*, did he refer to this obscure and veiled form of *Bice*, *per BE e per ICE*, when his purpose would have been better served by referring to the use of the name which Dante makes quite simply in the *Vita Nuova*, xxiv. 58:

Io vidi monna Vanna e monna Bice?

If any reason can be found for believing that Boccaccio was aware of the cryptographic character of the *Divina Commedia*, his reference to the cryptographic B (BE) and ICE may well be taken to indicate that he was intentionally contradicting himself in his identification of Beatrice with Beatrice Portinari.

It happens that there is evidence that the cryptographic character of the *Divina Commedia* was not unknown to Boccaccio; for Boccaccio wrote a poem, obviously influenced

by the *Divina Commedia*, which contains acrostics. The poem to which I refer is the *Amorosa Visione*. Like the *Divina Commedia*, the *Amorosa Visione* is a vision and an allegory. In its subject matter, moreover, the *Amorosa Visione*, like the *Divina Commedia*, tells how the poet, guided by a lady, sees heroes and lovers of the past. The *Amorosa Visione*, like the *Divina Commedia*, is written in *terza rima*, and the initial letters of all the *terzine* throughout the work compose three poems, in the first of which the whole is dedicated to Boccaccio's lady-love, under her name Maria. Following is this first acrostic *sonnetto*:

Mirabil cosa forse la presente
 Vision vi parrà, donna gentile,
 A riguardar sì per lo nuovo stile
 Si per la fantasia ch'è nella mente.
 Rimirandovi un dì subitamente
 Bella, leggiadra et in abit 'umile,
 In volontà mi venne con sottile
 Rima trattar parlando brevemente.
 Adunque a voi, cui tengo donna mia
 Et chui senpre disio di servire
 La raccomando, madame Maria:
 E prieghovi, se fosse nel mio dire
 Difecto alcun, per vostra cortesia
 Correggiate amendando il mio fallire
 Cara Fiamma, per cui'l core ò caldo
 Que' che vi manda questa visione
 Giovanni è di Boccaccio da Certaldo.*

Observe that this poem, which is itself an acrostic, contains another acrostic, for the initials of the first, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth lines spell: MARIA. This device, elaborate but obvious, once attention is directed to it, seems to have escaped notice for a long time, for according to the *Nuova Enciclopedia Italiana*, Girolamo Claricio in 1521, almost two centuries after the composition of the poem, was the first to

*Boccaccio. *Opere Volgari*. Vol. xiv, Ed. Ignazio Moutier, Firenze. 1833. It is amusing to note that this editor apologizes for the "barbarous" spelling in the acrostic poems, and calls attention to lines that are too long or too short. It is no wonder that in working out this long trick Boccaccio sometimes nodded; cryptographic devices are subject to imperfections and irregularities.

discover that *L'Amorosa Visione* is an acrostic poem. Boccaccio's method of using, for his acrostics, the initials of the first lines of the *terzine*, is analogous to Dante's method, in many of the acrostics in the *Divina Commedia*, of using the initials of the first lines of *terzine*.

In the light of the fact that in the *Amorosa Visione* Boccaccio imitated the *Divina Commedia* in form and subject matter and embodied in his poem, moreover, acrostics analogous in form to some of the acrostics of the *Divina Commedia*, it can hardly be rash to surmise that he was aware of the cryptographic character of the poem which he imitated. And if Boccaccio was aware of the cryptographic character of the *Divina Commedia*, he may be presumed to have been aware of the cryptographic character of the В (BE) and ICE, to which he refers in connection with his identification of Beatrice with Beatrice Portinari. The cryptic use of these letters by Dante points, as Boccaccio seems thus to have been aware, to the fact that Beatrice Portinari was *not* the Beatrice of the *Divina Commedia*.

It is my belief, accordingly, that Boccaccio made the identification of the Beatrice of the *Divina Commedia* with Beatrice Portinari as a blind; and that in making the identification which he knew to be false, he gave at the same time, for the benefit of those who should be capable of taking advantage of it, the clue, in the allusion to the cryptic BE and ICE, to her true identity. If Boccaccio did indeed perpetrate this fraud, it may be considered as a pious fraud; it protected the anonymity of Dante's lady in the same spirit that Dante himself had protected it. It must not be forgotten that Dante had taken elaborate precautions, to which he confesses in the *Vita Nuova*, to conceal the identity of the lady to whom his devotions were dedicated. For the purpose of concealing her identity he pretended love for other ladies, whom he called the *schermi* of his true love. In the *Vita Nuova*, v. 23, he speaks, in referring to a lady with whom he thus pretended, *di fare di questa . . . donna schermo della veritate*; and again, *Vita Nuova*, vi. 2, he says that *questa donna era schermo di tanto amore*. Concealment of the identity of the

lady love was the literary convention; it was of the essence, indeed, of the esotericism of the Platonic or chivalric love so widely celebrated in the poetry contemporary with Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarca. There is reason to believe, therefore, that in his "pious fraud," Boccaccio, who had himself concealed under the name of *Fiammetta* his devotions to *Maria*, was moved by loyalty to his master to protect from the eyes of the profane the secret of his master's love. In view of the fact that his own work is so closely related to that of Dante in its esoteric and cryptographic character, his identification of Beatrice with Beatrice Portinari, the only evidence that exists for the identification, must be regarded with suspicion.

But whether this evidence be regarded with suspicion or not, there is an objection to the identification of the Beatrice of Dante with Beatrice Portinari which remains insurmountable. Dante would not have called by her real name the lady whose identity he took such pains to conceal. I have already referred to the elaborate method of concealment which Dante confesses that he practiced. In order to keep the secret of the identity of his true love, he pretended love, as he tells us in the *Vita Nuova*, for another lady whom he calls the *schermo della veritade*. The *schermo della veritade*, I believe, has a double meaning into the discussion of which I cannot enter now. But it certainly indicates, in its literal meaning, that the desire to conceal the identity of his lady was profound on the part of Dante. How, then, can he be considered to have been willing to refer to her as Beatrice if Beatrice, as Boccaccio says, was her real name? For Dante to have referred to Beatrice Portinari as Beatrice—supposing for the moment that Beatrice Portinari was really the lady—would have been tantamount, in a small city like the Florence of Dante's time, to telling her name in full. In view, therefore, of the concealment which he desired, it is necessary to conclude that the *real* name of his lady was *not* Beatrice, and therefore not Beatrice Portinari.

There is nothing in the history of criticism, it seems to me, that surpasses the credulity with which the identification of Beatrice with Beatrice Portinari has been accepted. The

Vita Nuova, the first work of Dante's in which he speaks of Beatrice, must have had for its readers his own contemporaries, his fellow citizens and friends, the very eyes from which he wished his secret to be kept. Yet it is generally supposed that in the *Vita Nuova* Dante betrays his secret in the very breath with which he speaks of keeping it! It cannot even be objected that, as the *Vita Nuova* was written after the death of Beatrice, the necessity for concealing her identity had ceased to exist for Dante. In the first place, the death of a mistress, Platonic or non-Platonic, can hardly have appealed to the scruples of Dante as a release from the necessity of protecting her name. And in the second place, it would appear from the *Vita Nuova* that he had already referred to her as Beatrice *before the time which he assigns for her death*. I am not now speaking of the use which Dante constantly makes of the name of Beatrice in the early *prose* parts of the *Vita Nuova*; for the *prose* of the *Vita Nuova* was certainly written after the date assigned for the death of Beatrice. I am speaking now of his allusion to her as *monna Bice* in the fourteenth sonnet, *Vita Nuova*, xxiv, a poem which, as he tells in the *prose* comment, was written immediately after the meeting with her which it describes. Since it thus appears from Dante's evidence that he had used this name before the date assigned for her death, it can hardly be argued that the obligation to conceal her true name had been removed by her death. But the directest evidence that Beatrice was not the true name of his lady is given by Dante himself in his first reference to her, *Vita Nuova*, ii. 6-7, as *la gloriosa donna della mia mente, la quale fu chiamata da molti Beatrice, i quali non sapeano che si chiamare*. With whatever shade of meaning these words may be interpreted—and they have proved a stumbling-block to many—their unavoidable implication is that the true name of the lady was somehow *not* Beatrice.

The case for Beatrice Portinari is so weak that the only relation that she may reasonably be supposed to have had with the Beatrice of Dante is to have served as a *schermo della veritate*. It is just possible that, as Beatrice Portinari happened to have the same name that Dante had chosen for

the lady of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia*, Dante may have permitted it to be believed that she was indeed the object of his devotions, just as he had permitted the same false belief about other ladies. It is in the sense, therefore, of creating a *schermo della veritade* that I think Boccaccio must be understood in his identification of Beatrice with Beatrice Portinari.

I have referred above to the literary convention which required a poet to write of his lady under a fictitious name. This widespread convention, which indicates that Beatrice must also have been a fictitious name, appears in the "Fiammetta" of Boccaccio. To the possible objection to this argument that the convention may have been disregarded by Dante just as it was disregarded by Petrarca in the poems which he addressed to the historic Laura, I reply that the historicity of Laura *as* Laura has yet to be proved. The kind of proof that is commonly produced to identify the Laura of Petrarca with Laura, the daughter of Audibert de Noves and the wife of Hugh de Sade, is shown in Moore's essay on Beatrice, when he says: "And as to Laura such scepticism is simply absurd, since her existence is as certain as anything in history, and her family survives near Avignon to this day." The proof of the actual existence of Laura de Sade has nothing whatever to do with proving that she was the original of the Laura of Petrarca. I might as well say that I know that William Shakespeare wrote the Shakespeare plays because I have been in his house at Stratford. There are, as a matter of fact, very good reasons for believing that the Laura of Petrarca was really some one with a name not Laura. I cannot go into these reasons here. Let me, however, point out certain curious parallels. Dante is supposed to have seen Beatrice for the first time in May, and the third meeting with her which he describes was apparently in a church. The first meeting of Boccaccio with his mistress, Maria, whom he celebrated as Fiammetta, was on Easter Eve in a church. The first meeting of Petrarca with Laura was in Holy Week in a church. In view of the fact that we are dealing here with three great poets, almost contemporaries, who followed more

or less the same literary conventions, the coincidence of their first meetings with their mistresses in *a church at the rebirth time of the year and of Christ* suggests that we must take the accounts of these meetings and the identity of the ladies thus met with a grain of allegory. The theme of rebirth, thus suggested by the three Poets, is proved to be consciously intended by Dante in the very title of the *Vita Nuova*.

BELLA

Grouped with the "Realists (properly so called)"—to continue the devout terminology of Moore—there are those whom he designates as "spurious Realists," or "Separatists." These heretics among the Dantists, while admitting that the Beatrice of Dante must have been an actual contemporary of Dante's, reject the identification of her with Beatrice Portinari and declare that her identity can never be known. I share the belief that the Beatrice of Dante was not Beatrice Portinari; but I am far from believing that it is impossible to know who she was. As I have already indicated, I identify the Beatrice of Dante with Bella, the mother of Dante.

My identification of the Beatrice of Dante with Bella, the mother of Dante, is based, first, on the allegorical meaning of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia*, and second, on cryptograms which I have deciphered in the *Divina Commedia*. In order to present this cryptographic evidence adequately, I shall have to develop briefly the interpretation of the character to which the cryptographic evidence points.

Of the mother of Dante little is known. It is certain that her Christian name was Bella, and it has been conjectured that she was the daughter of Durante di Scolaio degli Abati. If the conjecture is true, the Christian name of Dante, as a contraction of Durante, was possibly derived from his maternal grandfather.

Bella was the first of the two wives of Dante's father, whose name is usually spelled *Alighiero*. She gave birth to Dante in Florence, and Dante was her only child. She died in or before 1278.

The second wife of Alighiero was Lapa, the daughter of Chiarissimo Cialuffi. By his second wife, Lapa, Alighiero had three children. The names of both Bella and Lapa appear in a document dated May 16, 1332, at which date Lapa was still alive.*

The fact that the mother was succeeded by a stepmother in the life of Dante was a profound determinant, I believe, for the peculiar development of his imagination; it supplied, by accident, a personal experience of two mothers which predisposed him to the myth of the two mothers, or the dual mother, that plays so important a part in the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*.

In 1278, the latest date, according to Toynbee, that can be assigned for the death of Bella, Dante was thirteen years old. His association with his mother, therefore, can scarcely, at the longest, have extended beyond his childhood. There is very good evidence, however, that his mother held a unique position in Dante's affection. This evidence consists of the fact that she is the only member of his immediate family to whom he refers in the course of his entire work. The very phrasing of his reference to her implies, as I shall show, the peculiar character of his filial love.

Dante's reference to his mother is made in the words addressed to him by Virgil, *Inf.* viii. 44-45:

Alma sdegnosa,
Benedetta colei che in te s'incinse.

This is the only overt reference in the entire works of Dante to Dante's mother; and outside of what he has to say about his ancestors, it is the only reference in his entire works to any member of his family. The remarkable feature of this reference to Dante's mother is that it is a paraphrase of the words addressed to Christ, *Luke* xi. 27, in reference to Mary, the mother of Christ:

“And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto

*My authority for the foregoing statements regarding Bella is Paget Toynbee, in his *Dante Alighieri*.

him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked."

Now the implication of the words which Dante puts in the mouth of Virgil are of the greatest importance for the interpretation of the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*. In paraphrasing in his address to Dante the Biblical address to Christ, Virgil is implying that Dante is to be identified with Christ as the divine son. This identification of Dante with Christ accords with the numerous examples of the same identification that we have already noticed. And in paraphrasing, in his reference to the mother of Dante, the Biblical reference to Mary, the mother of Christ, Virgil is implying that Bella, the mother of Dante, is to be identified with Mary, the mother of Christ, as the deified or divine mother. Now this identification of Bella with Mary as the divine mother is, as we shall see, constantly paralleled both in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* by the intimate association which Dante describes as existing between Beatrice and Mary.

It has sometimes been doubted whether the words which Dante here puts in the mouth of Virgil are actually intended by Dante as a reference to his own mother. The proof that he so intends them appears in the interior sequences to be found in the passage in which the words occur. The sequences appear as follows, *Inf.* viii. 42-48:

42 dicendo via costa con gli Altri cani
 43 lo collo poi con Le braccia mi cinse
 44 baciommi iL volto e disse alma sdegnosa
 45 BENedetta colei che in te s'incinse
 46 quei fu al monDo persona orgogliosa
 47 bonta non e che sua MEMoria fregi
 48 cosi s'e l'ombra sua qui fuRiosa

Read A of *altri*, 42; L of *le*, 43; L of *il*, 44; BE of *benedetta*, 45; BELLA.

Read A of *benedetta*, 45; D of *mondo*, 46; ME of *memoria*, 47; R of *furiosa*, 48; MADRE.

Note that the two sequences key on *benedetta*, line 45.

Associated with the beloved mother, as she thus unmistakably appears in this passage, is the dream-like distortion of the hated father in the figure of Filippo Argenti, whose jealous act in laying his hands on the boat, a mother image, in order to prevent Dante's passage, the symbol of incestuous union with the mother image, is so cruelly resented by Dante as the jealous son.

There is evidence that Dante was dominated to an unusual degree by his love for his mother. I am referring now to a peculiar habit of thought which shows in all his work—a habit of thought which led him to form his abstract conception of life in terms of mother imagery. This habit is the measure of the emotion with which the memory of his mother dominated his imagination. Dante conceived as mother images, as I showed in the preceding chapter, the earth, the encircling sea, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise; he recreated the universe in the image of the mother whom he had lost in his youth in order that he might return to her in imagination. And it is only as expressing this same desire to return to his mother that he can be completely understood when he enunciates as the universal tendency of life: *il sommo desiderio di ciascuna cosa, e prima della Natura dato, è lo ritornare al suo Principio.*

It is impossible within the limits of the present volume to trace the mother imagery in the works of Dante as it spreads from his abstract conception of the universe to his conceptions of the details of daily life. But there is not a page, I venture to say, in the whole of the *Divina Commedia* where this imagery may not be seen by those who have eyes to see it. I will confine myself, therefore, to citing a single instance here. Dante's birthplace was Florence; and having been exiled from Florence under penalty of death, he was unable to return to it. But the desire to return to it was with him constantly, and led to long and fruitless attempts on his part to have the decree of exile repealed. Now in the imagination of Dante Florence and the image of his mother were alike in being both his *birthplace*, and they were alike in being both denied to him *under penalty of death*. And they were alike, accordingly, in being both *suo principio* to which he desired,

as his *sommo desiderio*, to return. In his love of Florence and even in his hatred of Florence, as the source of his misery, Dante identified the city with his mother, and it is only in the light of this identification that his allusions to the city, expressed as they constantly are in terms of mother imagery, can be properly understood. In the pathetic allusion to his exile in the beginning of the *Convivio* he speaks of the *dolcissimo seno* of the *bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza . . . nel quale nato e nudrito fui fino al colmo della mia vita*. And in the description of primitive Florence, *Par.* xv, which he puts into the mouth of his ancestor Cacciaguida, he contrasts her primitive purity with her contemporary licentiousness, expressing the contrast in unmistakable references to the sexual life.

We have already seen (pp. 92-4) some of the cryptograms in this passage, in which Dante's native city denies him and names him. That it was his conscious intention in this description of Florence to identify the city of his birth with his mother is proved by another cryptogram which the passage contains. Following are the lines immediately succeeding the passage containing the acrostic: ELLA NON NOMA DANTE:

Bellincion Berti vid' io andar cinto	112
Di cuoio e d' osso, e venir dallo specchio	
La donna sua senza il viso dipinto;	
E vidi quel de' Nerli e quel del Vecchio	115
Esser contenti alla pelle scoperta,	
E le sue donne al fuso ed al penneccio.	
O fortunate! Ciascuna era certa	118
Della sua sepoltura, ed ancor nulla	
Era per Francia nel letto deserta.	
L' una vegghiava a studio della culla,	121
E consolando usava l' idioma	
Che prima i padri e le madri trastulla;	
L' altra, traendo alla rocca la chioma,	124
Favoleggiava con la sua famiglia	
De' Troiani, di Fiesole, e di Roma.	
Saria tenuta allor tal meraviglia	127
Una Cianghella, un Lapo Salterello,	
Qual or saria Cincinnato e Corniglia.	

A così riposato, a così bello	130
Viver di cittadini, a così fida	
Cittadinanza, a così dolce ostello,	
Maria mi die', chiamata in alte grida,	133
E nell' antico vostro Batisteo	
Insieme fui cristiano e Cacciaguida.	
Moronto fu mio frate ed Eliseo;	136
Mia donna venne a me di val di Pado,	
E quindi il soprannome tuo si feo.	

This passage consists of nine *terzine*. Nine is the maternal number. Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the nine *terzine*:

112	BE
115	E
118	O
121	L
124	LA
127	SA
130	A
133	MARIA
136	MOR

Read: BELLA E MARIA AMOROSA

Now consider the following marginal letters of the first *terzina*:

112	BEL
113	DI
114	LA

Read: DI BELLA

This passage and the passage preceding it (see p. 92) are an elaborate play on the idea of mother and son. Cacciaguida, the root (*radice*) of Dante, is speaking in praise of good old-fashioned domestic mothers in the uncorrupted Florence of an earlier time. Dante's mother, Bella, appears twice in cryptograms, and the Virgin Mary, line 133, appears in the open text. Note, lines 114 and 137, *la donna sua* and *mia donna*.

Another instance of Dante's identification of Bella with Florence occurs in *Par.* xxiii, 84-88, in which Bella is also identified with the Virgin Mary. The interior sequence in this passage appears as follows:

84 senza veder principio dei fulgori
 85 o benigna virtu che si gl'imprenti
 86 su t'esaltasti per largirmi loco
 87 agli occhi li chE non eran possenti
 88 il nome del Bel fior ch'io sempre invoco

Read: L of *fulgore*, 84; L of *gl'*, 85; A of *largirmi*, 86; E of *che*, 87; B of *bel*, 88: BELLA.

The reading terminates on *bel*. *Il nome del bel* is a hint to look for a name. *Bel fior* is the mystic rose, the Virgin. And *fior* to any Florentine suggests his mother city.

Another instance of the association of the name of Bella with the Virgin Mary is found in an interior sequence in the Hymn to the Virgin, *Par.* xxxiii. 13-16:

13 donna sei tanto grande e tanto vaLi
 14 che' qual vuol grazia ed A te non ricorre
 15 sua disianza vuol volar senz' ali
 16 la tua BEnignita non pur soccorre

Read L of *vali*, 13; A, 14; L of *vuol*. 15; BE of *benignita*, 16: BELLA.

THE MOTHER CULT

The emotional disposition of Dante to recreate, out of the miscellaneous materials of his personal experience, the mother whom he had lost in his childhood in order that he might return to her in imagination is further to be inferred from the fact that he allied himself with the various contemporary forms of thought which expressed the mother cult.

In many primitive religions there appears the vast and vague figure of the Mother of the Gods.* This figure must be

*See in Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, the article on "The Mother of the Gods."

understood, in the last analysis, as expressing for the people who believed in the divine mother the need of including in their religious conceptions of the universe a counterpart of the human mother. The Mother of the Gods was identified by Homer with Rhea, the wife of Kronos, and she was supposed to have prevented Kronos from swallowing their son Zeus by concealing Zeus and by giving Kronos to devour in place of her son a large stone wrapped in swaddling clothes. The story was localized in Crete, which thus became the birth-place of Zeus. The significance which Dante attaches to this myth appears from his curious elaboration of the myth in *Inf.* xiv.

Rhea appears in the four *terzine*, *Inf.* xiv. 94-105:

'In mezzo mar siede un paese guasto,'	94
Diss' egli allora, 'che s' appella Creta,	
Sotto il cui rege fu già il mondo casto.	
Una montagna v' è, che già fu lieta	97
D' acqua e di fronde, che si chiamò Ida;	
Ora è diserta come cosa vieta.	
Rea la scelse già per cuna fida	100
Del suo figliuolo; e per celarlo meglio,	
Quando piangea vi faceva far le grida.	
Dentro dal monte sta dritto un gran veglio,	103
Che tien volte le spalle inver Damiatà,	
E Roma guarda sì come suo specchio.	

Consider first the following marginal letters of the first lines of these *terzine*:

94	IN	100	R
97	U	103	D

Read: NUDRI

In connection with the idea of nourishment consider also the following marginal letters on the same lines:

94	IN M	100	REA
97	UNA	103	D

Read: IN UNA MADRE

There is a hint of a hidden meaning in *celar*, line 101. *Speglio*, line 105, like *specchio* in other passages in the *Divina Commedia*, is a mother image. Cf. the *tre specchi* in *Par.* ii. 101 (see p. 216). The mirror which reproduces the image of the father is obviously the mother. Here the mirror is Rome, the mother city. The sea and the mountain are mother symbols. The old man who stands erect in the mountain is phallic.

The conception of the divine mother, which is an essential feature of many primitive religions and which is to be understood as a sort of universalization of the human mother, is apparently absent from the orthodox forms of Christianity. The conception survives, indeed, in the expression in the Apostles' Creed that Christ "was conceived of the Holy Ghost." But the implication of this phrase as to the motherhood of God is seldom recognized, and the three Persons of the Trinity are generally considered as male, a divine fatherhood with which a divine motherhood is not consciously associated.

But in the Christian picture of the eternal, or universal, life as the complete fulfillment of the life of man, the absence of anything adequately corresponding to the profound and enduring relation of child to mother was felt from the beginning as an imperfection—an imperfection in the picture itself which could not possibly be conceived as existing in the divine reality. So great is the need of a child for its mother that the "children of God" were unable to believe without reservation in a picture of the perfect life in which the mother was missing.

From the very beginning, therefore, of the Christian era, there appeared the tendency to put back into the picture, either in the form of legend or of heretical doctrine, the figure of the divine mother that had been already more or less eliminated from the orthodox form of faith.

It is possible to assign to two causes the elimination of the divine mother from the orthodox form of Christianity. The first was the early Christian ideal of asceticism, according to which the sexual life, even under the sanction of marriage,

was regarded as reprehensible. Recognition of the "Motherhood of God" would have entailed a recognition of sex as an element of the divine life that was at utter variance with the ascetic ideal of early Christianity. It is a fact, moreover, that the cult of the divine mother in pagan religions had been accompanied almost invariably by ceremonies of an extremely licentious character. It was natural, therefore, that the Christian Fathers should look askance at a cult, in whatever Christian rehabilitation, which had proved in practice to lead to sexual irregularities in the conduct of the worshippers.

The second cause to which may be assigned the elimination of the concept of the divine mother from orthodox Christianity was the rationalistic tendency, due to the influence of Greek thought, to define the nature of God in terms not merely anthropomorphic. The "accident" of sex could accordingly find no place in the definition of the Christian Trinity as "substance." This rationalistic tendency in the definition of the Trinity is "reconciled" in the *Divina Commedia* with the concept of the Trinity as a family Triad; the reconciliation appears in the opening lines of *Inferno* iii, where the three persons of the Trinity are associated respectively with the three categories of the mind, will, intellect, and emotion.

But neither the asceticism nor the rationalism of early Christianity could suppress the popular demand for a form of faith in which the divine mother, as a counterpart of the human mother, was assigned an adequate rôle. This popular demand was met in two ways: first, by the identification of the Holy Ghost as the divine mother, and second, by the virtual deification of Mary, the human mother of Christ, as Θεοτόκος, the mother of God.

The cult of the mother in the early history of Christianity was developed in an extremely explicit form in Gnosticism, "the manifold systems of belief," according to the article on Gnosticism in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, "prevalent in the first two centuries of our era, which combined the Christian teachings with a *gnosis*, or higher

knowledge." The *gnosis*, or "higher knowledge," to which the Gnostics laid claim was, according to Theodotus, "the knowledge of who we were, what we have become, where we were, into what place we have been thrown; whither we are hastening, whence we are redeemed; what is birth, what is rebirth."

Fundamental in most, if not all, of the Gnostic sects is the conception of the Godhead as a family Triad, consisting of the supreme unknown Father, whose essence is light, and, associated with him, the Mother and the Son. This divine mother is explicitly identified by the Gnostics with the Holy Ghost of the orthodox Christian Trinity.

The Gnostic elements in the *Divina Commedia* are numerous and precise; they have never, however, been sufficiently recognized. I shall have occasion, later in the chapter, to show in what way Beatrice resembles the Gnostic figure of the divine and fallen mother. But in the meantime I can cite as Gnostic certain elements in the *Divina Commedia* which are independent of the mother symbolism of Beatrice, but which indicate the mother symbolism of the poem as a whole.

Common to Gnosticism and the *Divina Commedia* is the idea of rebirth. The Gnostic belief in the ascent of the soul through successive stages of being is analogous to Dante's ascent through the four stages of Earth, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. This ascent is analogous to the "Wheel of Birth," a concept related to the Pythagorean concept of the transmigration of the soul. From the "Wheel of Birth" the soul can escape only in union with God, a union which Dante conceives himself as accomplishing at the end of his poem.

One of the numerous expressions in the *Divina Commedia* of the idea of rebirth is to be found in the phrase *seconda morte*, a phrase that has given much trouble to the commentators. This phrase appears twice. The first appearance is in *Inf.* i. 115-117:

Ove udirai le disperate strida
 Di quegli antichi spiriti dolenti,
 Che la seconda morte ciascun grida:

The spirits are "crying out for" the second death as something to be desired, so that Norton's "proclaim" for *grida* misses the sense. Death and birth, as we have already seen, are ambivalent terms. The death of a spirit in Hell means its birth in another region.

The same implication of rebirth in *seconda morte* is evident in the second appearance of the words in *Par. xx. 115-117*:

E credendo s' accese in tanto foco
Di vero amor, ch' alla morte seconda
Fu degna di venire a questo gioco.

The "fire of love" is like the fire of Hell, through which the soul passes to be reborn.

Another idea common to Gnosticism and the *Divina Commedia* is the use of light as the symbol of the divine principle of good, and of darkness as the symbol of the principle of evil.

There is a Gnostic belief that the heavens were formed out of the body of the male-female Sophia or Prunicos. This belief is obviously analogous to Dante's idea of Heaven, as well as of Hell and Purgatory, as having the form of the female body.

According to another Gnostic belief, there proceed from the Father, or Supreme God, a number of beings in a descending scale of dignity; these divine creatures in their totality make up the Pleroma, the fulness of all blessedness and perfection. Distinguishable as they are from each other, they are manifestations of the one God, who is himself impersonal and unknowable. This belief has its analogies in the Angelic Orders of the *Divina Commedia* and in the orderly arrangement, according to their degrees of merit, of the souls who meet Dante in his ascent through the heavenly spheres.

The use of cabala, mystical letters, and numbers for cryptic meanings was prevalent among the Gnostics. The cryptographic character of the *Divina Commedia* cannot, therefore, be considered as unrelated to the cryptography of the Gnostics, numerous examples of which may be found in *The Gnostics and Their Remains*, by C. W. King. Especially

prevalent among the Gnostics was the custom of calculating, by various methods, the numerical value of proper names and then expressing these names by other names or phrases which have the same numerical value. The Gnostics had also the custom of renaming their neophytes, the new names being chosen for the appropriate or fortunate numerical value which they were supposed to possess. The theory which underlay this use for the same person or thing of different names having the same numerical value was, according to *The Gnostics and Their Remains*, that "things equal to the same thing were equal to each other." Of Dante's use of the enigmatic *cinquecento diece e cinque*, King says: "That genuine Gnostic Dante employs with great effect this numerical expression of a Name."

These few of the manifold analogies between Gnosticism and the *Divina Commedia*, however much or little they prove in themselves the mother symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, prove that the *Divina Commedia* is intimately related to the Gnostic forms of thought in which the cult of the mother is an essential feature.

The cult of the mother is implicit in the Gnostic doctrine of the motherhood of the Holy Ghost. But the form in which the cult attained its widest expression was in the exaltation of the Virgin Mary, as combining the perfections of the human as well as of the divine mother. The cult of the Virgin Mary developed to extremes which earned the name of Mariolatry. Traces of the cult of the Virgin Mary are certainly to be recognized in the *Divina Commedia*.

Many of the Gnostic ideas, meeting as they did the hostility of the orthodox church of Rome, survived in more or less modified form in the Middle Ages in certain heretical sects and in the writings of the Catholic mystics. I need not here discuss the mystical elements of the *Divina Commedia*; for our present purposes they may be taken for granted. But what I wish to emphasize is the fact that in medieval mysticism the cult of the mother is likewise highly developed. Indicative of the mystical cult of the mother are many expressions in the writings of the great mystic St. Bernard,

the St. Bernard who leads Dante to the Virgin Mary in the conclusion of *Paradiso*.

In his Gnosticism, in his cult of the Virgin Mary, and in his mysticism, Dante is related to the principal forms of religious thought in the Middle Ages in which the cult of the mother is expressed. And in all these forms of the cult of the mother there is an element which, for lack of a better term, must be called incestuous. I have frequently already been obliged to refer to the suggestion of incest in primitive myth and medieval symbolism. Let it suffice, therefore, in regard to Gnosticism, to the cult of the Virgin Mary, and to medieval mysticism, to say that the incestuous element in these forms of thought arises necessarily from the idea, expressed almost universally in terms of the sexual life, of the union of man, conceived as a son, with God conceived as a mother.

There remains to be briefly considered a form of the cult of the mother which was social rather than religious. I am referring now to the remarkable convention prevailing in the Middle Ages that was known as chivalric love. This convention, which sought to reproduce in society an equivalent of the religious cult of the Virgin Mary, must, I believe, be understood in the last analysis as a simulation between lover and mistress of the relations between the human son and the divine mother. These relations, necessarily, are the same, in ideal form, as the relations between the son and his human mother. That the relationship between lover and mistress in chivalric love was indeed a simulation of the ideal relationship between son and mother is proved by the rules of the so-called Courts of Love, by which the relationship was defined. According to these rules a man must love, not his wife, but a lady married to some one else; and his love must be chaste. The lover, moreover, as it would seem, must stand in a feudal relation to the lady's husband, as subject to ruler, or as son to father.

Now the foregoing conditions imposed by the Courts of Love are exactly calculated to simulate the relations of son and mother. The lady of the lover must be married, like his

mother; and the lover must be subject to the lady's husband, just as he is subject to his own father. And his love for his lady must be chaste, just as his love for his mother must be chaste, although the ideal of chastity was not always attained. The convention of chivalric love was, first, a recognition of the existence of a sexual character in the love of the son for his mother; and, second, a belief that the love of the son for his mother is the ideal form of love. The ideal of chivalric love was expressed, *par excellence*, by Dante and his contemporaries.

BEATRICE AND BELLA

In view of the manifold aspects of the cult of the mother which may thus be shown to exist in the work of Dante, let us now examine the evidence for identifying Beatrice, the central female figure of the *Divina Commedia*, with Bella, the mother of Dante.

There is no lack of expressions in the *Divina Commedia* which indicate, in quite literal terms, the maternal character of Beatrice. In her very first appearance to Dante in the Terrestrial Paradise Dante says of her, *Purg.* xxx. 79-80:

Così la madre al figlio par superba,
Com'ella parve a me.

And in *Par.* i. 101-102, Dante speaks of her as looking at him

con quel sembiante
Che madre fa sopra figliuol deliro.

And again in *Par.* xxii. 4-7, Dante says that Beatrice spoke to him

come madre, che soccorre
Subito al figliuol pallido ed anelo
Con la sua voce, che il suol ben disporre.

In addition to these direct allusions in the *Divina Commedia* to the maternal character of Beatrice, there is constantly developed, in the presence of Beatrice as if by association of thought, a flood of maternal imagery. To refer

again to her first appearance in the Terrestrial Paradise, Dante says, *Purg.* xxx. 43-45, that when he saw her,

Volsimi alla sinistra col rispetto
Col quale il fantolin corre alla mamma,
Quando ha paura o quando egli è afflitto.

And making straightway an allusion to Virgil as his *dolcissimo padre*, he alludes, line 52, to *l'antica matre*. I leave to the reader, however, the further working out of the maternal associations which suggest themselves to the mind of Dante in the presence of Beatrice, with the assurance that they are numerous; and confine myself at present to showing an acrostic by which the maternal character of Beatrice, as I think, is definitely proved. The very first words which Beatrice addresses to Dante begin *Purg.* xxx. 73. The four *terzine*, 73-84, which follow this line and which give the words of Beatrice and their remarkable effect on Dante read as follows:

'Guardaci ben: ben sem, ben sem Beatrice:
Come degnasti d' accedere al monte?
Non sapei tu che qui è l' uom felice'?
Gli occhi mi cadder giù nel chiaro fonte; 76
Ma veggendomi in esso, i trassi all' erba,
Tanta vergogna mi gravò la fronte.
Così la madre al figlio par superba, 79
Com' ella parve e me; per che d' amaro
Sente il sapor della pietate acerba.
Ella si tacque, e gli Angeli cantaro 82
Di subito: *In te, Domine, speravi;*
Ma oltre *pedes meos* non passaro.

On the first lines of the four *terzine* of this passage consider the following marginal letters:

73 GUA
76 GLI
79 COSI LA MADRE A
82 E

Read: EGUAGLIA COSI LA MADRE

The interior sequences in the same passage appear as follows:

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73 guardaci ben ben sem Ben sem BEatrice
 74 come degnasti d'accedere AL monte
 75 non sapei tu che qui e L'uom fELice

Read B of the third *ben*, 73; AL, 74; EL of *felice*, 75: BELLA.

Read BE of *beatrice*, 73; AL, 74; L before *uom*, 75: BELLA.

Note that the two readings form a cross.

The maternal character of Beatrice is indicated in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* by the intimate association which Dante is constantly declaring to exist between Beatrice and the Virgin Mary. Dante recalls how she sat *ove s'udiano parole della Regina della gloria*, *Vita Nuova*, v. 2-3; and at her death he says that *lo Signore della giustizia chiamò questa gentilissima a gloriare sotto l'insegna di quella reina benedetta Maria, lo cui nome fu in grandissima reverenza nelle parole di questa Beatrice beata.*—*Vita Nuova*, xxix. In *Inf.* ii she is mentioned as one of a trinity of blessed ladies of whom the other two are Lucia and the Virgin Mary; she comes to the rescue of Dante at the bidding of the Virgin Mary; and her place in the mystic rose in the Empyrean Heaven is very near the place of the Virgin Mary.

The character of Beatrice, as developed throughout the *Vita Nuova*, is Virgin-like, divine: "she seemed not the daughter of mortal man but of God." In more than the sense common to a lover's adoration, she is miraculous: *miracolo la cui radice è solamente la mirabile Trinitade.*—*Vita Nuova*, xxx 39-41. From her proceed powerful and excellent influences upon all who behold her; she is, indeed, the exemplar of womanhood. The words that describe her in *Vita Nuova*, xxvi, *coronata e vestita d'umiltà*, and, in the sonnet, *Benignamente d'umiltà vestuta*, are like the words in the prayer to the Virgin, *Par.* xxxiii. 2:

Umile ed alta più che creatura.

In *Purg.* xxxiii. 4-6, Beatrice is explicitly associated with Maria:

E Beatrice sospirosa e pia
 Quelle ascoltava sì fatta, che poco
 Più alla croce si cambiò Maria.

And in lines 10–12 the divinity of Beatrice is clearly implied, for she repeats as applying to herself the words of Christ to his disciples, words which would be inappropriate on the lips of any woman but the divine mother:

Modicum, et non videbitis me,
Et iterum . . .
Modicum, et vos videbitis me.

This association of Beatrice with Mary is in effect an identification of the two, as the human mother deified and the divine mother. It is analogous to the identification which Dante makes of himself with Christ. The identity of Beatrice and Mary is borne out by several cryptograms.

Following are the last ten lines of *Par. i*, a significant position:

(E sì come veder si può cadere	133
Foco di nube) se l' impeto primo	
L' atterra, torto da falso piacere.	
Non dei più ammirar, se bene estimo,	136
Lo tuo salir, se non come d' un rivo	
Se d' alto monte scende giuso ad imo.	
Maraviglia sarebbe in te, se privo	139
D' impedimento giù ti fossi assiso,	
Come a terra quiete in foco vivo.'	
Quinci rivolse inver lo cielo il viso.	142

Consider the following marginal letters on the last line of the canto and on the first lines of the three preceding terzine:

133	E
136	NO
139	M
142	QUI

Read: NOME QUI

This acrostic seems to be part of a longer acrostic to be read on lines 121–142:

La provvidenza che cotanto assetta,	121
Del suo lume fa il ciel sempre quieto,	
Nel qual si volge quel ch' ha maggior fretta:	

Ed ora lì, com' a sito decreto,	124
Cen porta la virtù di quella corda, Che ciò che scocca drizza in segno lieto.	
Ver' è che, come forma non s' accorda	127
Molte fiata alla intenzion dell' arte, Perch' a risponder la materia è sorda,	
Così da questo corso si diparte	130
Talor la creatura, ch' ha potere Di piegar, così pinta, in altra parte, (E si come veder si può cadere	133
Foco di nube) se l'impeto primo L' atterra, torto da falso piacere.	
Non dei più ammirar, se bene estimo,	136
Lo tuo salir, se non come d' un rivo Se d' alto monte scende giuso ad imo.	
Maraviglia sarebbe in te, se privo	139
D' impedimento giù ti fossi assiso, Come a terra quiete in foco vivo.'	
Quinci rivolse inver lo cielo il viso.	142

Consider on the last line of the canto and the first lines of the seven preceding *terzine* the following marginal letters:

121	LA
124	E
127	V
130	COSI
133	E
136	NO
139	M
142	QUI

Read: COSI VELA NOME QUI

If the name is veiled here, it may be in *MARAVIGLIA*, line 139, which is an anagram for *VAGLI MARIA*. These words may be understood to mean that Beatrice, who is speaking in the text, is the equivalent of Mary.

It is worth noting that immediately under *Maraviglia*, on the last three lines of the passage, there are the following marginal letters:

140 DI
 141 CO
 142 QUI

Read: DICO QUI

In the passage containing the acrostic NOME QUI are several interior sequences, as follows:

133 e si come vedEr si puo cadere
 134 foco di nube se L'impeto primo
 135 l'atterra torto da fALso piacere
 136 non dei piu ammIrar se Bene estimo
 137 lo tuo saliR se non come d'un rivo
 138 se d'Alto monte scende giuso ad imo
 139 Maraviglia sarebbe in te se privo
 140 d'impEDimento giu ti fosse assiso
 141 come a terRA quiete in foco vivo

Read the second E of *veder*, 133; L before *impeto*, 134; AL of *falso*, 135; B of *bene*, 136: BELLA.

Read A of *falso*, 135; I of *ammirar*, 136; R of *salir*, 137; A of *alto*, 138; M of *maraviglia*, 139: MARIA.

Note that these two sequences key on the word *falso*, 135.

Read M of *maraviglia*, 139; ED of *impedimento*, 140; RA of *terra*, 141: MADRE.

Note that the second and third sequences key on the initial of *Maraviglia*, 139;

There is another interior sequence which involves the word *maraviglia*. It appears in *Purg.* xxviii. 39-43 (see p. 367).

The maternal character of Beatrice is indicated by the constant association of her with the number *nine*, the *nine* being, in effect, the nine months of pregnancy. According to the *Vita Nuova*, a nine is connected with all the principal events of her life, and in *Vita Nuova*, xxx, Dante tells why the number nine was so "friendly" to her. The chief reason, according to Dante, seems to be this: Nine is a miracle, because it represents the multiplication of *three*, the number of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by *itself*. This is surely, in the language of such a symbolist as Dante, to be taken as a reference to the way in which the Trinity begot

and conceived, or, in other words, *multiplied itself into*, the divine man-child Christ. Thus nine, as representing the multiplication of Trinity by itself, represents the miracle by which Christ, according to the Apostles' Creed, was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. The nine, therefore, which is so friendly to Beatrice, identifies her as a symbol of motherhood, and further identifies her with the divine mother, as symbolized both by Mary and by the Holy Ghost.

A curious confirmation of this identification, by means of the number nine, of Beatrice with Mary is to be found in a passage in the *Vita Nuova* which has always given trouble to the commentators. In order to show the constant association of nine with Beatrice Dante wishes to show in the date assigned for her death a nine in the day, the month, and the year. According to the Christian calendar, *l'usanza nostra*, the nine appears in the year, which was 1290, but not in the day and the month, the 8th of June; and Dante is therefore obliged, in order to get a day and a month with a nine in them, to do what various commentators have considered as juggling with other calendars. What he does is to take recourse to the calendar of Syria, in which June, the month assigned for the death of Beatrice, is the ninth month; and to the calendar of Arabia, according to which the eighth of June, the day assigned for the death of Beatrice, is the ninth. For the discussion of these calendars the reader may refer to Moore's essay on "Beatrice."

Now this "juggling," as it is generally considered to be, is juggling, indeed, but juggling with a purpose quite different from the purpose usually assigned. Dante is not to be considered here as "juggling" with the calendars of Syria and Arabia in order to escape from the difficulty of finding nines where they do not exist. He is using these calendars to indicate that the date of the death of Beatrice must be reckoned according to the calendars that would have been used for the dates of the Virgin Mary, for the reason that Beatrice is to be identified with the Virgin Mary as the divine mother.

The association of nine with Beatrice was so intimate, according to the *Vita Nuova*, that *questa donna fu accompagnata dal numero del nove a dare ad intendere, che ella era un nove, cioè un miracolo, la cui radice è solamente la mirabile Trinitade.*—*Vita Nuova*, xxx. That Beatrice was a nine in fact may be shown by a method of computing the *numerical value of her name*. One method of computing the numerical value of a name is to add together the numerical values of all the letters of the name, and if the sum is *more than one* integer, to add together in turn the integers of the sum so that the final sum appears as a single integer. This integer gives the numerical value of the name from which it is obtained. The numerical value of a letter corresponds to the number of its position in the alphabet. According to the Latin alphabet as including the letter κ, the numerical values of the letters of BEATRICE are as follows:

B	2
E	5
A	1
T	20
R	18
I	9
C	3
E	5

The sum of these numbers is 63; and the sum of the integers of 63—which, as I said, must be added together—is 9, the numerical value of BEATRICE.

The fact that the name of Beatrice may be calculated to express the number nine, the very number which Dante associates with her as her symbol, is a coincidence that would have appealed to the kind of Gnostic interest that produced in the *Divina Commedia* the enigma of the DXV. I am of the opinion, therefore, that along with the meaning of the name Beatrice, as “She who blesses,” the numerical value of the name as nine was a determinant for Dante to use the name for the central female character of his poem.

In connection with the numerical value of the name

Beatrice, which gives, first, a 63 and, second, a 9, it is interesting to note that the number of times the name of Beatrice is mentioned in the *Divina Commedia* is exactly 63; so that the numerical value of the name, if computed from the number of times it is mentioned, may again be expressed as 9. This coincidence is, in my opinion, not an accident; and I feel confirmed in my opinion by the fact that there seems to be something equally cryptic suggested in the number of times the name of Christ is mentioned in the *Divina Commedia*, namely, 39, a number which reduces by the addition of its integers first to 12 and then to 3, the number of the Trinity. And in view of the fact that, as I have tried to show, Dante identifies himself with Christ in the *Divina Commedia* and that the name of Dante, *di necessità*, is mentioned in the *Divina Commedia* once, the number of times that Christ is mentioned may be considered to be 40. The number 40 reduces to 4, and 4 is the number *par excellence* for Christ, since he makes, by his divine Incarnation, a four of the Trinity. Four as the number of the *perfect man* dates at least from the sacred tetrad of Pythagoras, a conception that finds its echo in Dante's expression: *Ben tetragono, Par. xvii. 24.*

The 63 which appears in the process of computing the numerical value of Beatrice and also in the number of times the name is mentioned in the *Divina Commedia* has also a significant appearance in the life of the Virgin Mary. According to medieval belief the age of Mary at the time of her death was 63.* Since there is no historical foundation for assigning this age to Mary, I suggest that it was assigned to her by the early symbolists for the simple reason that, like the name of Beatrice, it can be reduced to the number 9, which expresses the function of motherhood. If this suggestion is reasonable, it suggests in turn that Beatrice and the divine mother, like Dante and the divine son, are to be identified.

*Begley quotes several cabalistic soliloquies of the Virgin Mary, made by Josephus Mazza, a monk of the seventeenth century. Each of the soliloquies contains 63 cabalas, "that being her supposed age when she died."—*Biblia Cabalistica or the Cabalistic Bible*. Rev. Walter Begley, London, 1903.

This same association of the "beloved" as mother with the number nine appears in acrostics in *Purg.* ix. 64-81:

A guisa d' uom che in dubbio si raccerta,	64
È che muta in conforto sua paura, Poi che la verità gli è discoperta.	
Mi cambia' io: e come senza cura	67
Videmi il Duca mio, su per lo balzo Si mosse, ed io dietro inver l' altura.	
Lettor, tu vedi ben com' io innalzo	70
La mia materia, e però con più arte Non ti maravigliar s' io la rincalzo.	
Noi ci appressammo, ed eravamo in parte,	73
Che là, dove pareami prima un rotto Pur come un fesso che muro diparte,	
Vidi una porta, e tre gradi di sotto,	76
Per gire ad essa, di color diversi, Ed un portier che ancor non faceva motto.	
E come l' occhio più e più v' apersi,	79
Vidil seder sopra il grado soprano, Tal nella faccia, ch' io non lo sofferisi:	

Consider on the first lines of the first three terzine the following marginal letters:

64 A
67 MICA
70 L

Read: L'AMICA

Lines 70-73 are a hint to look for concealed meaning.

Consider on the first lines of the last three terzine the following marginal letters:

73 NO
76 V
79 E

Read: NOVE

Note that the number of the canto in which this acrostic NOVE appears is nine, and that in this canto nine is developed the mother symbolism of Lucia and also the symbolism of the *porta*, line 76, as the entrance to the uterine region, Purgatory proper.

In *Par.* iv. 118, Dante addresses Beatrice in the following words:

O amanza del primo amante, o diva.

In thus implying that Beatrice as the daughter of God is also the *amanza* of God, Dante must be considered as again identifying her with the divine mother Mary, who is referred to, *Purg.* xx. 97-98, as *quell'unica sposa dello Spirito Santo*. This reference to the *Spirito Santo*, by the way, need not be taken as disproving the mother symbolism of the Holy Ghost, supported as this symbolism consistently is throughout the *Divina Commedia*. The mother symbolism of the Holy Ghost is here disguised, as it is disguised in all orthodox definitions of the character of the third person of the Trinity. In the foregoing quotation, indeed, the *association* of the *Spirito Santo* with Mary as wife is rather to be understood as a veiled identification of the two.

Now the character of Beatrice as the *amanza* of God and so as the mother of the divine son is indicated by Dante in several cryptographic allusions to her, in which the divine son is indicated as *in her womb*. Let me show first that this meaning is contained in the cryptic allusion which Dante makes to Beatrice: *per BE e per ICE, Par.* vii. 14.

This allusion to Beatrice by the first and last letters of her name is, according to Boccaccio, an indication that she was sometimes called *Bice*, the contracted form of Beatrice. And in the *Vita Nuova* it appears that Dante did indeed call her *Bice*. In the sonnet in *Vita Nuova*,^{xxiv}, Dante says:

Io vidi monna Vanna e monna Bice.

Now in connection with this use of *Bice* Dante makes a remarkable statement both in the sonnet and in the prose discussion of the meeting with Beatrice which the sonnet records. In referring, in the sonnet, to the two ladies, *monna Vanna* and *monna Bice* respectively, Dante says:

Amor mi disse: Questa è Primavera,
E quella ha nome Amor, sì mi somiglia.

And in the prose comment he explains how Love said to him

in his heart that *quella Beatrice chiamerebbe Amore, per molta somiglianza che ha meco.*

What, then, is the resemblance which Beatrice has with Love?

I suggest that the answer to this question is to be found in the letters of the name BEATRICE which are omitted in the form BICE. These letters are EATR.

The cryptographic significance of these letters, as showing the resemblance of Beatrice to Love, is to be discovered in the fact that, as we have already seen, the letter τ is the symbol of the cross and so of Christ, or the *divine man*. A form for the Italian word for *man* is *om*, so that the τ of EATR may be considered as representing, in the divine form, OM. Replace the τ , therefore, by its equivalent OM, in the letters EATR; and EATR become EAOMR, or AMORE. It appears, then, that BEATRICE resembles love by virtue of the fact that AMORE is actually spelt, by a cryptographic device, in BEATRICE. BEATRICE thus equals BICE + AMORE, or B-AMORE-ICE.

The same substitution of OM for τ is to be made in the omitted letters in the allusion to BEATRICE as BE and ICE. The letters of BEATRICE intervening between BE and ICE are ATR. Substitute OM for the τ , and the letters are AOMR, or AMOR, the Latin form of AMORE. AMOR, or the divine child, is thus *inside* Beatrice, as in her womb. This same idea of Love, as the divine child, in the womb of his mother, has already been noted in the words of the prayer to the Virgin in the opening lines of *Par.* xxxiii. In this passage, moreover, Dante shows by a cryptographic device that it is himself who is in the womb of the mother, and thus, by the correspondence between the meaning of the cryptogram and the manifest meaning of the text, identifies himself with the divine child and his mother with the divine mother. The passage, *Par.* xxxiii. 1-15, reads as follows:

‘Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio,
Umile ed alta più che creatura,
Termine fisso d’ eterno consiglio,

Tu se' colei che l' umana natura	4
Nobilitasti sì, che il suo Fattore	
Non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura.	
Nel ventre tuo si raccese l' amore,	7
Per lo cui caldo nell' eterna pace	
Così è germinato questo fiore.	
Qui sei a noi meridiana face	10
Di caritate, e giusto intra i mortali	
Sei di speranza fontana vivace.	
Donna, sei tanto grande e tanto vali,	13
Che qual vuol grazia ed a te non ricorre,	
Sua disianza vuol volar senz' ali.	

Consider first the following marginal letters of the first lines of the first three *terzine*:

1	VER
4	T
7	NE

Read: VENTRE

This recalls the phrase *nel ventre tuo*, line 7. For the interior sequence in this passage see p. 328.

Now note the following marginal letters on the first lines of the five *terzine*, five being the number of letters in Dante's name:

1	V	E
4		T
7		N
10	QUI SEI	A
13		D

Read: QUIVI SEI, DANTE

The letter *v*, line 1, has the spelled form *vi*, and in this form it is here considered. The *n*, *t*, and *e* of DANTE are the same letters used in reading the acrostic VENTRE, so that Dante, as here written, is in the VENTRE.

Dante was not unaware, I surmise, that he could also be shown to be *nel ventre* by another cryptographic device, since Dante's initials reversed, A. D., are contained in the word *madre*, line 1.

The acrostic: SEI QUIVI, DANTE, is immediately followed by a passage of five terzine which contains an acrostic. The passage, *Par.* xxxiii. 16-30, reads:

La tua benignità non pur soccorre	16
A chi domanda, ma molte fiate	
Liberamente al domandar precorre.	
In te misericordia, in te pietate,	19
In te magnificenza, in te s' aduna	
Quantunque in creatura è di bontate.	
Or questi, che dall' infima lacuna	22
Dell' universo infin qui ha vedute	
Le vite spirituali ad una ad una,	
Supplica a te per grazia di virtute	25
Tanto che possa con gli occhi levarsi	
Più alto verso l' ultima salute.	
Ed io, che mai per mio veder non arsi	28
Più ch' io fo per lo suo, tutt' i miei preghi	
Ti porgo, e prego che non sieno scarsi,	

Consider the initials of the first lines of these five terzine:

16	L
19	I
22	O
25	S
28	E

Read: ELIOS

ELIOS is, as we have already seen, a designation of God which identifies God with the sun. The symbolism of Christ in the womb of the divine mother corresponds, in sun symbolism, to the sun at night in the womb of the earth. That the ELIOS here, as the sun god, is to be understood as in this nocturnal phase is expressed by the acrostic on the five terzine immediately following:

Perchè tu ogni nube gli dislegghi	31
Di sua mortalità coi preghi tuoi,	
Sì che il sommo piacer gli si dispieghi.	
Ancor ti prego, Regina che puoi	34
Ciò che tu vuoi, che conservi sani,	
Dopo tanto veder, gli affetti suoi.	

Vinca tua guardia i movimenti umani: 37
 Vedi Beatrice con quanti Beati
 Per li miei preghi ti chiudon le mani.
 Gli occhi da Dio dilette e venerati, 40
 Fissi nell' orator, ne dimostraro
 Quanto i devoti preghi le son grati.
 Indi all' eterno lume si drizzaro, 43
 Nel qual non si de' creder che s' inii
 Per creatura l' occhio tanto chiaro.

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these *terzine*:

31 PER
 34 A
 37 VI
 40 GLI
 43 I

Read: PERVIGILIA

The vigil is for the rising of the sun that is enclosed in the womb of the night; it corresponds to the vigil for the resurrection of Christ, and, in the allegory of the *Divina Commedia*, to the mystic rebirth of Dante, who has been symbolized, in the acrostic on the opening lines of the canto, as in the womb of the divine mother.

The three consecutive acrostics: SEI QUIVI, DANTE; ELIOS; and PERVIGILIA, appear, it is to be noted, on frames of five *terzine*. Their identity of structure and their consonance of meaning go far to proving their intentional character.

In view of the foregoing cryptograms which indicate Dante as in the womb, let us return now to the consideration of the cryptographic device: BE . . . ICE, in connection with the thrice repeated word: DILLE. The passage in which the device appears reads as follows, *Par.* vii. 10-15:

Io dubitava, e dicea: 'Dille, dille,' 10
 Fra me, 'dille,' diceva, 'alla mia donna
 Che mi disseta con le dolci stille';
 Ma quella riverenza che s'indonna 13
 Di tutto me, pur per BE e per ICE,
 Mi richinava come l'uom ch'assonna.

The play on the double meanings of the words in this passage is extraordinary. I wish to call attention particularly to the use of the word *indonna*, line 13; the punning idea of this word as "in lady" suggests the meaning of the cryptogram showing AMOR in BEATRICE. Notice, also, the thrice repeated *Dille*, lines 10 and 11. The literal meaning of *Dille* is, of course: "Tell her." But the letters DIL, as we have already seen, are one of the cryptographic guises for the name of Dante; so that DILLE, DILLE, DILLE may be taken to mean: "To her, Dante; to her, Dante; to her, Dante." There is certainly in this cryptic iteration the suggestion of the act by means of which the child enters its mother's womb.

In the Christian symbolism of the Middle Ages Love signifies sometimes, as in the passage just quoted from the prayer to the Virgin Mary, the divine son; and sometimes, as in the inscription over the gate of Hell, the Holy Ghost. The resemblance of Beatrice to Love, which Dante speaks of in the *Vita Nuova*, indicates, therefore, that she resembles Love in the sense that she reproduces Love, as the divine child, in her womb; and also that she is to be identified with Love as the Holy Ghost, the divine mother in the Trinity.

It is now possible to understand why Dante uses the word *pur*, or "merely," in speaking of

quella riverenza che s'indonna
Di tutto me, pur per BE e per ICE.

In the form of her name as BE and ICE Beatrice is represented as being as yet without the divine child in her womb. *Per BE e per ICE*, therefore, she is represented as still virginal, and accordingly as commanding less reverence than in the full form of the name, BEATRICE, which represents her as having the divine child in her womb and therefore as being now the divine mother.

This interpretation of *Bice* as the virginal and *Beatrice* as the maternal form of the name is supported by the use which Dante makes of the two forms in the *Vita Nuova*. The only allusion to Beatrice by name in the verse of the *Vita Nuova* that may be supposed to have been written before the time

assigned for her death is in the *Bice* to which we have been referring, *Vita Nuova*, xxiv. After her death she is consistently called Beatrice.

The maternal character of Beatrice is expressed symbolically by her death and consequent ascent to Heaven; her death symbolizes the act by which Dante is reunited with her, as in incest, and her ascent to Heaven symbolizes the act by which Dante is reborn, or borne to God. The form *Beatrice* is therefore applied to her after her death as to the mother, whereas the form *Bice* is applied to her before her death as to the virgin who has not yet received the son into her womb.

That the ascent of Beatrice to Paradise is the means by which Dante is reborn has already been suggested. In Dante's sleep with Beatrice in the Terrestrial Paradise is symbolized the sexual union by which Dante, as the son, begets himself anew in his own mother in order to be reborn. By this act he is to be understood as entering her womb, and it is in her womb that Beatrice carries Dante in their ascent to Paradise. Paradise and the womb are, as a matter of fact, one and the same. There is nothing unusual in this phantasy of returning to the womb of the mother as to the ideal state of existence; it is common in myth, religion, and dream. For the symbolism of Dante's sleep with Beatrice, see pp. 380-7.

That Dante is indeed to be considered as in the womb of Beatrice in his ascent to Paradise is frequently implied by *double entente*. A striking instance of such a double meaning is to be seen in the words of Beatrice to Dante, *Par.* i. 88-89:

Tu stesso ti fai grosso
Col falso immaginar.

These words occur just a few lines before Beatrice, as I have already pointed out, is likened to a mother turning toward her delirious child Dante. The word *grosso* has, of course two meanings in Italian; it means, first, "dull" or "stupid;" and, second, it means "pregnant." The double meaning of the whole passage may be developed, therefore, as follows: Beatrice and Dante are ascending together to Paradise, and

Dante, who imagines that he is still on earth, is confused by the novel experiences which the ascent produces. When Beatrice, therefore, says in effect to Dante that in his false conjecture he is making *himself* pregnant, she is virtually implying that what he is really doing is *making her pregnant*.

The passage, *Par.* i. 88-90, which contains the phrase just quoted, is as follows:

E cominciò: Tu stesso ti fai grosso
Col falso immaginar, sì che non vedi
Ciò che vedresti, se l' avessi scosso.

Consider the following marginal letters of these three lines:

88 E
89 CO
90 C

Read: ECCO

The intention of this acrostic may be to call attention to the double meaning in the words: *tu stesso ti fai grosso*.

A similar suggestion of Dante's union with Beatrice will appear, I believe, in the first seventy lines of *Par.* xviii, if the reader is alert to the possible double meanings. In this passage Cacciaguida, as the ancestor of Dante, is obviously a father image, and when it is said of him that

Già si godeva solo del suo verbo
Quello specchio beato,

the word *verbo*, as a word used like *Logos* for Christ, may well be understood to refer not merely to what Cacciaguida has been saying, but also to his Christ-like son. The *specchio beato*, as in the three mirrors in *Par.* ii, is a father image, which reinforces the father imagery of Cacciaguida himself. In the light of this symbolism of father and son, it is not unnatural to think of Beatrice as completing the family trinity, and as with child, in view of the possible double meaning of her words:

io sono
Presso a colui ch'ogni torto disgrava.

Disgrava, as disburdens, has a possible reference to delivery

in childbirth. The idea seems to be adumbrated again in the words, lines 65-66:

bianca donna, quando il volto
Suo si discarchi di vergogna il carco.

The importance of the passage as containing a double meaning seems to be suggested by the cryptograms which it contains. The first four *terzine* of the canto are:

Già si godeva solo del suo verbo	
Quello specchio beato, ed io gustava	
Lo mio, temprando col dolce l'acerbo;	
E quella Donna ch' a Dio mi menava,	4
Disse: 'Muta pensier, pensa ch' io sono	
Presso a colui ch' ogni torto disgrava.'	
Io mi rivolsi all' amoroso suono	7
Del mio conforto, e quale io allor vidi	
Negli occhi santi amor, qui l' abbandono;	
Non perch' io pur del mio parlar diffidi,	10
Ma per la mente che non può reddire	
Sopra sè tanto, s' altri non la guidi.	

Consider first the following marginal letters of the first lines of these four *terzine*:

1	G
4	E
7	IO
10	N

Read: GENIO

Genio suggests *ingegno*, a word which Dante often uses as a hint of the presence of a cryptogram.

In the same passage appears the following interior sequence:

2	quello specchio bEato ed io gustava
3	lo mio tempranDo col dolce l'acerbo
4	e quella doNna ch'a dio mi menava
5	disse muTA pensier pensa ch'io sono

Read E of *beato*, 2; D of *temprando*, 3; first N of *donna*, 4; TA of *muta*, 5: DANTE.

There is a passage in the *Divina Commedia* where, as I believe, Beatrice is actually named in the open text as Bella, the Christian name of Dante's mother. The passage to which I refer is to be found in *Inf.* ii. 52-54, where Virgil is telling Dante how he was persuaded to come to the aid of Dante. Virgil says:

Io era tra color che son sospesi,
E donna mi chiamò beata e bella,
Tal che di comandare io la richiesi.

In this, the first allusion to Beatrice in the *Divina Commedia*, it is highly significant that Beatrice is not named as Beatrice and that the allusion to her as *beata e bella* may be understood, as far as the structure of the sentence is concerned, as actually naming her in a punning use of the proper name Bella.

Consider the interior sequences in the passage that includes the foregoing lines:

50 dirotti perch'io venni e quEl che intesi
51 nel primo punto che Di te mi dolve
52 io era tra color che son sospesi
53 e donna Mi chiamo BEata e bella
54 tAl che di comandare io La richiesi
55 lucevan gli occhi suoi piu che LA stella

Read E of *quel*, 50; D of *di*, 51; R of *color*, 52; M of *mi*, 53;
A of *tal*, 54: MADRE.

Read BE of *beata*, 53; L of *la*, 54; LA, 55: BELLA.

The interior sequences in the rest of this canto repeat the idea of mother. The following sequences are in lines 68-75:

68 e con cio ch'e mestieri al suo caMpare
69 l'aiuta si ch'io ne sia consolata
70 io son beaTRice che ti faccio andare
71 vEgno di loco ove tornar disio
72 amoR mi mosse che mi fa parlare
73 quanDo saro dinanzi al signor mio
74 di te Mi lodero sovente a lui
75 tacette Allora e poi comincia'io

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Read: M of *campare*, 68; A of *sia*, 69; TR of *beatrice*, 70; E of *vegno*, 71: MATRE.

Read: E of *vegno*, 71; R of *amor*, 72; D of *quando*, 73; M of *mi*, 74; first A of *allora*, 75: MADRE.

Note that the two sequences key on the E of *vegno*, 71.

Note the initials of the lines of the *terzina*, 70-72:

70 I
71 V
72 A

Read: VIA

Beatrice is the "way" from one life to another.

The following interior sequence is in lines 91-94:

91 io son fatta Da dio sua merce tale
92 che la vos**t**Ra miseria non mi tange
93 ne fiam**M**A d'esto incendio non m'assale
94 donna E gentil nel ciel che si compiang**e**

Read from D of *da*, 91; R of *vostra*, 92; MA of *fiamma*, 93; E, 94: MADRE.

The following interior sequences are in lines 101-105:

101 si mosse e venne al loco Dov'io era
102 che Mi sede**a** con l'ANTica rachele
103 disse be**A**TRic**E** loda di dio vera
104 che non socco**R**ri quei che t'amo tanto
105 che uscio per te d**E**lla volgare schiera

Read D of *dov'*, 101; ANT of *antica*, 102; last E of *beatrice*, 103: DANTE.

This signature begins significantly in *dov' io era* and ends in *Beatrice*, and the other sequence passes through the same word, *Beatrice*.

Read M of *mi*, 102; AT of *beatrice*, 103; first R of *soccorri*, 104; E of *della*, 105: MATRE.

There is in the *Vita Nuova* another curious instance of the use of *Bella* which can only be properly understood, I believe,

as a punning reference to the name of Dante's mother. In *Vita Nuova*, xxv, in a highly elaborate discussion of literary *personification*, a discussion, moreover, which immediately follows the cryptic use of *Bice*, Dante cites a number of examples of personification in the classical poets. He says:

"That the poets have thus spoken as has been said, appears from Virgil, who says that Juno, that is, a goddess hostile to the Trojans, spoke to Æolus, lord of the winds, here, in the first of the *Æneid*: *Æole, namque tibi*, etc. (Æolus, here to thee, etc.); and that this lord replied to her, here: *Tuus, O regina, quid optes*, etc. (Thine, O queen, what thou askest, etc.). In this same poet the inanimate thing speaks to the animate thing, in the third of the *Æneid*, here: *Dardanidæ duri*, etc. (Ye hardy Trojans, etc.). In Lucan the animate thing speaks to the inanimate, here: *Multum, Roma, tamen debes civilibus armis* (Much dost thou owe, O Rome, to civic arms). In Horace a man speaks to his own knowledge as to another person; and not only are they the words of Horace, but he says them as the interpreter of the good Homer, here, in his book on Poetry: *Dic mihi, Musa, virum*, etc. (Tell to me, Muse, of the man, etc.). In Ovid, Love speaks as if he were a human person, at the beginning of the book of the Remedy for Love, here: *Bella mihi, video, bella parantur, ait* (Wars against me, I see, wars are preparing, he says).*

The use of *Bella* to which I referred is the *Bella*, Latin for "wars," in the quotation from Ovid. But before proceeding to explain the cryptic use of *Bella* here, I wish to express my opinion that the whole passage is not at all as simple as it seems, and that all the quotations are intended to convey a double meaning.

The cryptic character of the passage, indeed, is distinctly hinted by Dante in the words immediately following it. He says:

"And by this the matter may now be clear to any one who is perplexed in any part of this my little book.

"And in order that no uncultured person may derive any over-boldness herefrom, I say, that the poets do not speak

* Norton's translation.

thus without reason, and that those who rhyme ought not to speak thus, unless they have some reason for what they say; since it would be a great disgrace to him who should rhyme anything under the garb of a figure or of rhetorical coloring, if afterward, being asked, he should not be able to denude his words of this garb, in such wise that they should have a true meaning. And my first friend and I are well acquainted with those who rhyme thus foolishly." *

This concluding paragraph should be taken to heart; it expresses as clearly as possible the cryptic character of Dante's imagery. It ought to be obvious, indeed, from the insistence with which he dwells on the meaning which the imagery covers, that the reader is expressly directed to look for a *hidden* meaning.

There is another passage in the *Vita Nuova* with a somewhat analogous reference to a hidden meaning; I will quote it here, *en passant*, as an indication of the emphasis with which the existence of a hidden meaning is proclaimed by Dante. At the close of his comment on the canzone, *Donna, ch'avete intelletto d'amore*, *Vita Nuova*, xix, Dante says:

"I say, indeed, that to make the meaning of this canzone more clear it might be needful to employ more minute divisions; but nevertheless it will not displease me that he who has not wit enough to understand it by means of those already made should let it alone; for surely I fear I have communicated its meaning to too many even through these divisions which have been made, if it should happen that many should hear it.*

Prepared now with a suspicion of the duplicity of the language of the *Vita Nuova*, let us return to the examples of personification which Dante quotes from the classical poets. These quotations, intended apparently as examples *merely* of personification, are really intended to illustrate the hidden meaning of the *Vita Nuova*. The clues to the hidden meaning which they illustrate appear in the unquoted context of the passages of which Dante quotes merely the beginnings. As in deciphering the cryptic use of *Bice* and of *per BE e per ICE*

* Norton's translation.

it was necessary to consider the omitted letters, so here it will be necessary to consider the omitted words.

But before considering the passages in their entirety, let us examine what they present in the briefer form in which they appear in the text of the *Vita Nuova*. Notice, first, the reference to Juno, who, as the wife of Jupiter, is the figure of the divine mother. Notice, next, in the quotation from Lucan, the *Roma*, which, as has been developed earlier, is, first, the symbol of the divine mother in the Christian church, and, second, a palindrome for *Amor*, the very word which appears in connection with the cryptic use of *Bice* and *per Be e per Ice*. In connection with the two appearances of the divine mother in Juno and *Roma* the *Bella* of the quotation from Ovid may be taken as at least a hint that *Bella* is here used in a double sense to suggest the name of the mother of Dante. That it is a hint indeed, and a very strong hint, appears from the fact that in the passage to which Dante refers, beginning *Dardanidae duri*, there appears the command: "Seek out your ancient mother." This command is uttered by the oracle whom Æneas has consulted in regard to his future. The passage, as in the words of Æneas, is as follows:

"Scarcely had I thus said, when suddenly all seemed to tremble, both the temple itself, and the laurel of the god; the whole mountain quaked around, and the sanctuary being exposed to view, the tripod moaned. In humble reverence we fall to the ground, and a voice reaches our ears: Ye hardy sons of Dardanus, the same land which first produced you from your forefather's stock shall receive you in its fertile bosom after all your dangers; search out your ancient mother. There the family of Æneas shall rule over every coast, and his children's children, and they who from them shall spring."*

In connection with the command here expressed to "search out your ancient mother," this passage distinctly develops the idea of *rebirth* as to be accomplished by a *return to the fruitful bosom* of that mother. The means of rebirth here

**Æneid*, iii. Davidson's translation.

suggested is thus, as we have seen it to be elsewhere, incestuous.

The passage which I have just quoted is the third referred to by Dante; the two preceding it prepare for the rebirth symbolism with remarkable precision. The first passage to which Dante refers reads as follows:

“Æolus (for the sire of gods and the king of men hath given thee power both to smooth the waves, and raise them with the wind), a race by me detested sails the Tuscan Sea, transporting Ilium, and its conquered gods, into Italy. Strike force into thy winds, everset and sink the ships; or drive them different ways, and strew the ocean with carcasses.”*

It appears from this passage that the *divine mother* is hostile to the Trojans, who, as human beings, are to be considered as her *sons*; and that in order to wreak her wrath on her sons, she appeals to Æolus as representing the power of the *divine father*. There thus appears the family triad of father, mother, and son, in which the son is the object of the hostility of the father and the mother. This relation is exactly appropriate to the son as incestuous in relation to his father and his mother as resisting the incestuous act.

The second of Dante's references, beginning *Tuus, O regina, quid optes*, is the reply of Æolus to Juno, in which he acknowledges the power of the mother as supreme.

Now the hostility of Juno as the divine mother is offset in the *Æneid* by the benignity of Venus, who, as the mother of Æneas, is to be considered as completing *the dual character* of the divine mother. The symbolism of the dual mother is elaborated in the *Æneid* to a degree that has not, I believe, been sufficiently appreciated; Juno and Venus, as representing the two aspects of the divine mother of the Trojans, and particularly of the mother of Æneas, have their counterparts in Crete, as the malignant motherland from which the Trojans are expelled and Italy, as the benignant motherland into which they are received. Nor is it sufficiently recognized that the theme of the *Æneid* is rebirth involving, in the return to the ancient mother, incest. It is on account of

**Æneid*, i. Davidson's translation.

this theme, which is also to be seen in the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, that Dante takes Virgil as his poetic father; for Virgil works out the theme of rebirth with a conscious elaboration that is exceeded only by Dante himself. The analogy between the two poems extends even to the conception in the *Æneid*, as in the *Divina Commedia*, of the infernal regions as the womb. This idea is expressly implied, indeed, by the fact that *Æneas*, in his descent to the infernal regions, sees there the shades of his descendants waiting for their birth. The two mothers in the *Æneid*, as in the *Divina Commedia*, are to be understood as, first, the mother who expels the child as in birth, and, second, the mother who receives the child back into her womb as in the act of incest.

We have now examined the first three of Dante's classical instances of personification, and find that they imply, with an aptness that can scarcely be considered as accidental, the mother symbolism of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia*. The fourth of his references is to Lucan, a reference which includes the cryptic *Roma*; the passage is appropriate as *applied to Dante himself* in his imagined ascent to Paradise. The passage reads as follows:

"Still, much does Rome owe to the arms of her citizens, since for thy (Nero) sake these events have come to pass.

"When, thy allotted duties fulfilled, thou shalt late repair to the stars, the palace of heaven, preferred by thee, shall receive thee, the skies rejoicing; whether it please thee to wield the sceptre, or whether to ascend the flaming chariot of Phoebus, and with thy wandering fire to survey the earth, in no way alarmed at the change of the sun; by every divinity will it be yielded to thee and to thy free choice will nature leave it what god thou shalt wish to be, where to establish the sovereignty of the world."*

Dante's next reference is to a description of "the man"; this description is likewise appropriate to himself (appropriate both as to his wanderings among "many men and cities" and also as to his allegorical method of mingling "feigned with true"). The passage in *Ars Poetica* reads as follows:

**Pharsalia*, i. Riley's translation, London, 1853.

“‘Sing for me, my muse, the man who, after the time of the destruction of Troy, surveyed the manners and cities of many men.’ He meditates not to produce smoke from a flash, but out of smoke to elicit fire, that he may thence bring forth his instances of the marvelous with beauty, such as Antiphates, Scylla, the Cyclops, and Charybdis. Nor does he date Diomedes’s return from Meleager’s death, nor trace the rise of the Trojan war from Leda’s eggs: he always hastens on to the event: and hurries away his reader into the midst of interesting circumstances, no otherwise than as if they were already known; and what he despairs of, as to receiving a polish from his touch, he omits; and in such a manner forms his fictions, so intermingles the false with the true, that the middle is not inconsistent with the beginning, nor the end with the middle.”*

The last of the classical allusions that Dante makes, the one in which appears the *Bella*, is again appropriate to Dante in its description of the *war of love*, which is expressed indeed in the *Divina Commedia* as resulting from the symbolized incest. Notice again, in this passage, the reference to the *mother*. The passage in *Remedium Amoris* reads as follows:

“The God of Love had read the title and the name of this treatise when he said, ‘War, I see, war is being meditated against me.’ Forbear, Cupid, to accuse thy poet of such a crime; me, who so oft have borne thy standards with thee for my leader. I am no son of Tydeus, wounded by whom, thy mother returned into the yielding air with the steeds of Mars. Other youths full oft grow cool; I have ever loved; and shouldst thou enquire what I am doing even now, I am still in love.”†

The last sentence recalls the lines, *Purg.* xxiv. 52–54, in which Dante describes himself:

Io mi son un che, quando
Amor mi spira, noto, ed a quel modo
Che ditta dentro, vo significando.

*Smart’s translation.

†Riley’s translation.

The foregoing glance at the sense of the passages cited by Dante as examples of personification brings to light such astonishing analogies with the hidden meaning of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* as to suggest that the ostensible reason for referring to them is only another *schermo della veritade*. This suspicion is reinforced by the hint he gives of a hidden meaning in his discussion, quoted above, of the necessity of having a meaning from which the imagery may be denuded. The whole discussion, with its elaboration of mother symbolism, suggests that the Latin *Bella* may have been intended as a punning reference to the name of Dante's mother. The mention of *Bella* immediately after the reference to *the man* in a passage so aptly describing Dante himself makes the conjecture, in my opinion, more than probable—more than probable especially in view of the fact that the reader, in the suppressed words of the quotation, is directed to seek out “the ancient mother.” In fact, the scholastic elaboration of the passage must seem curiously out of place and unmotivated in the general simple air of the *Vita Nuova* unless it may be understood, as Dante himself hints, as having some such hidden meaning.

LIA AND MATELDA

There is still another instance in the *Divina Commedia* of what I regard as a punning use of *bella* for *Bella*; it occurs in Dante's description of the dream in which he sees Lia, *Purg.* xxvii. 97–99:

Giovane e bella in sogno mi pareo
 Donna vedere andar per una landa
 Cogliendo fiori.

In the form of Lia Dante sees his mother Bella in a dream. But Lia is to be understood as one of the *two* aspects of his mother; the other aspect is Rachel, to whom Lia refers. This dream of Lia and Rachel is a prophetic dream, in that it foreshadows the two maternal figures of Matelda and Beatrice whom

Dante is to see, on awakening, in the Terrestrial Paradise. Matelda and Beatrice are likewise to be considered, as I shall show, as representing the mother as a duality.

That Lia is indeed a dream form of the mother appears from the cryptogram in the passage in which she speaks. For this cryptogram see page 409.

Let us now turn to Matelda, who, as is generally recognized, corresponds in the Terrestrial Paradise to Lia in the dream. The maternal character of Matelda is indicated with the greatest possible precision. In the first place, the very sight of her suggests to Dante a figure in which the word *madre* occurs, *Purg.* xxviii. 49-51:

Tu mi fai rimembrar, dove e qual era
Proserpina nel tempo che perdette
La madre lei, ed ella primavera.

Moreover, Proserpina, whom Matelda here suggests to Dante, was the *mother* goddess of the spring. The maternal character is still further indicated by the comparison which Dante makes of her with Venus, *Purg.* xxviii. 64-66:

Non credo che splendesse tanto lume
Sotto le ciglia a Venere trafitta
Dal figlio, fuor di tutto suo costume.

This comparison of Matelda with Venus as the divine mother is further remarkable for the fact of the incestuous relation indicated as existing between Venus and her son Cupid, by whom she is here said to be *trafitta fuor di tutto suo costume*. There is only one interpretation to be put upon the act of Cupid in wounding his own mother.

Another, and crucial, indication of the maternal character of Matelda is the fact that it is she who bathes Dante in the mystic stream. This bathing, like the sacrament of baptism, symbolizes birth, the symbol of the immersing waters being borrowed from the amniotic fluid in which the child is born.

There is no lack of cryptographic proof of the maternal character of Matelda. Following are the proper names in the passage which describes Matelda, *Purg.* xxviii. 64-75:

VENERE
ELLESPONTO
XERSE
LEANDRO
SESTO
ABIDO

X is not an Italian letter. As a sign of the cross it may be considered, as we have already seen, as equivalent to the letter τ , another sign of the cross. Substitute, accordingly, τ for the initial x of XERSE, and consider in all the proper names the following initial and contiguous letters:

V
EL
T
LEA
S
ABI

Read: BELLA E VISTA

Following are the four *terzine* which include the speech of Matelda:

'Voi siete nuovi, e forse perch' io rido,' 76
Cominciò ella, 'in questo loco eletto
All' umana natura per suo nido,
Maravigliando tienvi alcun sospetto; 79
Ma luce rende il salmo *Delectasti*,
Che puote disnebbiar vostro intelletto.
E tu che sei dinanzi, e mi pregasti, 82
Di' s' altro vuoi udir, ch' io venni presta
Ad ogni tua question, tanto che basti.'
'L' acqua,' diss' io, 'e il suon della foresta, 85
Impugna dentro a me novella fede
Di cosa, ch' io udi' contraria a questa.'

Consider on the first lines of the four *terzine* the following marginal letters:

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76 VOI
79 MAR
82 E
85 LA

Read: VELO MARIA

The passage which describes Dante's baptism in the mystic stream at the hands of Matelda is as follows, *Purg.* xxxi. 97-III:

Quando fui presso alla beata riva,	97
<i>Asperges me</i> sì dolcemente udissi,	
Ch' io nol so rimembrar, non ch' io lo scriva.	
La bella Donna nelle braccia aprissi,	100
Abbracciommi la testa, e mi sommerse,	
Ove convenne ch' io l' acqua inghiottissi;	
Indi mi tolse, e bagnato mi offerse	103
Dentro alla danza delle quattro belle,	
E ciascuna del braccio mi coperse.	
'Noi sem qui ninfe, e nel ciel semo stelle;	106
Pria che Beatrice discendesse al mondo,	
Fummo ordinate a lei per sue ancelle.	
Menrenti agli occhi suoi; ma nel giocondo	109
Lume ch' è dentro aguzzeranno i tuoi	
Le tre di là, che miran più profondo.'	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these five terzine:

97 QUA
100 LA BEL
103 I
106 NOI S
109 M

Read: BELLA SI NOMA QUI

For the cryptogram on the Latin words *Asperges me*, line 98, see page 284.

Following are interior sequences in the lines describing the first appearance of Matelda, *Purg.* xxviii. 39-43, 48-51:

39 per Maraviglia tutt'altro pensare
 40 una Donna soletta che si gia
 41 cantando ed iscegliendo fior da fiore
 42 ond'ERA pinta tutta la sua via
 43 deh BELLA donna ch'ai raggi d'amore

Read in a vertical line M of *maraviglia*, 39; D of *donna*, 40; second A of *cantando*, 41; ER OR *era*, 42; BELLA, 43: MADRE BELLA.

Maraviglia, as we have already noted, is an anagram for VAGLI MARIA.

48 tanto ch'io possa intenDER che tu canti
 49 tu mi fai rimembRAR dove e qual era
 50 proserpina nel tempo che perdette
 51 la Madre lei ed ella primavera

Read DE of *intender*, 48; second R of *rimembrar*, 49; A of *proserpina*, 50; M of *madre*, 51: MADRE.

Note that this word begins with the initial of the word *madre* in the text and runs through *Proserpina*, a recognized mother image.

Various attempts have been made to identify Matelda with historic persons bearing the same name. In view of the unmistakable mother symbolism of Matelda I regard these identifications as beside the mark. I suggest, on the contrary, that Dante chose the name Matelda, just as I have tried to show that he chose the name Beatrice, for cryptographic reasons. The name Matelda is composed of letters derived from *mater*, *Bella*, and *Dante* in the following order:

MAT	from	MATER
EL	from	BELLA
DA	from	DANTE

There appears in the *Vita Nuova* in association with Beatrice a figure which, as I think, corresponds to Matelda. This figure is Giovanna, mentioned in the sonnet, *Vita Nuova*, xxiv, with Bice:

Io vidi monna Vanna e monna Bice.

In the prose description of his meeting the two ladies, the meeting which is recorded also in the sonnet, Dante says of *monna Vanna* that she *fu già molto donna di questo mio primo amico. E lo nome di questa donna era Giovanna, salvo che per la sua beltade, secondo ch'altri crede, imposto l'era nome PRIMAVERA: e così era chiamata. E appresso lei guardando, vidi venire la mirabile Beatrice. Queste donne andaro presso di me così l'una appresso l'altra, e parvemi che Amore mi parlasse nel core, e dicesse: Quella prima è nominata Primavera solo per questa venuta d'oggi; chè io mossi lo impositore del nome a chiamarla così: 'PRIMAVERA,' cioè 'prima verrà,' lo dic he Beatrice si mostrerà dopo l'imaginazione del suo fedele.*

There is indicated here an intimate, even mystic, association of the two ladies, which is best to be explained, it seems to me, by understanding them to represent together the dual character of the mother. On this hypothesis Giovanna must correspond to Matelda; and there are, as a matter of fact, two verbal coincidences which support the hypothesis. In the dream of Lia, who, as is generally recognized, is the dream form of Matelda, Lia is spoken of as *giovane e bella*. I have already suggested that *bella* is a punning use for *Bella*; and I likewise suggest that *giovane* is a punning reference to the Giovanna of the *Vita Nuova*. This pun is no worse, at any rate, than Dante's own of *PRIMAVERA* for *PRIMA VERRA*. The identification thus suggested of Giovanna and Matelda is suggested again in the words in which Dante, addressing Matelda, says that she reminds him of Proserpina at the time when Proserpina lost *primavera*. And there is another suggestion in *Par. xii. 80*, in the words:

O madre sua veramente Giovanna.

If my identification of Giovanna with one of the two mothers is correct, there remains to explain Dante's statement that she was *già molto donna di questo mio primo amico*. Now the first friend of Dante was Guido Cavalcanti; but as the meaning of nothing in allegory is ever simple, Dante's "first friend," in the temporal sense of the word, may also be understood to be his father. That the father is indeed a friend

is declared by Dante himself in the *Vita Nuova* when he says, in connection with the death of the father of Beatrice, that "there is no friendship so intimate as that of a good father with a good child, and of a good child with a good father." With the *primo amico*, then, understood as having a double reference to Guido Cavalcanti and to Dante's father, there is nothing inconsistent in regarding Giovanna, the lady of this friend, as representing, under one of the two maternal aspects, the mother of Dante. I conclude, therefore, with the suggestion that just as in the *Divina Commedia* the dual character of Bella is represented by Beatrice and Matelda, it is represented in the *Vita Nuova* by Beatrice and Giovanna, and in the *Convivio* by Beatrice and Lucia.

LA VITA NUOVA

As I have referred so constantly in the preceding pages to the *Vita Nuova*, I will record here my conviction that the *Vita Nuova* was conceived and written as an integral part of the *Divina Commedia*. There is not a detail of the *Vita Nuova* that is not consistent with the plan of the *Divina Commedia*; the consistency, indeed, is so close that it seems impossible to accept the orthodox opinion that the relation of the two works is more or less accidental. I have not the space to develop here the essential unity of conception which the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* reveal. For cryptographic evidence of this unity see pp. 420-1. I will confine myself at present to a brief comment on the first sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*; in this sonnet the complete conception not only of the *Vita Nuova* itself but of the *Divina Commedia* is expressed *in parvo*.

The first sonnet of the *Vita Nuova*, like the *Divina Commedia*, purports to be the record of a dream; and this dream has for Dante, like the prophetic dreams of the Bible and again like the *Divina Commedia*, a hidden meaning. The sonnet is addressed to friends of Dante's; it describes the dream to them and asks them to interpret it. In none of the

responses to the sonnet, however, was the interpretation given correctly. *Lo verace giudizio del detto sogno*, says Dante, *non fu veduto allora per alcuno, ma ora è manifestissimo alli più semplici*. How seriously this last statement is to be taken may be imagined from Dante's reference, *Purg.* xvi. 88, to *l'anima semplicetta, che sa nulla*.

The prose account of the dream is as follows:

"And thinking of her (Beatrice), a sweet slumber overcame me, in which a marvelous vision appeared to me; for methought I saw in my chamber a cloud of the color of fire, within which I discerned a shape of a Lord of aspect fearful to whoso might look upon him; and he seemed to me so joyful within himself that a marvelous thing it was; and in his words he said many things which I understood not, save a few, among which I understood these: *Ego Dominus tuus* (I am thy Lord). In his arms meseemed to see a person sleeping, naked, save that she seemed to me to be wrapped lightly in a crimson cloth; whom I, regarding very intently, recognized as the lady of the salutation, who had the day before deigned to salute me. And in one of his hands it seemed to me he held a thing which was all on fire; and it seemed to me that he said these words: *Vide cor tuum* (Behold thy heart). And when he had remained awhile, it seemed to me that he awoke her that slept; and he so far prevailed upon her with his craft as to make her eat that thing which was burning in his hand; and she ate it timidly. After this it was but a short while before his joy turned into most bitter lament; and as he wept he gathered up this lady in his arms, and with her it seemed to me that he went away toward heaven. Whereat I felt such great anguish, that my weak slumber could not endure it, but was broken, and I awoke." *

The obvious interpretation of this dream, in the light of the subsequent death of Beatrice, is that it was a prophetic dream in which the death of Beatrice was foreshadowed. But it ought to be equally obvious that this dream is also the exact equivalent of the dream of the *Divina Commedia*, in which Dante imagines himself as being carried to heaven by

*Norton's translation.

Beatrice. In the dream of the *Vita Nuova* the "Lord of aspect fearful," or *Dominus*, is the equivalent of God in the *Divina Commedia*; the lady in his arms the equivalent of Beatrice; and the heart of Dante the equivalent of Dante himself. The lady by eating the heart and then being carried to Heaven is analogous, in the *Divina Commedia*, to Beatrice carrying Dante to Heaven in her womb. In myth and dream, the act of eating is commonly a symbol of the act of impregnation; this symbolism survives in various stories, as in the Bible and in Boccaccio, of impregnation through eating the mandrake.

The obvious analogies which I have here suggested between the dream of the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* are far, however, from giving a complete interpretation of the dream. Let us examine, therefore, for further light, the provenance of the dramatic situation which the dream in the *Vita Nuova* presents. This situation, as Scherillo has shown conclusively, is derived from a popular troubador story of a feudal lord who discovers the infidelity of his wife with one of his liegemen (Italian, *fedeli*; old French, *feaux*; Provençal *fiel*). In revenge the lord kills the paramour of his wife, cuts out his heart, and compels his wife to eat it. Dante can hardly be imagined to have been ignorant of this story; indeed, he seems to indicate the troubador provenance of his dream in his reference, *Vita Nuova*, iii. 68, to *trovatori*, and in his use of *fedeli*, line 72, as expressing the relationship of the *trovatori* to their feudal lord.

Now in appropriating from this gruesome tale of illicit love, jealousy, and murder the situation presented in his dream, Dante can only be understood as portraying Beatrice as a married woman who has been unfaithful to her husband. She is portrayed, moreover, as having been unfaithful with one of her husband's *fedeli*, who must be understood as standing, in the feudal system, in a *filial* relation to their lord. I have already spoken of the cult of the mother as underlying the conventions of chivalric love; the conventions of chivalric love appear in the present instance, where the lover of the married lady stands in a relation

analogous to the filial relation both to her and to her husband. This filial relationship is immediately intensified in the dream by the fact that the "Lord of aspect fearful" is conceived as godlike by the human Dante. Along with the illicit love which the dream thus expresses as existing between Dante and Beatrice it is further implied, therefore, that this illicit love has an incestuous character. Important, moreover, to remember in connection with the sin of the two lovers is the punishment meted out for it. Since, as I pointed out above, the eating of the heart symbolizes the sexual act, the punishment, as in all the punishments in the *Inferno*, is a *repetition of the sin itself*.

The first dream of the *Vita Nuova*, paralleling, as I have shown that it does, the dream of the *Divina Commedia*, is to be interpreted, therefore, as referring to the existence of illicit love between Dante and Beatrice, who is portrayed as married to the "Lord of aspect fearful." This "Lord of aspect fearful," moreover, is to be understood as a father to Dante, for in *Vita Nuova*, xii, he addresses Dante as "my son." The implication, therefore, of the maternal character of Beatrice in the dream is not to be avoided.

Now the essential situation in the dream, as I have thus defined it, is the essential situation in the whole of the *Vita Nuova*. The apparent innocence of the tone of the *Vita Nuova* has concealed the fact that it tells a story of incestuous love, jealousy, and murder—a story of father and son as rivals for the possession of the mother. Beatrice is the mother; the father is God, or Love, who desires to have Beatrice with him in Heaven; the son is Dante, who desires to have Beatrice with him on earth. In these conflicting desires is represented the jealousy of the father and the son, a jealousy which wreaks its revenge in the death of Beatrice, and, as symbolized in the eating of Dante's heart, in the death of Dante. But the death of Dante must be understood as an ambivalent symbol. It symbolizes not only his death but also his entrance into the womb of the mother, through whom he thus attains his rebirth, or *Vita Nuova*.

The situation suggested in the dream is the identical situ-

ation which was recognized by medieval symbolists in the relation of Christ to Mary—an incestuous relation, in so far as it expresses the son's return to the source of life, the divine mother. It is this reunion and rebirth which is symbolized by the death on the cross, by the descent into Hell, and by the ascent into Heaven. In the *Vita Nuova*, therefore, Dante is associating himself with Christ, and Beatrice with Mary, under the guise of the conventions of chivalric love.

THE DESCENT OF BEATRICE

In the light of the maternal character of Beatrice as it thus appears in the essential situation of the *Vita Nuova*, let us now examine the essential situation in which she appears in *Inferno*. What, in other words, does the *Divina Commedia* say that Beatrice does to rescue Dante from Hell?

The words of Beatrice herself in reference to Dante give the answer, *Purg.* xxx. 124-141:

Sì tosto come in sulla soglia fui	124
Di mia seconda etade, e mutai vita,	
Questi si tolse a me, e diessi altrui.	
Quando di carne a spirto era salita,	127
E bellezza e virtù cresciuta m' era,	
Fu' io a lui men cara e men gradita;	
E volse i passi suoi per via non vera,	130
Imagini di ben seguendo false,	
Che nulla promission rendono intera.	
Nè impetrare ispirazion mi valse,	133
Con le quali ed in sogno ed altrimenti	
Lo rivocai; sì poco a lui ne calse.	
Tanto giù cadde, che tutti argomenti	136
Alla salute sua eran già corti,	
Fuor che mostrargli le perdute genti.	
Per questo visitai l' uscio dei morti,	139
Ed a colui che l' ha quassù condotto,	
Li preghi miei piangendo furon porti.	

It was not of her own will, however, that Beatrice, as she here tells us, visited the portal of the dead; she was moved, as we are told in *Inf.* ii., by the command, transmitted by

Lucia, of the divine mother Mary. She was thus the instrument of the divine mother; and the maternal significance of her act should appear from what we have already discovered as to the female symbolism of the gate of Hell. In the gate of Hell (or vulva) Beatrice meets the paternal image of Virgil, and the meeting of father and mother in such a region results, naturally, in the birth, or rebirth, of the filial Dante. But it is not on this aspect of the symbolism of the visit of Beatrice to the portal of the dead that I wish to dwell at present; I wish, instead, to call attention to the striking analogies which may be shown to exist between the visit of Beatrice to the portal of the dead and certain ancient myths.

Common to many peoples are myths of the descent of a living person to the abode of the dead. These myths may be divided into two groups, corresponding to the sex of the person supposed to make the descent. Among the men to whom the miraculous feat is ascribed are Hercules, Ulysses, Æneas, and St. Paul. Many other examples may be cited, and it is obvious that there are analogies between these descents and the descent of Christ into Hell after the crucifixion. The myth of the descent of a living man into the abode of the dead is referable to the sun myth, according to which the sun descends into the earth at evening in order to be reborn in the morning. In the last analysis, however, the rebirth symbolism, which is a constant feature in all variations of the sun myth, symbolizes the rebirth not of the sun *qua* sun, but of the hero, man, as accomplished by an act of reunion with the original source of his life. As the original source of a man's life is his mother, these myths are invariably expressed in terms implying incest.

In the variation of the myth in which the person supposed to make the descent is a woman the symbolism is still the symbolism of rebirth; the person to be reborn, however, is not the woman who makes the descent, but her son whom she descends into the abode of the dead to deliver, or bring to life again. The woman who makes the descent is invariably the *mother*.

An example of the descent of the mother to save her son

appears in the myth of the great Babylonian mother goddess Istar, who descended into Aralu, or Hades, to bring back to life her son Tammuz. Analogous to this story is the Greek myth of the descent of the mother goddess Aphrodite to redeem Adonis. As indicative of the sex symbolism which these myths expressed to those who believed in them, it is said that in the temple of the Syriac Aphrodite sexual relations with the priestesses representing her were supposed to ransom a soul from Hades, just as Adonis had been ransomed.*

Hell, or the abode of the dead in general, is invariably a symbol of the mother. Accordingly it is necessary to recognize that in the myth of the descent of the mother into Hell, Hell and the mother are to be identified; she descends into the womb of the earth because the womb, as the source of life, is what she herself becomes at the moment of delivering her child.

The descent of the mother into the abode of the dead appears also, in a modified form, in the myth of the great Egyptian mother goddess Isis. And it is of particular interest to note, in this connection, that as a result of the contact of the Egyptian myth with early Christianity, Isis became identified with the Virgin Mary.

Now the myth of the descent of the mother into the abode of the dead survived—and it is in this survival that the myth principally concerns us here—comparatively late into the Christian era in the central female figure of the Gnostic belief, Sophia, or, according to certain sects, Bardelo. As a preeminent feature of a system of belief with which Dante was intimately acquainted (the intimacy is evident, indeed, in the Gnostic elements in the *Divina Commedia* that I have already pointed out and in many others which I lack space to discuss here), the maternal symbolism of the descent of Sophia must have been understood by Dante. The fact, therefore, that he reproduces in the myth of Beatrice a similar descent must be taken to indicate that he intends for Beatrice a similar mother symbolism.

*See Hastings: *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*; Descent to Hades.

There is, moreover, a feature in Christian belief which corresponds to the descent of the mother as we have already seen it in primitive myth and in Gnosticism. The feature to which I refer is the descent to the earth of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove. In the doctrine of the Holy Ghost as male, the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove is understood as the male principle through which the Virgin Mary conceived her divine child. In the doctrine of the Holy Ghost as female, the descent in the form of a dove to Mary must be understood as an expression of the identity of the Holy Ghost and Mary as the divine mother.

The descent of the mother has a double meaning in ancient and medieval symbolism which I have no space to develop here in detail. It means, first, the act of birth: the mother descends to *deliver* her child; and it means, second, the act by which the child is conceived: the *fall* of the mother, as in the fall of Eve. The delivery of the child, as symbolized in myths of the descent of the mother, and the conception of the child, as symbolized in myths of the fallen mother, are sometimes represented as evil acts and sometimes as benign. The ambivalence of these acts depends upon the imagined value of the mother herself, in expelling the child from her womb in birth and in receiving her child back into her womb in rebirth. The dual character of the mother is expressed in the Bible, as was commonly recognized in early Biblical exegesis, in the contrasting figures of Eve and Mary.

THE MYSTIC PROCESSION

There remains to be considered in connection with the interpretation of the character of Beatrice the part that she plays in the Mystic Procession, described in the closing cantos of *Purgatorio*. The pageant of the Mystic Procession is generally supposed to represent the history of the Church terminating with the transference of the Papal See to Avignon in 1309; and the parallels, indeed, between the pageant and the history of the Church lend some plausibility to this interpretation. I am willing to grant, therefore, that there are

allusions to the history of the Church in the dumb-show of the pageant. But the deeper symbolism of the pageant is the symbolism of rebirth.

Let us assume for the moment, however, that the interpretation of the pageant as simply a representation of the history of the Church is correct. To a degree that certainly demands further explanation, this history of the Church is represented in terms of the sexual life. The harlot and the giant embracing in the car and the giant dragging away the car with the harlot in it, the closing scene of the pageant, make the sex symbolism quite obvious; but this symbolism has indeed been present in almost every detail of the pageant. It is certainly obvious in the incident of the dragon issuing from a hole in the earth between the two wheels of the car and piercing the floor of the car with his tail. The car, as the symbol of the Church, is the symbol of the divine mother, who is thus represented, as in all myths of rebirth, as being prostituted.

Now the reason that the history of the Church, in so far as it is represented in the pageant, is represented in terms of the sexual life, is simply that the sexual life is the form under which all existence may be symbolized. Whatever is first created, and then, by the fact of existing in time, becomes what it was not at first. There is first the birth and then the

“change
Into something new and strange.”

This change may be expressed, as in the language of the philosophers, in the problem of becoming, or, as in the language of myth and religion, in the theme of rebirth. Thus the fundamental distinction between being and becoming is dramatized in the sexual life conceived as the means by which, first, the birth of the individual and, second, his rebirth, or becoming new, may be accomplished.

Fundamentally, therefore, the Mystic Procession is a representation of the history of the universe. If the universe may be considered to have a life, the story of its life is the story of its origin, or birth, and of its development, or rebirth.

And the history of the universe as a whole is identical with the history of every part of the universe, whether the part be an institution, like the Church, or an individual. In the divine drama of the universe which God imagines, there is just one plot, the plot of birth and rebirth, a drama in which the *dramatis personae* are three, the paternal principle, the maternal principle, and the filial principle. This plot is the universal form of life. And therefore, since the life of the universe is the same in form as the life of the individual, Dante sees in the pageant the representation of his own life, which is typical of the life of all mankind.

I lack the space to treat of the symbolism of the Mystic Procession in detail; I will confine myself, therefore, to referring to a few of the indications of its symbolism of rebirth. The car, as commonly in ancient myth and legend, represents the mother, and as Beatrice appears in the car, she and the mother are identified. Any such identification of contained with container is, indeed, the essence of synecdoche. Now it is of the highest importance for the symbolism to note that after Beatrice has left the car, the harlot appears in it. The harlot is likewise, therefore, to be identified with the mother; and Beatrice and the harlot together symbolize the mother in her dual aspect. The two aspects of the mother, as we have already noted, are, first, the receiving of the child into the womb, as in union and pregnancy, and, second, the expelling of the child from the womb, as in the act of birth. Either aspect appears in myth and legend as ambivalent for good or for evil.

Just as one of the two aspects of the motherhood of Beatrice is represented by the harlot, so one of the two aspects of motherhood as symbolized by the car is represented by the tree to which the griffon draws and attaches the car.

The griffon represents, as commonly in Christian legend, Christ. And in the griffon, since Christ represents both God and mankind, Dante sees the representation of himself in one aspect of his dual nature, human and divine. The other aspect of the dual nature of Christ, Dante, or mankind, is represented by the giant, who, after the disappearance of the

griffon, drags the car away. As Beatrice was replaced by the harlot, the griffon is replaced by the giant; the giant, by thus replacing the griffon, is indicated as an aspect of the griffon. The giant, accordingly, also represents an aspect of Dante himself; and when it is prophesied of the *dux*, who is Dante, that he shall slay the giant, a partial meaning is that Dante shall overcome his own lower nature. The *dux* represents the reborn or regenerate Dante, just as the giant represents Dante unregenerate.

The pole of the car, by which the griffon is attached to the car, is phallic. The phallic symbolism of the pole is plainly indicated by the fact that as soon as the pole is united with the tree, a recognized mother symbol, the tree, which has been leafless, puts forth blossoms. The griffon is, indeed, the son who accomplishes his rebirth by the act of incest, since incest is the means of returning to the original source of life. The griffon is attached to the car, as a mother symbol, in birth, and to the tree, as a mother symbol, in rebirth. But the griffon, like Christ, is peculiar in possessing his human and divine nature together in perfection. He is at once his human self and his reborn self. This peculiarity is implied in the epithets *animal binato*, *biforme fiera*, *doppia fiera*.

Repeating the rebirth symbolism of the details of the procession already described is the incident of the two descents of the eagle into the car. The eagle is usually interpreted as a symbol of the empire, and the descent of the eagle into the car as a symbol of the union, in some form or other, of the empire and the church. As a matter of fact, the first descent of the eagle into the car symbolizes the union of God, or the father, with the mother, the union which results in the birth of the son. The second descent of the eagle into the car symbolizes the union of the son with the mother. The son descends in the guise of the father, and, as the result of the incestuous union, is reborn. This interpretation of the descent of the eagle as rebirth symbolism is confirmed by an ancient Hebrew belief to which Frazer refers in his *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*. "Certainly," he says, "the Hebrews seem to have thought that eagles renew their youth by moulting their

feathers." And in a note to this sentence he adds: "Psalm ciii. 5, 'Thy youth is renewed like the eagle.' The commentators rightly explain the belief in the renewal of the eagle's youth by the moulting of its feathers. Compare J. Morgenstern, 'On Gilgames-Epic, xi, 274-320,' *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, xxix. (1915) p. 294, 'Baethgen quotes a tradition from Bar Hebraeus, that when the eagle grows old he casts off his feathers and clothes himself with new ones. Rashi, commenting on this same verse, is even more specific. He says that from year to year the eagle casts off his old wings and feathers and puts on new, and thereby renews his youth constantly.'" The rebirth symbolism of this myth of the eagle recalls the rebirth symbolism of the myth of the phoenix, with which, as we have already seen, Dante identifies himself. The phoenix rises from its own ashes; the eagle from its own feathers. The incestuous son, accomplishing his rebirth like the phoenix and the eagle, is to be understood, beneath these veils, as rising from his own semen.

The analogy between this myth of the rebirth of the eagle and the descent of the eagle in the pageant of the Mystic Procession appears in the fact that the eagle is described as leaving the car covered with its feathers, whereupon a voice from above cries:

O navicella mia, com' mal sei carca.

It is the protesting voice of the replaced father.

It is immediately after the griffon has bound the pole of the car to the tree that Dante describes himself as falling asleep; and it is in this sleep, as I suggested in an earlier chapter, that he must be understood to unite himself with Beatrice. This union is not, indeed, expressed in such plain terms that it cannot be overlooked. It has been overlooked, apparently, for six centuries. But the indications are such that, once pointed out, they can scarcely be denied. In order to show how Dante indicates his union with Beatrice in the description of his sleep, let us revert for a moment to the griffon's act of tying the pole of the car to the mystic tree. The tree is a mother symbol, so used indeed in the story of the

Garden of Eden from which it is here borrowed by Dante. And the pole, as I suggested, is phallic. The union of the phallic pole and the maternal tree, which before was leafless, results in the tree's putting forth blossoms. The griffon himself makes the symbolism clear in the words which he utters as he is about to unite the pole and the tree:

Sì si conserva il seme d'ogni giusto.

The act that is performed by Dante with Beatrice in his sleep is simply an imitation of the act of the griffon, the symbol of Christ.

Let me now quote the passage in which the sleep of Dante is described. In its innuendo, in its implying everything with the air of saying nothing at all, this passage, *Purg.* xxxii. 61-87, is one of the subtlest in the *Divina Commedia*:

Io non lo intesi, nè qui non si canta	61
L' inno che quella gente allor cantaro,	
Nè la nota soffersi tutta quanta.	
S' io potessi ritrar come assonnaro	64
Gli occhi spietati, udendo di Siringa,	
Gli occhi a cui più vegghiar costò sì caro;	
Come pittor che con esemplo pinga	67
Disegnerei com' io m' addormentai;	
Ma qualvuol sia che l' assonnar ben finga.	
Però trascorro a quando mi svegliai,	70
E dico ch' un splendor mi squarciò il velo	
Del sonno, ed un chiamar: 'Surgi, che fai?'	
Quale a veder dei fioretti del melo,	73
Che del suo pomo gli Angeli fa ghiotti,	
E perpetue nozze fa nel cielo,	
Pietro e Giovanni e Jacopo condotti	76
E vinti ritornaro alla parola,	
Dalla qual furon maggior sonni rotti,	
E videro scemata loro scuola,	79
Così di Moisè come d' Elia,	
Ed al Maestro suo cangiata stola;	
Tal torna' io, e vidi quella pia	82
Sopra me starsi, che conducitrice	
Fu de' miei passi lungo il fiume pria;	
E tutto in dubbio dissi: 'Ov' è Beatrice?'	85
Ond' ella: 'Vedi lei sotto la fronda	
Nuova sedere in sulla sua radice.	

I wish first to call attention to the manner in which Dante says that he would depict how he fell asleep "if he could portray how the pitiless eyes sank to slumber while hearing of Syrinx." In this allusion Dante is apparently suggesting some sort of parallel between the way the "pitiless" eyes sank to slumber while hearing of Syrinx and the way his own eyes sank to slumber while hearing the hymn alluded to in lines 61-63. Such, however, is not the case; Dante's eyes cannot be likened to pitiless eyes; and the parallel which Dante seems to be suggesting is a blind to throw the reader off the track of his real meaning. The real meaning, indeed, is to be found in following up the allusion to the "pitiless" eyes.

To understand the allusion to the pitiless eyes that sank to slumber while hearing of Syrinx, we must refer to the first book of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid; the pitiless eyes are the eyes of Argus, the "all seeing," and the story that Ovid tells of them may be summarized as follows. Jupiter had fallen in love with Io, and in order to conceal his amour from his jealous wife Juno, who had followed him to the spot where he was still with the seduced maiden, he changed Io into a cow. Juno, who was not completely deceived, demanded the cow as a gift from her husband; and Jupiter, still in the hope of diverting her suspicions, gave it to her. Juno straightway placed the cow under the guard of the hundred-eyed Argus, so that Jupiter might not again gain possession of it. As this situation was intolerable to the amorous Jupiter, he commanded his son Mercury to kill Argus and steal Io away. Mercury accordingly, in the guise of a shepherd, went to where Argus was guarding Io, and by playing to him on his pipe and telling him the story of Syrinx, caused the hundred eyes of Argus at last to close in slumber. As soon as Argus was asleep, Mercury cut off his head and thus gained possession of the metamorphosed maiden. Juno, however, inconsolable at the death of her faithful Argus, transplanted his hundred eyes into the tail of her favorite bird, the peacock.

Now it is evident from this story that the way the pitiless eyes of Argus sank to sleep can hardly have been cited by

Dante as a parallel to the way his own sank to sleep. It is true, indeed, that both Argus and Dante sank to sleep in hearing music. But beyond the hearing of music the parallel ends; for Dante is a lover and Argus is a guard who keeps the lover away from his mistress. The real parallel, therefore, which Dante must be considered as suggesting in his allusion to the pitiless eyes of Argus is to some Argus-like eyes that were guarding Beatrice from himself as her lover.

But if Dante is referring to some Argus-like eyes that are guarding Beatrice and not to his own, where can these Argus-like eyes be found? For the answer to this question, let us turn to Dante's description of the Mystic Procession as he first sees it. What he first sees is candlesticks, *Purg.* xxix. 50, and then twenty-four elders crowned with fleur-de-lys. Candlesticks and fleur-de-lys were universally recognized as phallic symbols. Immediately after these elders, who are singing, lines 85-86:

Benedetta tue
Nelle figlie d'Adamo,

comes the triumphal car in which Beatrice is to appear; and surrounding the car, as a guard, *quattro animali*. Of these *animali* Dante says, lines 94-96:

Ognuno era pennuto di sei ali,
Le penne piene d'occhi; e gli occhi d'Argo,
Se fosser vivi, sarebber cotali.

Here then, as guarding the triumphal car of Beatrice, the car which is the symbol of the divine mother and with which Beatrice is to be identified as the divine mother, are expressly cited the Argus-like eyes referred to in Dante's description of his sleep. And these guardian eyes are expressly described as intervening between the mother symbol of the car and the phallic symbols of the candlesticks and the fleur-de-lys.

Accordingly, when Dante says that he would tell how he himself fell asleep "if he could portray how the pitiless eyes sank to slumber while hearing of Syrinx," he must be understood to refer to the Argus-like eyes in the wings of the guardian *animali*. But though he cannot say how these eyes

were closed in slumber, he can at least say how they were put off their guard, for on waking he is informed, as he tells us, that the animals with the Argus-like eyes had already *departed*. In accomplishing, therefore, what he accomplished in his sleep with Beatrice, he had been freed from the jealous restraint of the eyes that would have guarded her from him just as the eyes of Argus guarded Io from Jupiter.

The duplicity of the entire passage in which Dante refers to his sleep consists in the fact that he describes it in the very words with which he apparently disclaims the ability to describe it. But there are still more precise indications of the character of his sleep in what he has to say of his waking. He is wakened, as he records, *Purg.* xxxii. 72, by a voice crying to him: *Surgi, che fai?* In the abruptness of this imperative and in the accusatory tone of the *che fai?* there is certainly a suggestion that Dante has been doing something in his sleep that has not been completely sanctioned; the character of this unsanctioned act is to be guessed, to say the least, from the immediate allusion, *Purg.* xxxii. 74-75, to the

melo
Che del suo pomo gli Angeli fa ghiotti
E perpetue nozze fa nel cielo.

The eating of the apple, as in the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, is unmistakable symbolism for sexual union, and this symbolism is made absolutely explicit in the allusion to the *perpetue nozze*. By these allusions to the apple and the *nozze* on awakening and by the incident, immediately before the sleep, of the griffon tying the phallic pole to the maternal tree, the sleep of Dante is bounded by images of sexual union which serve to suggest what happened during the sleep. Moreover, there is a wealth of detail in the further description of what happened after the waking which repeats this same symbolism of sexual union.

There is first the allusion to the Transfiguration of Christ, as recorded in *Matthew* xvii; in this account of the Transfiguration Christ ascends "into a high mountain apart" and is there "overshadowed" by "a bright cloud;" "and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son,

in whom I am well pleased." The incident of the Transfiguration had a profound significance for Dante, as may be seen in the use which he makes of the incident in the *Convivio* in defining the four meanings of allegory. Just what this significance was I infer from the fact that the cloud, as well as the mountain, was a widely recognized mother symbol.* For Christ to have been overshadowed by the bright cloud signified for Dante that Christ was enclosed in the womb of the cloud as a mother symbol; and the voice from the cloud announcing Christ as the beloved son must have been for Dante the voice of the Holy Ghost, or mother principle of the divine Trinity. In the incident of the Transfiguration, therefore, Christ must be understood, in the language of medieval symbolism, to have been reunited with the divine mother. This union is, indeed, further implied in the fact that after the union Christ was transfigured, or changed, as in rebirth. Thus the allusion to the Transfiguration is a further implication as to what happened in Dante's sleep.

For the interpretation of the sleep of Dante as symbolizing his union with Beatrice there is the following cryptographic confirmation to be found in the first five *terzine* in which the sleep is referred to. This passage begins with line 61, with the allusion to the music during which Dante falls asleep, and ends, line 75, with the allusion to the *nozze*. Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of these *terzine*:

61	IO
64	S I
67	CO
70	P
73	QUAL

Read: QUI SI COPOLA

In the continuation of the canto still more images appear which confirm the interpretation of the sleep which I suggest. Beatrice is discovered

sotto la fronda
Nuova sedere in sulla sua radice.

*See Hirn, *The Sacred Shrine*.

The *radice* is phallic, and the fact that Beatrice is described as seated upon the *radice* suggests that we have here an analogy with an ancient Roman marriage custom, referred to in the article on "Phallism" in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*: "At Roman marriages the bride was required to sit upon the image of Priapus (Augustine, *de Civ. Dei*, vii. 24; Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* i. 20)."

Dante also refers to Beatrice as she who *m'avea chiuso*. This declaration that Beatrice had *enclosed* Dante must certainly not be overlooked. She is described, moreover, as being surrounded by the nymphs with lights in their hands; there seems to be here an allusion to the virgins in the parable, *Matthew xxv*, "which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." Thus Beatrice may be understood to be surrounded by the virgins like a bride.

It is further significant of the symbolism of Dante's sleep that it is after he wakes from it that the character of the mystic pageant itself changes from images of innocence to images of guilt, as in the fox that leaps into the car, the dragon that pierces the car with his tail, the harlot in the car embracing the giant. I have already alluded to the accusatory tone of the *che fai?* addressed to Dante, as if what he had done in his sleep had not been completely sanctioned. The sense of guilt, as implied in these images following the union of Dante and Beatrice, is thus like the sense of guilt that followed the union, in the same Garden of Eden, of Adam and Eve, a union, as the reader will recall, which I have already indicated as incestuous. The incestuous union, sanctioned as it may be in myth and legend as the means of rebirth, is nevertheless consistently treated as guilty, or at least as incurring the jealous hostility of the father. The act by which mankind is to be reborn, as suggested in the Biblical account, is therefore ambivalent; it is good, in that it is the means by which man attains the kingdom of God—the mother; and it is evil in that it entails a usurpation of the rights of the father. The following verses in *Genesis* may be read in the light of this interpretation of incest as the means of rebirth:

"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as

one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever:

“Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.”

This expulsion of the guilty Adam and Eve is reproduced in the mystic pageant of the *Divina Commedia* by the flight of the giant, in whom Dante, as a result of his guilty act, now sees himself, together with the *puttana*, in whom Dante now sees Beatrice, the mother with whom the act has been consummated. But though the act is evil, in the sense of incurring the anger of the father, it is the highest virtue, in the sense that it is the means by which Dante is to be reborn and so to return to the father. The result of the union is accordingly indicated in the prophecy of the *DXV*; this personage, as I have shown, is Dante himself, and as the *DXV*, or himself reborn, Dante is to slay, as Beatrice foretells,

la fuia

Con quel gigante che con lei delinque.

In other words, he is to slay himself, as human and incomplete, and his own mother, as human and incomplete, in becoming, in her and through her and with her, complete and divine.

THE VARIETY OF MOTHER SYMBOLS

I have now shown that in her various manifestations in the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* Beatrice represents Bella, the mother of Dante, conceived as an incarnation of the divine mother. It is in this ascription of divine motherhood to a human mother that Dante must be understood to fulfill the mysterious promise that he makes at the end of the *Vita Nuova*, in what is apparently his earliest allusion to the project of the *Divina Commedia*:

*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.

The mother symbolism of Beatrice is not, however, the only mother symbolism in the *Divina Commedia*; as I showed in Chapter VII, Earth is a mother symbol, Hell is a mother symbol, Purgatory is a mother symbol, Paradise is a mother symbol; and a series of other symbols of the mother is developed throughout the entire poem. Thus the universe of Dante's experience is a long succession of symbols, which are to be understood as incarnations, of the one divine mother who exists in God. Among these mother symbols in the *Divina Commedia*, as I have already shown, are the *selva oscura*; the *lupa*; the moon, with its waxing and waning as in pregnancy and delivery; the sea, with the analogous swelling and sinking of its tides; the car in the Mystic Procession; the tree in the Terrestrial Paradise; Giovanna, Lia, Rachel, Matelda, Lucia; the *maggior valle in che l'acqua si spanda*; the city of Florence, as the birthplace of the poet; and the mystic rose. These are only a few of the mother symbols in the *Divina Commedia*, in which, indeed, the principal experiences through which Dante describes himself as passing are expressed in terms of mother symbolism. Let me conclude the list, therefore, with a final example that may serve as typical of the working of Dante's imagination, dominated as it was by his love for his mother and his desire to return to her.

In *Inf.* xix. 16-21, in describing the holes in which the sinners were inserted head first, Dante likens them to the openings of the fonts in the Baptistry in Florence, and describes how he broke one of these fonts in order to save a child who was drowning in it:

Non mi parean meno ampi nè maggiori, 16
 Che quei che son nel mio bel San Giovanni
 Fatti per loco de' battezzatori;

L' un delli quali, ancor non è molt' anni, 19
 Rupp' io per un che dentro vi annegava:
 E questo sia suggel ch' ogni uomo sganni.

The last line of the passage quoted is to be noticed particularly, for it implies that Dante had been considered guilty of sacrilege in thus breaking one of the sacred containers and delivering a child from it.

Disinterested as the act had been as the only means of saving a life, it was nevertheless a guilty act, in that it was a violation of a symbol of the divine mother, and so of the divine mother herself. The degree to which the baptismal font is to be considered as a mother symbol appears from the symbolism of baptism as a reenactment of birth; the baptismal water in which the child is immersed symbolizes the amniotic fluid in which the child is immersed in the womb, and the font which holds the water symbolizes the womb itself. In view, therefore, of the maternal symbolism of the font, Dante's act of breaking it and delivering a child from it is only to be understood as a symbolized act of incest; in no other way, indeed, is the guilt from which Dante so curiously seeks to exculpate himself to be accounted for. This guilt is exactly analogous to the guilt of Uzza, as recorded in 1 *Chronicles* xiii. 9-10:

“And when they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

“And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.”

The ark, for the Hebrews, was the supreme symbol of the divine mother, and to touch it even to save it was an incestuous profanation. That the Baptistery of Florence, like the ark of the Hebrews, was considered by Dante as a mother symbol, a symbol of the womb which he had no right to open, appears from his reference to it, in the words of Cacciaguida, as the place where he himself was baptized.

Through the long series of mother symbols contained in the

Divina Commedia, a series of mother symbols which are to be understood as incarnations of the divine mother, Dante makes his journey from Earth to Heaven as by a series of births and rebirths. The object of his journey is to return to his mother as the source of life in which life may be renewed and fulfilled. But the various incarnations of the divine mother through which Dante passes are all imperfect; they are arranged, indeed, in an ascending scale of perfection, so that Dante passes from the less perfect to the more perfect, until, in the penultimate stage of his journey, he attains to his own human but now transfigured mother Bella in the figure of Beatrice.

Bella as Beatrice is the supreme incarnation of the divine mother. But as an *incarnation* she is not the divine mother herself; of the divine reality she is only the most perfect appearance; and Dante in passing as he does from Beatrice to Mary and thence to God, passes from appearance to reality.

In the return to God with which the vision ends God is to be understood as a divine motherhood as well as a divine fatherhood; and Dante himself, by the fact of coming home, becomes himself the divine son. The home coming that I have attempted to describe is described by Dante in *Convivio* iv. 12:

Il sommo desiderio di ciascuna cosa, e prima dalla Natura dato, è lo ritornare al suo Principio. E perocchè Iddio è Principio delle nostre anime e Fattore di quelle simili a sè, siccom' è scritto: 'Facciamo l' uomo ad immagine e simiglianza nostra'; essa anima massimamente desidera tornare a quello. E siccome peregrino che va per una via per la quale mai non fu, che ogni casa che da lungi vede, crede che sia l' albergo, e non trovando ciò essere, dirizza la credenza all' altra, e così di casa in casa tanto che all' albergo viene; così l' anima nostra, incontanente che nel nuovo e mai non fatto cammino di questa vita entra, dirizza gli occhi al termine del suo Sommo Bene, e però qualunque cosa vede, che paia avere in sè alcun bene, crede che sia esso. E perchè la sua conoscenza prima è

imperfetta, per non essere sperta nè dottrinata, piccioli beni le paiono grandi; e però da quelli comincia prima a desiderare. Onde vedemo li parvoli desiderare massimamente un pomo; e poi più oltre procedendo, desiderare uno uccellino; e poi più oltre, desiderare bello vestimento; e poi il cavallo, e poi una donna: e poi le ricchezze non grandi, poi grandi, e poi grandissime. E questo incontra perchè in nulla di queste cose trova quello che va cercando, e credelo trovare più oltre. Per che vedere si puote che l' uno desiderabile sta dinanzi all' altro agli occhi della nostra anima per modo quasi piramidale, chè 'l minimo li copre prima tutti, ed è quasi punta dell' ultimo desiderabile, ch' è Dio, quasi base di tutti.

CHAPTER IX
PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS

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WITH the proof that the *Divina Commedia* is based on the symbolism of an anthropomorphic universe, and that Beatrice is to be identified with Bella, the mother of Dante, conceived as an incarnation of the divine, or universal, mother, and that the dxv and the *Veltro* are to be identified with Dante, conceived as an incarnation of the divine, or universal, son, I have completed the principal part of the task that I set for myself in the present volume. This part of the task has been a double one: it has been, first, to show the presence of cryptograms in the *Divina Commedia*, and, second, to show the bearing of these cryptograms on the meaning of the *Divina Commedia*. But for an exhaustive analysis of the *Divina Commedia* there remain to be considered certain aspects of the cryptography which may prove, indeed, to be insoluble, and certain aspects of the meaning which lie beyond the scope of the present volume but which I wish to define as a program for further research.

THE LONG ANAGRAMMATIC ACROSTIC

In concluding my examination of the cryptography of Dante I will show four groups of cryptograms: first, long anagrammatic acrostics; second, cryptograms in passages not Italian; third, cryptograms on groups of proper names; and, fourth, acrostics on the first lines of consecutive cantos. Examples of the first, second, and third groups have been shown in previous chapters.

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The long anagrammatic acrostics, which I will now show, cannot be proved to be intentional, and they are, I believe, imperfectly deciphered. But I give these readings, imperfect as they are, for the reason that they seem to indicate that acrostics of which they are approximate readings were actually intended by Dante. Indeed, I am inclined to suspect that the *Divina Commedia* may possibly contain a continuous acrostic extending from the beginning to the end. I have not deciphered such an acrostic, and I am unable to do so. But I have deciphered long acrostics which seem to be confirmable in part as intended by Dante. The impression that I get from these long readings, separated as they are from each other without any apparent reason for being separated, is that they may be fragments of a unit which I am unable to reconstruct.

The existence of these long anagrammatic acrostics seems to be indicated by the repeated appearance of certain acrostic words, such as PEREMAS, VEL, POEMA, DANTE. These words appear with such a constancy of repetition as to suggest that they should be connected together in some continuous reading. The frequent possibility of reading them together suggests that some such continuous reading was intended by Dante. But in view of the nature of the anagrammatic acrostic form I regard the attempt to decipher these long acrostics as extremely liable to error. On account, therefore, of the liability to error, I have, in the previous chapters, used only a few of the long acrostics to support my interpretation of the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*. And I wish to make it clear that my general thesis does not depend on the long readings shown in this chapter.

The method, however, by which these long anagrammatic acrostics are to be deciphered is precisely the same method, applied to longer passages of the text, that was used in deciphering the short anagrammatic acrostics shown in the preceding chapters. In some of the short acrostics, the reader will remember, the acrostic letters appear in the text in the exact sequence in which they are to be read. An example of such a sequence is the NATI discovered in the initials of the first four *terzine* of *Inf.* i:

I N
 4 A
 7 T
 10 I

But in other of the short acrostics the acrostic letters appear in such an order that they have to be rearranged to reveal their hidden meaning. An example of an acrostic that requires such a transposition of the acrostic letters is the VELA PENE discovered in the marginal letters of the first lines of the first four *terzine* of *Par. i*:

I LA
 4 NE
 7 PE
 10 VE

Such a transposition of letters is the essential characteristic of the anagram, and I have accordingly called the acrostics in which such a transposition of letters is necessary *anagrammatic acrostics*. All the long acrostics that I have deciphered are anagrammatic in the sense defined.

In order to clarify the relation of the anagrammatic to the common form of acrostic, let me define, first, an anagram, and, second, an acrostic as generally understood.

An anagram, according to the *New English Dictionary*, is: "1. A transposition of the letters of a word, name, or phrase, whereby a new word or phrase is formed." An anagram may also be: "2. *loosely* or *fig.* A transposition, a mutation." The following example of the use of the word as well as an example of an anagram is quoted by the *New English Dictionary* from Howell: "This Gustavus (whose anagram is Augustus was a great Captain." Another example, quoted from Hiceringell, is: "The true anagram of *Jesuita* is *Sevitia*." It is of interest to note, as illustrating the motive for using anagrams, that the two anagrams given are supposed by their authors to express the meaning of the words from which they are formed. This understanding of an anagram as expressing the meaning of the word from which it is formed appears in the definition of "anagrammatisme" in the *Remains*, 1674, of W. Camden.

“Anagrammatisme” is there defined as “a dissolution of a name truly written into his letters, as his elements, and a new connection of it by artificial transposition, without addition, subtraction or change of any letter, into different words, making some perfect sence applyable to the person named.”

According to the *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*, “the construction of anagrams is an amusement of great antiquity, its invention being ascribed without authority to the Jews, probably because the later Hebrew writers, particularly the Kabbalists, were fond of it, asserting that ‘secret mysteries are woven in the numbers of letters.’ . . . A well-known anagram is the change of *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum* into *Virgo serena, pia, munda et immaculata*. Among others are the answer to Pilate’s question, ‘*Quid est veritas?*’—namely, ‘*Est vir qui adest;*’ and the transposition of ‘Horatio Nelson’ into ‘*Honor est a Nilo;*’ and of ‘Florence Nightingale’ into ‘Flit on, cheering angel’. James I’s courtiers discovered in ‘James Stuart’ ‘A just master,’ and converted ‘Charles James Stuart’ into ‘Clames Arthur’s seat.’”

Let us now examine the meaning of the word *acrostic*, which is derived from the Greek *ἄκρος*, extreme, and *στίχος*, order, row, line, verse. *Acrostic* is defined as having two principal meanings. According to the first definition, an acrostic is a composition, usually in verse, which contains a particular kind of cryptogram that is also called an acrostic. According to the second definition, the word designates the cryptogram itself. It is in this sense of designating a particular kind of cryptogram that I will use the word in the following pages.

In the sense of the word, then, to which I am limiting myself, an acrostic is commonly understood as a cryptogram which is composed of the initial letters, to be read consecutively, of the lines of a composition usually in verse. This common understanding of an acrostic is inadequate in one important particular: the initial letters used in an acrostic are not necessarily the initials of lines. They may be the initials of any of the divisions of the composition in which the acrostic occurs, such as chapters, cantos, stanzas, etc. They

may also be the initials of consecutive words. An example of an acrostic composed of the initials of the chapters of a work is to be found in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*; the initials of the chapters of this anonymous work spell: POLIAM FRATER FRANCISCUS COLUMNA PERAMAVIT. This acrostic reveals the name of the author of the work in which it appears and the name of his mistress. An acrostic composed of the initials of consecutive words is the 'ΙΧΘΥΣ, composed of the initials of the words: 'Ιησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ Υἱὸς Σωτὴρ, "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior."

We shall see, in the course of the chapter, that Dante composed acrostics analogous to these two examples.

Now it is to be noted that in the anagram the precise letters and the exact number of letters to be used are indicated by the word or phrase which is to undergo the anagrammatic transformation. This indication of the letters and of the number of letters to be used does not, however, enable the decipherer to be certain that the anagram which he finds is intended. In the first place, a decipherer may find an anagram in a word or phrase where no anagram was intended at all. And in the second place, he may find an anagram which is different from the intended one. Take, for instance, the word ROMA, for which, let us assume, we have been directed to find an anagram. There are several anagrams for ROMA: AMOR, MARO, ARMO, RAMO, and MORA; and nothing in the nature of the anagram itself will aid us in determining which of these variations was intended and which was not. Though the letters themselves are indicated, there is no indication as to the order in which they are to be rearranged.

As contrasted with the anagram, therefore, the common form of acrostic, which is to be read *consecutively* on *initials*, indicates the cryptographic letters in their proper order. And it would seem, perhaps, that the common form of acrostic indicates also just what the cryptographic letters are. Such is the case, however, only in those acrostics, as in the alphabetical psalms, which begin at the beginning of a composition and end at the end of it. For all acrostics that extend through *less* than the entire text, the extent of the

acrostic, and so the letters that compose it, are indicated merely by the spelling which the decipherer is able to discover.

Now the anagrammatic acrostic, which I find in the *Divina Commedia*, differs from the common acrostic in two important particulars; it is not read consecutively; and, using as it does initial and contiguous letters, it is not read exclusively on initials.

So far as I know, such a combination of the acrostic and anagrammatic forms is not described in the histories of cryptography. But the fact that the form may not have been described by the historians is no evidence that the anagrammatic acrostic is not a valid form or that it was not used by Dante. Indeed, in regard to the precedents for the anagrammatic acrostic, I find them plainly enough in the irregular clusters of significant letters which the makers of cryptograms have frequently placed on the margins of the opening lines of their texts. An instance of such an irregular letter cluster has already been noted in the first two lines of *Purgatorio*:

1 PE
2 OMA

This letter cluster is acrostic in the sense that the letters which compose it are all either initials or contiguous to initials. And since, as we saw in an earlier chapter, these letters may be rearranged to read POEMA, the cluster is anagrammatic. I call this cluster of letters, therefore, an anagrammatic acrostic; and the method that I have used in deciphering it is identically the method used in deciphering the long acrostics to be shown in the following pages. Like the anagram and unlike the common acrostic, the anagrammatic acrostic does not indicate the order in which the significant letters are to be read. And unlike both the anagram and the common acrostic that is coextensive with the composition in which it appears, the anagrammatic acrostic does not, of itself, give an exact indication as to what the significant letters are: it indicates by its structure merely the initials and an indeterminate number of contiguous letters.

But if the anagrammatic acrostic indicates by its structure merely the initial letters and an indeterminate number of contiguous letters, how can these contiguous letters be determined at all? The contiguous letters are many: how, then, can the decipherer know which of them to choose? Is he not free, by reason of the indeterminate indications of the anagrammatic acrostic form, to pick out at fancy the letters that spell whatever word or phrase he happens to preconceive? And if the acrostic is not necessarily co-extensive with the text, is not the decipherer free to fix its limits arbitrarily?

There can be no doubt, in view of the incomplete guidance afforded by the anagrammatic acrostic structure, that the probability of error in deciphering is great. In deciphering anagrams of any kind and in deciphering any acrostic for which definite instructions have not been supplied by the author to take the initials on an exact number of specified lines, the reading, however it may be confirmed, cannot be absolutely *proved* as intentional.

But the confirmations may be strong, and the decipherer is by no means free to wander at will. Though the anagrammatic acrostic form fails to indicate exactly how many letters are to be taken or exactly what all of them are, it indicates enough of them to guide the decipherer in the right direction. Almost invariably, in the long anagrammatic acrostics which I shall show in the *Divina Commedia*, the letters spelling an important word appear in such proximity as to suggest the word to any one who has freed himself from the convention—which is, after all, merely a convention—of reading letters in the usual order from left to right. Let me show again the anagrammatic acrostic on the first six lines of *Purgatorio*:

1	PE	4	E CANT
2	OMA	5	DO
3	C	6	E

Read: POEMA. ECCO DANTE

The marginal letters which show in the first two lines are

PE and OMA. Though these letters have to be rearranged to *spell* POEMA in the usual order, they can easily be *read* as POEMA in the order in which they occur. To a practised decipherer the word is plainly visible. It is a word, moreover, which appears frequently in other cryptograms. It makes obviously good sense in relation to the *Divina Commedia*. It is at the beginning of an important unit of text, and, as is well known to any student of cryptography, the beginning of a unit of text is a likely place in which to find a cryptogram and especially a signature. But POEMA is not in itself a signature. Where is the signature if there be one? Close at hand are the initials of lines 4 and 5, E and D, which suggest DANTE, and the rest of the letters of the name appear, also close at hand, in the third, fourth, and fifth letters of line 4. But this reading, so far, is not satisfactory. C intervenes between the letters E and A in line 4, and another c, the initial of line 3, intervenes between POEMA and the broken or interrupted DANTE. The decipherer of an anagrammatic acrostic is not free to skip about among non-contiguous letters or to disregard initials. He is restricted and thereby he is guided. The two c's must be accounted for: and the presence, in contiguous letters, of the means to account for them is an indication that the whole reading is intentional; the E and the O are in plain sight, and ECCO completes the reading on the two *terzine*.

Thus the process by which the decipherer works is systematic. When he finds a collocation of letters that spells POEMA and the name of the author of the poem he is inclined to believe that the collocation of letters was intentionally arranged by the author to spell just those words. The probability that the author intended the words thus deciphered is greater than that he did not intend them. The guide, then, for the decipherer, is the existence, in an appropriate place, of letters spelling words that show by position and meaning a consonance with the text. Following the guide, the decipherer chooses the letters spelling the consonant words and rejects the remaining letters as irrelevant. The chief difficulty in deciphering is to find, as in

ecco in the reading above, the links between the more important cryptographic words which seem actually to protrude from the text. And it is in this difficulty in particular that the decipherer is most likely to be misled by his ingenuity or lack of it. The outstanding words are, in most of the instances which I will show, plainly indicated. Their intention is confirmed by their "high visibility," by the correspondence of their meaning to the sense of the text in which they are embodied, by the hints which Dante gives of a hidden meaning, by the constant recurrence of the same letters spelling the same words; that is, by the same indications of intention that I enumerated in Chapter I.

The short anagrammatic acrostics are easier to decipher and more convincing than the long anagrammatic acrostics. But the long readings shown in this chapter are applications to long passages of precisely the same method that was applied to the short passages. In many instances the long readings extend through passages of the text in which the short readings appear, and the same letters are used to spell either the same or different words. Examples of such concurrent readings have already been shown in the preceding chapters. The passage which we have just examined at the beginning of *Purgatorio* is an especially good example. For together with the reading: POEMA. ECCO DANTE, on the first six lines are the two readings: PEREMAS and SPEM, on the first lines of the first four *terzine* (see pp. 27-8). Far from suggesting an accidental character in each other, these concurrent readings are mutually corroborative, in that they intensify the sense.

Dante's choice of the anagrammatic acrostic form for the majority of his cryptograms, both short and long, may have been determined, first, by the fact that it allowed him greater freedom than an acrostic with the letters in strict sequence, and, second, by the fact that, being less easy to decipher, it offered surer means of concealment. I do not believe that in the construction of his cryptograms Dante was primarily interested in having them deciphered. The chief philosophic interest of cryptograms, is, as I explained in

Chapter I, that they express, as latent in a given text, the fundamental difference between appearance and reality. In the universe *in parvo* which the *Divina Commedia* may well be considered to be, the problem of appearance and reality had to have a place; it is symbolized, therefore, by the relation of the manifest meaning of the text to the cryptograms which it contains. These cryptograms may also have been used to give the poem *a form derived from the idea* expressed, just as the form of the universe is derived from the *ideas* of its creator. The difficulty, or even, it may be, the impossibility, of deciphering the cryptograms in the text may be quite irrelevant to the purpose for which they were inserted. But the difficulty, or even the impossibility, of deciphering the anagrammatic acrostics in the *Divina Commedia* in no wise necessarily implies that these anagrammatic acrostics do not exist. The evidence for their existence, in the repetition of certain cryptographic forms that keep emerging from the text, like islands that unite with each other at the bottom of a sea, is so clear and so consistent that it cannot be controverted.

As an example of the long anagrammatic acrostic form let us examine first the anagrammatic acrostic in the first lines of the *terzine*, *Par.* xxxiii. 100-145. As I showed in Chapter II, page 30, there is an acrostic on the last line of this canto and the first lines of the three preceding *terzine*. This acrostic reads: L'AMATA. The long acrostic will include some of the letters used for L'AMATA; the word L'AMATA will not, however, appear in it.

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the first three *terzine*:

100	A
103	PE
106	OMAI

Notice that these letters, minus the AI, spell POEMA.

Now consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the next two *terzine*:

109 NO

112 MA

Notice that these letters spell **NOMA**.

Now consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the remaining *terzine*:

115 N

117 E

121 O

124 O

127 QU

130 D

133 QU

136 T

139 M

142 A

145 L

Notice that these letters, minus **QUQU**, spell **DANTE** and **L'OMO**.

Read, then, on all the letters given, beginning line 100:
POEMA NOMA QUI DANTE QUA L'OMO.

Easy to see in this reading are the salient words: **POEMA**, **NOMA**, **DANTE**, and **L'OMO**. The difficulty, to which I have referred in discussing in general the salient words that appear in the anagrammatic acrostics, is the difficulty of connecting these words into the continuous reading which they seem to suggest. I have solved the difficulty here by the use which I have made of the **QUQU**. But this solution is not the only solution possible. For instance, if instead of the letters **QU** of the first word *Quella*, on line 127, the letters **QUEL** be taken; and if, instead of the **MA** of 112, simply the **M**; and if, instead of simply **N** of the word *Nella* on line 115, the letters **NE**; the reading might be considered as: **POEMA NOMA QUI DANTE. QUEL E L'OMO.**

Or a variation on this second reading might be made by omitting the **L** of *Quella*, line 127, and the **E** of *Nella*, line 115:
POEMA NOMA QUI QUEL OMO DANTE

These variations illustrate the difficulty of deciphering the exact form of the anagrammatic acrostic; but this difficulty, however great it may be, in no way invalidates the readings as an approximation to the reading actually intended by Dante. The words **POEMA**, **NOMA**, **DANTE**, and **L'OMO** appear so

plainly in the anagrammatic acrostic form, and they so nearly group of themselves into a sentence, and this sentence expresses so great a relevance to the poem, as autobiographical, that I find it difficult to doubt that Dante *intended* some approximation to the anagrammatic acrostic which I have here shown as actually existing in the text.

The cryptographic interest of this passage is not yet exhausted. For consider the following marginal letters of all the lines from line 133 to the end of the canto:

133	QU	140	SE
134	PER	141	D
135	PE	142	A
136	TALE E	143	MA
137	VE	144	SI C
138	L I	145	L
139	MA NON E		

Read: PEREMAS QUI VEL. DANTE SI CELA NEL POEMA

The sentence: PEREMAS QUI VEL, is frequently repeated in the acrostic readings, as is also the idea that Dante conceals himself in the poem. The exact repetition of the first sentence, and the repetition of the ideas expressed in both, confirm the intention of the acrostic.

The last ten *terzine* of *Inf.* v show a reading on the following marginal letters of their first lines:

115	POI	130	PER
118	MA	133	QU
121	E	136	L
124	MA SE	139	M ENT
127	NOI LE	142	EC AD

Read: PEREMAS QUI. MI CELO NEL POEMA. DANTE

Manifest on lines 115-121 is the POEMA; and the PEREMAS on lines 124 and 130 is scarcely disguised by the intervening letters of 127. The DANTE at the end is unmistakable.

In *Par.* viii consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the *terzine* from line 112 to the end of the canto:

112	V	133	N
115	O	136	O
118	E	139	S
121	S	142	E
124	PER	145	MA
127	L	148	O
130	QUI		

Read: PEREMAS VELO. SONO QUI

Dante says in this reading that he is in the text. But where?

Consider on the last three lines the following marginal letters:

146	TA
147	E
148	OND

Read: O DANTE

The o belongs to the long reading which is given above and which the DANTE signs. The complete reading, therefore, may be considered as: PEREMAS VELO. SONO QUI. DANTE

Consider the following marginal letters on all the first twenty-one lines of *Par. x*:

1	GUA	12	TAN
2	CHE	13	VE
3	LO P	14	LO
4	QUAN	15	PER SATI
5	CON TA	16	E
6	SE	17	M
7	LE	18	E QU
8	MECO	19	E
9	DO	20	F
10	E LI CO	21	E
11	DI		

Read: PEREMAS QUI VELO. ECCO CHE DANTE S'E FATTO QUI NEL POEMA L'EGUALE CON DIO

This reading is determined by the salient words. DANTE appears as a unit on lines 10, 11, and 12. VELO appears on

lines 13 and 14; PEREMAS on lines 15, 16, and 17. The L'EGUALE QUI appears clearly on the regular ten-line frame of the first four *terzine*, thus:

1 GUA
4 QU
7 LE
10 E LI

Read: L'EGUALE QUI

This refers to Dante's identification of himself with Christ, the *figlio* in line 1. For the interior sequence in this passage see Chapter III, page 88.

The passage in which the longer reading is found is immediately followed by a *terzina*, *Par. x. 22-24*, in which the reader is expressly directed to the lines preceding:

Or ti riman, lettor, sopra il tuo banco
Dietro pensando a ciò che si preliba,
S'esser vuoi lieto assai prima che stanco.

These words may well be taken as a hint of the cryptographic character of the passage. An acrostic appears on these three lines, thus:

22 OR
23 DI
24 S

Read: SORDI

May Dante, in the acrostic on these lines which direct the reader to reconsider what he has been reading, have in mind the Biblical words: "Having ears, hear ye not?"

On the first lines of the first five *terzine* of *Purg. xxxii* consider the following marginal letters:

1 TAN
4 ED E
7 QU
10 E LA
13 MA POI C

Read: POEMA QUI CELA DANTE

The letters of DANTE are clustered on the first two lines, the letters of POEMA on the last two.

The initials of the first six lines are: T, A, C, E, D, A.

Read: TACE DA

This corresponds to the meaning of the text. Dante is looking so fixedly that every sense but sight is extinct.

Consider in *Purg.* xxxiii the following marginal letters on the first lines of all the *terzine* from line 100 to the end of the canto:

100	VE	124	E
103	E	127	MA
106	QUAN	130	CO
109	LE SET	133	C
112	DINAN	136	S I
115	O L	139	MA
118	PER	142	I
121	LA BEL	145	P

Read: PEREMAS QUI VEL. DANTE SI CELA CON BELLA IN POEMA

This passage contains two concurrent readings, the acrostics: PIO RIMASI and PURI RII, which have been shown in Chapter II, page 29.

Consider the following marginal letters on all the lines of the five *terzine*, *Purg.* xxvii. 100–114:

100	SA	108	LEI LO
101	C	109	E
102	LE B	110	CHE
103	PER PIAC	111	QUAN
104	MA M	112	LE TEN
105	DA	113	E
106	E	114	V
107	CO		

Read: PEREMAS QUI VEL. ECCO CHE DANTE CELA BELLA IN POEMA

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This acrostic confirms the idea that Lia is a dream form of the mother.

In *Par.* iii consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the first twenty-seven terzine:

1	QUEL	43	LA
4	ED I	46	I
7	MA	49	MA
10	QUALI	52	LI N
13	T	55	E
16	TALI V	58	O
19	S	61	P E
22	E N	64	MA
25	N	67	C
28	MA	70	F
31	PER	73	S E
34	E	76	C
37	O BE	79	A
40	G		

Read: PEREMAS QUI VEL. DANTE SIGNIFICA QUI COME BELLA E L'AMATA NEL POEMA

The reading which I have here deciphered is determined in its essential words by the initial letters. POEMA, lines 55-64, is unmistakable; and the PEREMAS, lines 19-31, disguised merely by the intervening N, line 25, is almost equally unmistakable. All the letters of DANTE except the D occur as initials, and the SIGNIFICA is suggested by three initials, S, G, and F.

In the text of the passage in which this acrostic naming BELLA appears the adjective *bella* is twice used. The first instance is in the second line. The marginal words of the first six lines seem to suggest that *bella* has a reference to *Bella*:

QUEL SOL
DI BELLA
PROVANDO
ED IO
ME STESSO

The sun and ED IO are both symbols of Dante. In the words: QUEL SOL DI BELLA, PROVANDO EDIO ME STESSO, he may accordingly be considered as referring to himself as belonging to BELLA.

The second *bella* occurs in the line, *Par.* iii. 48:

Non mi ti celerà l'esser più bella.

These words are so composed as to be capable of expressing by *double entente*: "Being Bella will no longer conceal me from thee."

Words in the text that may be considered as cryptographic hints are *postille*, line 13, meaning "marginal notes," and *levai lo capo*, line 6. *Capo* is a word that suggests a cryptographic device.

Inf. xx. 100-114, reads:

Ed io: 'Maestro, i tuoi ragionamenti	100
Mi son sì certi, e prendon sì mia fede,	
Che gli altri mi sarian carboni spenti.	
Ma dimmi della gente che procede,	103
Se tu ne vedi alcun degno di nota;	
Chè solo a ciò la mia mente rifiede.'	
Allor mi disse: 'Quel che dalla gota	106
Porge la barba in sulle spalle brune,	
Fu, quando Grecia fu di maschi vota	
Sì che appena rimaser per le cune,	109
Augure, e diede il punto con Calcanta	
In Aulide a tagliar la prima fune.	
Euripilo ebbe nome, e così il canta	112
L'alta mia Tragedia in alcun loco:	
Ben lo sai tu, che la sai tutta quanta.	

Consider on the first lines of these five *terzine* the following marginal letters:

100	ED
103	M
106	A
109	SI
112	EURI

Taking the U of EURIPILO for its equivalent v, read:
MADRE, VI SEI.

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And exactly as this acrostic indicates, the name of Dante's mother appears in an acrostic in the same passage. Consider the following marginal letters of the three lines of the last *terzina*:

112 E
113 L AL
114 B

Read: BELLA

The *terzina* immediately preceding the foregoing passage, *Inf.* xx. 97-99, reads:

Però t' assenno, che se tu mai odi
Originar la mia terra altrimenti,
La verità nulla menzogna frodi.'

The marginal letters of the first line of this *terzina* and of the first lines of the next four *terzine* are:

97 PER
100 E
103 M
106 A
109 S

Read: PEREMAS

This passage and neighboring lines contain several words that are hints of cryptograms, *augure*, 110; *nome*, 112; *magiche frode*, 117.

The words in the last *terzina*, 112-113:

così il canta
L'alta mia Tragedia in alcun loco,

taken in connection with the acrostics indicating the mother, suggest that Dante was aware of the mother symbolism of the *Aeneid*, the tragedy to which Virgil is referring in the text. That Dante has the same symbolism for his *Commedia* appears from the acrostic on the opening lines of the next canto. The first four *terzine*, *Inf.* xxi. 1-12, are:

Così di ponte in ponte, altro parlando
Che la mia commedia cantar non cura,
Venimmo, e tenevamo il colmo, quando

Ristemmo per veder l' altra fessura 4
 Di Malebolge, e gli altri pianti vani;
 E vidila mirabilmente oscura.
 Quale nell' Arzanà de' Viniziani 7
 Bolle l' inverno la tenace pece
 A rimpalmar li legni lor non sani,
 Chè navicar non ponno, e in quella vece 10
 Chi fa suo legno nuovo, e chi ristoppa
 Le coste a quel che più viaggi fece;

Consider on all the twelve lines of this passage the following marginal letters:

1	CO	7	QUALE
2	C	8	BOLLE
3	VENI	9	A
4	RIST	10	CHE NA
5	DI	11	C
6	E	12	LE

Read: ECCO CHE DANTE SI RIVELA QUI CON BELLA

Compare this acrostic containing the name of BELLA in connection with the mention of the *Commedia* with the acrostic containing the name of BELLA in connection with the passage in which Virgil refers to his *Tragedia, Inf. xx. 113*.

In the present passage Dante declares that Virgil and he were speaking of things

Che la mia commedia cantar non cura.

It may therefore be inferred from the acrostic that the subject of their conversation was the relation of Dante with his mother Bella. This relation is, indeed, the hidden subject of the entire *Commedia*.

The following passage, *Par. xxiii. 85-90*, consists of two *terzine*:

O benigna virtù che sì gl' imprenti, 85
 Su t' esaltasti per largirmi loco
 Agli occhi lì, che non eran possenti.
 Il nome del bel fior ch' io sempre invoco 88
 E mane e sera, tutto mi ristrinse
 L' animo ad avvisar lo maggior foco.

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Consider the following marginal letters on all the lines of these two terzine:

85 O BE
 86 SU T
 87 A
 88 IL
 89 E
 90 L

Read: O BELLA SEI TU

For the interior sequence in this passage and for the significance of *Il nome del bel fior* see page 328.

The following four terzine, *Inf.* vi. 64-75, comprise the prophecy which Ciaccio makes about Florence:

Ed egli a me: 'Dopo lunga tenzone	64
Verranno al sangue, e la parte selvaggia	
Caccerà l' altra con molta offensione.	
Poi appresso convien che questa caggia	67
Infra tre soli, e che l' altra sormonti	
Con la forza di tal che testè piaggia.	
Alte terrà lungo tempo le fronti,	70
Tenendo l' altra sotto gravi pesi,	
Come che di ciò pianga, e che ne adonti.	
Giusti son due, ma non vi sono intesi:	73
Superbia, invidia ed avarizia sono	
Le tre faville che hanno i cori accesi.'	

The reference, line 73, to the "two just ones" is generally supposed to be to Dante himself and his friend Guido Cavalcanti. No proof, so far as I know, has been given for these identifications. There is confirmation, however, in the anagrammatic acrostics which the passage contains.

Observe, first, that the prophetic words of Ciaccio begin, line 64, after the introductory *Ed egli a me*. Let us, therefore, consider, as a preliminary, the following marginal letters of the first line of the prophecy itself, which begins with *Dopo lunga tenzone*, and of the first lines of the remaining terzine in which the prophecy appears:

64 DO
67 POI
70 ALTE
73 GIU

Read: IL POETA GUIDO

Let us now return to the complete text of the four *terzine* and consider the following marginal letters on their first lines:

64 ED E
67 POI A
70 ALTE
73 GIUSTI SON DUE MA NO

Read: IL POETA VI NOMA ESSI: GUIDO E DANTE

In medieval Italian the letter *u* was the same as the letter *v*. I have here taken, therefore, the *u* of *due* for its equivalent *v*, and have used it as the equivalent of its *spelled* form *vi*.

The acrostic just deciphered is confirmed by another acrostic extending through the remainder of the same canto. Consider on the first lines of these *terzine*, *Inf.* vi. 76–115, the following marginal letters:

76	QUI	97	CI
79	FA	100	S
82	D	103	PER
85	E	106	ED E
88	MA	109	TU
91	GL	112	NOI
94	E I	115	QUIV

Read: PEREMAS QUI VEL. FECI QUI GUIDO E DANTE

Consider on the first lines of the first nine *terzine* of *Par.* xi the following marginal letters:

1	O I	16	E
4	C	19	C
7	E	22	T
10	QUA	25	O
13	P		

Read: ECCO QUI POETA

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Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the last nine *terzine* of *Inf.* xxxiii:

133	E	148	M
136	T	151	A
139	IO	154	C
142	N	157	ED
145	C		

Read: ECCOMI DANTE

The following acrostic appears in Dante's description of the punishment of the *peccator carnali*, *Inf.* v. 34-54. Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the *terzine*:

34	QUA
37	INT
40	E
43	DI
46	E C
49	OM
52	L

Read: MI CELO QUI. DANTE

Following are two examples of acrostics reading PEREMAS, in which the letters of the word are very plain but in which the word NON intrudes. It may be that the two words are fragments of a longer reading (see p. 410). The first acrostic is in *Par.* iii. 19-33:

Subito, sì com' io di lor m' accorsi,	19
Quelle stimando specchiati sembianti,	
Per veder di cui fosser, gli occhi torsi;	
E nulla vidi, e ritorsili avanti	22
Dritti nel lume della dolce guida,	
Che sorridendo ardea negli occhi santi.	
'Non ti maravigliar perch' io sorrida,'	25
Mi disse, 'appresso il tuo pueril coto,	
Poi sopra il vero ancor lo piè non fida,	
Ma ti rinvolve, come suole, a voto.	28
Vere sustanzie son ciò che tu vedi,	
Qui rilegate per manco di voto.	

Però parla con esse, ed odi, e credi; 31
 Chè la verace luce che le appaga
 Da sè non lascia lor torcer li piedi.'

Consider on the first lines of these five *terzine* the following marginal letters:

19 S
 22 E
 25 NON
 28 MA
 31 PER

Read: PEREMAS [NON]

The following passage is *Par.* xxvi. 43-57:

Sternilmi tu ancora, cominciando 43
 L' alto preconio, che grida l' arcano
 Di qui laggiù sopra ogni altro bando.'
 Ed io udi': 'Per intelletto umano, 46
 E per autoritadi a lui concorde,
 De' tuoi amori a Dio guarda il soprano.
 Ma di' ancor, se tu senti altre corde 49
 Tirarti verso lui, sì che tu suone
 Con quanti denti questo amor ti morde.'
 Non fu latente la santa intenzione 52
 Dell' aquila di CRISTO, anzi m' accorsi
 Dove volea menar mia professione.
 Però ricominciasti: 'Tutti quei morsi, 55
 Che posson far lo cor volger a Dio,
 Alla mia caritate son concorsi;

Consider on the first lines of the five *terzine* the following marginal letters:

43 S
 46 E
 49 MA
 52 NON
 55 PER

Read: PEREMAS [NON]

Consider the following marginal letters on all the lines,
Inf. xxxiii. 139-157:

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139	I	149	A
140	C	150	E
141	E	151	A
142	NE	152	D O
143	L	153	P
144	NO	154	C
145	C	155	T
146	N	156	I
147	CHE	157	E
148	MA DIS		

Read: ECCO CHE DANTE SI INDICA NEL POEMA

All the letters of DANTE appear as initials.

Consider the following marginal letters on all the lines of the five *terzine*, *Purg.* xvi. 37-51:

37	A	45	E
38	CHE	46	L
39	E V	47	D
40	E SE	48	A
41	TA	49	PE
42	PER M	50	CO
43	NO	51	C
44	MA		

Read: PEREMAS. ECCO CHE POEMA VELA DANTE

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the first seven *terzine* of *Purg.* viii:

1	E
4	E
7	QUAND I
10	ELL
13	T
16	E
19	AGU

Read: DANTE F OUI L'EGUALE

The reference of the cryptogram may be to *lo nuovo peregrin d'amore*, line 4, which is exactly what Dante represents himself to be throughout the *Divina Commedia*. For the cryptogram on the Latin phrase: *te lucis ante*, see pp. 97-8. The seventh *terzina*, 19-21, is a distinct hint to penetrate the veil, and the cryptogram on this *terzina* is a further hint to look for a hidden meaning. Consider on the *terzina* the following marginal letters:

19	A
20	C
21	CER

Read: CERCA

Consider on the first lines of the next four *terzine* the following marginal letters:

22	I
25	E
28	V
31	L

Read: VELI

This repeats the idea of *velo . . . sottile*, line 20.

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the *terzine*, *Purg. xxx. 118-145*:

118	M	133	NE
121	A	136	T
124	SI	139	PER
127	QU	142	A
130	E	145	D

Read: PEREMAS QUI DANTE

Notice how clearly DANTE appears on the margin of the last five lines, interrupted only by the PER, 139.

Consider the following marginal letters on the first lines of the *terzine*, *Par. xxix. 100-145*:

100	E	124	DI
103	N	127	MA PE
106	SI	130	Q
109	N	133	E S
112	E	136	LA
115	O	139	O
118	MA TALE	142	V
121	PER	145	UNO M

Read: PEREMAS QUI VELO. DANTE SI NOMA NEL POEMA

Note that the word POEMA is spelled on the marginal letters, all but one being initials, of four consecutive lines, 112-121.

A proof of the close relationship between the *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* appears in the fact that the *Vita Nuova* contains cryptograms similar in meaning and identical in form to cryptograms found in the *Divina Commedia*.

Following are the last five lines of the fourteenth sonnet in the *Vita Nuova*, xxiv. 59-63:

Venire inverso il loco là ov' i' era,
L' una appresso dell' altra meraviglia:
E sì come la mente mi ridice,
Amor mi disse: Questa è Primavera,
E quella ha nome Amor, sì mi somiglia.

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

59	V
60	L
61	E
62	AM
63	E

Read: VELAME

The line preceding these five lines begins with *Io vidi*.

The eighteenth sonnet in the *Vita Nuova* appears in two versions. For reasons that must have been sufficient, Dante gives first what he calls the *Primo cominciamento* and then the final form of the completed sonnet. The *Primo cominciamento* reads:

Era venuta nella mente mia
 La gentil donna, che per suo valore
 Fu posta dall' altissimo signore
 Nel ciel dell' umiltate, ov' è Maria.

Consider the following marginal letters of these four lines:

ER
 LA
 FU
 NE

Read: FUNERALE

The sonnet commemorates the first anniversary of the death of Beatrice.

The *Secondo cominciamento* reads:

Era venuta nella mente mia
 Quella donna gentil, cui piange Amore,
 Entro quel punto, che lo suo valore
 Vi trasse a riguardar quel ch' io faccia.
 Amor, che nella mente la sentia,
 S' era svegliato nel distrutto core,
 E diceva a' sospiri: Andate fuore;
 Per che ciascun dolente sen partia.
 Piangendo usciano fuori del mio petto
 Con una voce, che sovente mena
 Le lagrime dogliose agli occhi tristi.
 Ma quelli, che n' uscian con maggior pena,
 Venien dicendo: O nobile intelletto,
 Oggi fa l' anno che nel ciel salisti.

Consider the following marginal letters of all the lines of this sonnet:

E	PER
QU	PIA
ENT	C
VI	LE LA
AM	MA
S	VE
E D	O

Read: PEREMAS VI VEL. POEMA CELA QUI DANTE

CONTINUOUS ACROSTICS THROUGH
ENTIRE CANTOS

The first of the cantos in which I have deciphered a continuous reading from beginning to end is *Inf. i.*

On the first lines of the first four terzine appears, as the reader will remember, the acrostic NATI. Consider now the marginal letters of the first lines of the next four terzine:

13	M
16	GUARD
19	A
22	E

Read: GUARDA ME

On the first lines of the next six terzine consider now the following marginal letters:

25	CO
28	POI
31	E
34	EN
37	T
40	M

Read: COPIO MENTE

It thus appears that on the first lines of the first fourteen terzine of *Inf. i* there is a consecutive series of acrostics, reading:

NATI. GUARDA ME. COPIO MENTE

Now the reader will remember that I showed in Chapter II that lines 1, 4, 7, and 10, on which the NATI appears, may also be considered to give DANTE. The coincidence of the two readings on the same lines seem to indicate that DANTE is to be identified with the NATI as a typical man. Taking then the first acrostic as DANTE, the complete reading on the first fourteen terzine may be considered:

GUARDA ME, DANTE (NATI). COPIO MENTE

The meaning of DANTE: COPIO MENTE, is profoundly true of the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*. In saying that he "copies mind," Dante is implying an identification of himself with Intelligence which is constantly repeated throughout the entire poem. In the Christian Trinity the three persons are represented respectively, as Dante indicates in the inscription over the gate of Hell, *Inf.* iii, as Power, Intellect, and Love; Intellect corresponds to the divine Son. The identification which Dante makes of himself with Christ has already been indicated, and this identification carries with it, therefore, the identification of Dante with Intelligence. This identification is indeed expressed by an acrostic shown in Chapter VI, on the very lines on which we have just found MENTE.

The DANTE, as identified with MENTE, appears thus:

31	ED ECCO QUASI A
34	E N
37	T
40	M

Read: ECCO QUASI ME, DANTE

Now on the very lines on which we have found NATI. GUARDA ME. COPIO MENTE, or GUARDA ME, DANTE. COPIO MENTE, there appears another reading. Consider on these lines the following marginal letters:

1	NEL	22	E
4	A	25	CO
7	T	28	PO
10	I	31	E
13	M	34	EN
16	G	37	T
19	A	40	M

Read: MENTE COGITA NEL POEMA

Consider in the succeeding seven terzine the following marginal letters:

43 LO
 46 QU
 49 E
 52 QUESTA
 55 E
 58 T
 61 MEN

Read: LOQUE QUESTA MENTE

Consider the following marginal letters in the succeeding fifteen terzine:

64	QUAND I	88	VE
67	RI	91	A
70	N	94	C
73	POETA	97	E
76	MA	100	M
79	OR	103	QUE
82	O	106	DI
85	T		

Read: QUANDO POETA MARO QUI MI RICEVE, DANTE

Observe on lines 73, 76, and 79 the MARO following the POETA; MARO is the name of Virgil. For the remarkable cryptographic use which Dante makes of MARO in this passage see pp. 190-3. Observe also that, exactly as in the final lines of *Paradiso* already examined, all the letters of DANTE appear in the initials of the lines.

Consider now the following marginal letters on the first lines of the remaining terzine of the canto:

109	QUEST	124	C
112	O	127	IN
115	OVE	130	ED I
118	E	133	C
121	ALL	136	A

Read: QUESTO INDICA OVE E CALLE

Thus the continuous anagrammatic acrostic reading on the first lines of all the terzine of *Inf. i* appears:

MENTE (ECCO QUASI ME, DANTE) COGITA NEL POEMA (OF GUARDA ME, DANTE—NATI—COPIO MENTE). LOQUE QUESTA MENTE QUANDO POETA MARO QUI MI RICEVE, DANTE. QUESTO INDICA OVE E CALLE.

This reading is, in effect, a synopsis of the text of the canto.

Following is the continuous anagrammatic acrostic on the first lines of all the *terzine* of *Purg.* xxix.

Consider first on the first lines of the first twenty-nine *terzine* the following marginal letters:

1	CA	46	MA
4	E	49	LA
7	A	52	DI
10	NO	55	IO
13	NE	58	I
16	E	61	LA
19	MA PERCHE IL B	64	GE
22	E	67	L
25	C	70	QU
28	SOT	73	E
31	M	76	SI
34	D	79	QU
37	O	82	SO
40	OR CON VI	85	T
43	PO		

Read: PEREMAS QUI POEMA. ECCOMI, DANTE ALDIGHIERO.
SONO COSI VELATO QUI CON BELLA

Now consider the following marginal letters on the next nine *terzine*:

88	P	103	E
91	SI	106	LO
94	OGN	109	E
97	AD	112	TAN
100	MA		

Read: POEMA: DANTE LO SIGNA

And finally consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the remaining *terzine* of the canto:

115	NO	136	L
118	QU	139	M
121	T	142	POI
124	L	145	E
127	E	148	A
130	D	151	E
133	A	154	F

Read: POEMA: DANTE FELLO QUI

Notice that the word POEMA is on the marginal letters, all but one being initials, of the first lines of four consecutive *terzine*, 139–148.

The complete acrostic in this canto, as thus deciphered, is:

PEREMAS QUI POEMA. ECCOMI, DANTE ALDIGHIERO. SONO
COSI VELATO QUI CON BELLA. POEMA: DANTE LO SIGNA.
POEMA: DANTE FELLO QUI.

In *Purg.* xxx, on the first lines of all the *terzine* preceding the mention of *Dante*, line 55, appears a reading particularly pertinent to the sense of the text. Consider the following marginal letters:

1	QUA	28	CO
4	E CHE	31	S
7	F	34	EL
10	E	37	S
13	QUA	40	T
16	COT	43	V
19	T	46	PER DI
22	I	49	MA
25	E	52	NE

Read: PEREMAS QUI VEL. ECCO CHE DANTE S'E FATTO QUI

On the first lines of the *terzine* from line 55 to line 78 consider the following marginal letters:

55	DANTE	67	TU
58	QUA	70	RE
61	I	73	GUA
64	VI	76	GLI

Read: DANTE EGUAGLIA QUI VIRTU

Inlaid in this passage are other important cryptograms, which I have already shown, referring to the symbolism. They are not to be understood, however, as belonging to the continuous reading that runs throughout the canto.

On the first lines of all the remaining *terzine* of the canto consider the following marginal letters:

79	C	115	QUE
82	E	118	M
85	SI COME	121	A
88	POI	124	SI
91	C	127	QU
94	MA	130	E
97	L	133	NE
100	E	136	T
103	V	139	PER
106	ON	142	A
109	NO	145	DI
112	MA		

Read: PEREMAS QUI VEL. ECCO COME DANTE SI NOMA QUI IN POEMA

The complete anagrammatic acrostic in this canto, as thus deciphered, is:

PEREMAS QUI VEL. ECCO CHE DANTE S'E FATTO QUI. DANTE EGUAGLIA QUI VIRTU. PEREMAS QUI VEL. ECCO COME DANTE SI NOMA QUI IN POEMA.

NON-ITALIAN PHRASES

I have shown in Chapter III several examples of cryptograms on passages not Italian. For the discussion of this form of cryptogram see page 95. I will show here other examples.

In *Purg.* vii. 82, is the Latin phrase: *Salve regina*. These words may be regarded as an anagram for VEL A SIGNARE. This reading is appropriate to the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*, in which the divine *regina* veils Bella, the mother of Dante.

There is nothing to prove, indeed, that Dante intended the phrase: SALVE REGINA, to be considered as an anagram for VEL A SIGNARE. But there is plenty of evidence that phrases from the Bible and from the literature of the Church were commonly considered to contain cryptograms expressing the inner meaning of the phrases. An example is the well-known anagram which I have quoted from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the change of *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum* into *Virgo serena, pia, munda et immaculata*. It is my belief that Dante considered all, or nearly all, the Latin phrases in the *Divina Commedia* to be transformable, like the foregoing anagram, into readings appropriate to his symbolism. The reason for my belief is the fact that cryptographic transformations of many of his Latin phrases into appropriate readings may actually be shown.

In *Purg.* xxvii. 58, is the Latin phrase: *Venite, benedicti patris mei*. Consider in these words the final and contiguous letters as follows, changing the DI of *benedicti* into the letter D, of which the letters DI are the spelled form:

VENITE	E
BENEDICTI	NEDCTI
PATRIS	ATRIS
MEI	EI

Read: RECITI: SEI DANTE

In *Purg.* xxiii. 11, is the Latin phrase: *Labia mea, Domine*. These words contain a cryptic reference to Bella, the mother of Dante. Consider in these words the following initial and contiguous letters:

LABIA	LABIA
MEA	MEA
DOMINE	DOMI

Read: ODAMI, MIA BELA

BELA as a *kind* of BELLA may be suggested in the words: *per modo*, which immediately follow *Labia mea, Domine*. The ODA of the deciphered reading is echoed in the words of Dante, line 13:

O dolce Padre, che è quel ch'i 'odo?

That Dante intended to suggest that he heard BELLA in the Latin *Labia mea, Domine*, is indicated in the acrostic on the three lines of the *terzina* in which the Latin phrase appears:

IO	E
II	LABI
I2	TAL C

Read: TACI BELLA

As we have already seen, TACI may be read CITA; both make sense and it is difficult to choose between them.

The Latin word *Ave* appears apart from a Latin context in *Purg.* x. 40, and *Par.* xvi. 34, and with *Maria* in *Par.* iii. 121. This word was recognized early in the Middle Ages as a palindrome for EVA. The palindrome thus associates the divine mother Mary, as the woman to whom the *Ave* was uttered, with the fallen mother Eve. This association of the two mothers in an identical form is fundamental in the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*.

In *Purg.* x., line 44, appears the Latin *Ecce ancilla Dei*. These words yield a signature in which the τ is missing.

ECCE	E
ANCILLA	AN
DEI	D

Read: DANE

The τ is suggested by the reference which the Latin words, used in the Annunciation, have to Christ. The symbol of Christ is the cross, and the cross, as has already appeared in several cryptograms, is to be considered as represented by the letter τ . A hint of the silent τ , as the image of the cross of Christ, may be taken from the words, line 39, *imagine che tace*. By supplying, then, the *imagine che tace*, the complete reading is: DANTE.

In *Par.* xxiii. 128, is the Latin phrase: *Regina coeli*. Consider in these words the initial and marginal letters as follows:

REGINA	R
COELI	COEL

Read: CELOR, Latin for "I am concealed."

The Latin words *Regina coeli* are from an antiphone sung in the office of the Virgin. The association of CELOR with a hymn to the Virgin has a bearing on the fundamental symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*. Dante, as we have seen, portrays himself at the culmination of his mystical journey, as concealed in the womb of the divine mother.

In *Par.* xx. 94, appears the Latin *Regnum coelorum*. These words may be considered as yielding the same acrostic: CELOR.

The acrostic on both *Regina coeli* and *Regnum coelorum* may also be considered as COR. The *Regnum coelorum* as COR recalls the Biblical: "The kingdom of God is within you," *Luke* xvii. 21. The symbolism of the kingdom of God as the heart or as within the body is fundamental in the *Divina Commedia*.

In *Par.* xxix, line 12, are two Latin words, *ubi* and *quando*; and three lines later, line 15, is the Latin *subsisto*. These three Latin words, taken together, yield a signature. Consider in these three words the following terminal and contiguous letters:

UBI	BI
QUANDO	ANDO
SUBSISTO	TO

Read: BIOO. DANT

BIOO is the Greek *Bίωω*, "I exist" or "I live;" it echoes the sense of Dante's Latin *subsisto*.

In the first twelve lines of *Purg.* xxxiii are three expressions in Latin: *Deus, venerunt gentes*, line 1; *Modicum, et non videbitis me, Et iterum*, lines 10-11; and *Modicum, et vos videbitis me*, line 12. A determinant in the choice of these expressions is the meaning which they may be considered as conveying in the anagrammatic acrostic to be found on the initial and contiguous letters of all the words involved.

A hint for the method of deciphering these words as a cryptogram may be taken from the words, lines 1 and 2:

alternando

Or tre or quattro.

Let us arrange the Latin words, therefore, in alternating groups of three and four. As there are fifteen Latin words in all, the last word, *me*, will fall outside the last group of four.

The first group, then, which is of the first *three* words, comprises *Deus, venerunt gentes*. Consider in these words the following initial and contiguous letters:

DEUS	DE
VENERUNT	VENERUNT
GENTES	GENTES

In the letters selected above the *v* is to be taken as its equivalent *vi*, the spelled form of *v*. The *UN* of *venerunt* spells *un*, or *one*; as a one, therefore, it may be taken as its cabalistic equivalent *A*.

The selected letters may accordingly be transposed thus:

DE	DE
VENERUNT	VI ENER A T
GENTES	GENTES

Read: VI SEGNERETE DANTE

The second group, which is of the succeeding *four* words, comprises *Modicum, et non videbitis*. Consider in these words the following initial and contiguous letters:

MODICUM	M
ET	E
NON	NO
VIDEBITIS	VIDE

Read: VEDI NOME

The name which the reader is thus directed to see is the name in VI SEGNERETE DANTE. But notice that by the omission of the *E* of *VIDE* the initial and contiguous letters of the words of this group may be read: NOME VID. *V* has the value of five; *I* the value of one; and *D* the value of five

hundred. By omitting the zeroes, there thus appears the cryptic number 515. Thus the reading VEDI NOME may be converted into NOME: 515.

The third and fourth groups, of *three* and *four* words respectively, comprise respectively *me*, *et iterum* and *modicum*, *et vos videbitis*. Consider in these words the following initial and contiguous letters:

(*Third group, of three words*)

ME	M
ET	ET
ITERUM	IT

Read: METTI

(*Fourth group, of four words*)

MODICUM	M
E	E
VOS	V
VIDEBITIS	VI

Read: ME VVI

The two last readings taken together are thus: METTI ME VVI. V has the value of five; I the value of one. Thus the cryptic number 515 appears again, and the cryptogram in the last two groups may be considered as METTI ME, 515.

The entire reading for the four groups of alternating three and four words is thus: VI SEGNERETE DANTE. VEDI NOME (or NOME 515). METTI ME 515.

To these deciphered readings may be added the last of the Latin words, *me*, which falls outside the alternating groups of three and four words.

It is to be noted that *me* is used to rhyme with itself, like *Cristo* and Dante's symbol IO VIDI. This identical rhyming on *me* is, like the identical rhyming on IO VIDI, a detail of Dante's imitation of Christ.

In *Purg.* xvi. 19, is the Latin phrase: *Agnus Dei*. The u of *agnus* is the same as v; so that the phrase is an anagram for: SEGNA DIV (515).

In *Purg.* xii. 110, is the Latin phrase: *Beati pauperes spiritu*. Consider in these words the following telestic letters:

BEATI	I
PAUPERES	ES
SPIRITU	TU

Read: SEI TU

Dante may here be considered as hearing himself referred to in the words of the Beatitudes.

In *Purg.* xv, line 38, is the Latin phrase: *Beati misericordes*. These Latin words may be considered to yield a signature in which the *N* is missing. Consider in these words the following telestic letters:

BEATI	EATI
MISERICORDES	DES

Read: SEI DATE

The missing *N* is referred to in an acrostic on the first lines of the four *terzine* ending with the *terzina* in which the Latin phrase appears:

28	NON
31	TOS
34	PO
37	N

Read: NON POSTO N

In *Purg.* xxii. 5 and 6, are the Latin words: *Beati* and *sitiunt*. These two words, taken together, conceal a signature in which the *D* of *Dante* is missing. The context indicates that the missing *D* is to be supplied.

Consider in the two Latin words the following final and contiguous letters:

BEATI	EATI
SITIUNT	NT

Read: TI, ANTE. With a *D* supplied, the reading is TI, DANTE.

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There are several hints in the context to supply the D. Notice, in the first place, line 3:

Avendomi dal viso un colpo raso.

These words are capable of being taken as a hint that a letter has been removed from Dante's *viso*, or signature. And the whole of the second *terzina*, in which the Latin words appear, is so phrased as to imply that *Beati* and *sitiunt*, which suggest the sound of DANTE, *senz' altro, cid forniro*, line 6.

Line 17 reads:

Più strinse mai di non vista persona.

The words *di non vista* are capable, when removed from their context, of being understood as an allusion to the unseen letter D.

Another reference to the concealed D may be found in an acrostic on the initials of the five lines ending with the line in which *sitiunt* appears:

2	L
3	A
4	E
5	D
6	C

Read: CELA D

There is also an acrostic on all the first eighteen lines of the canto which seems to point to the signature hidden in *Beati* and *sitiunt*. Consider on lines 1-18 the following marginal letters:

1	GI	10	QU
2	L A	11	AC
3	AVE	12	PUR
4	E Q	13	O
5	DET	14	NE
6	CON	15	CHE
7	E	16	M
8	M A	17	PI
9	SE	18	SI

Read: PEREMAS QUI VEL. ECCO CHE DANTE SIGNA QUI POEMA

In *Purg.* xxix. 3, is the Latin phrase: *Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata*. Consider the final letters of these words:

BEATI	I
QUORUM	M
TECTA	A
SUNT	T
PECCATA	A

Read: AMATI

Compare with the sense of this telestic the *donna innamorata*, line 1.

In *Purg.* xix. 73, is the Latin phrase: *Adhaesit pavimento anima mea*. Consider in these words the following final and contiguous letters:

ADHAESIT	T
PAVIMENTO	O
ANIMA	MA
MEA	A

Read: AMATO

In *Purg.* xix. 99, is the Latin phrase: *Scias quod ego fui successor Petri*. Consider in these words the following final and contiguous letters:

SCIAS	AS
QUOD	OD
EGO	O
FUI	I
SUCCESSOR	OR
PETRI	I

Read: IO SARO DIO

In the ultimate identification of himself with God, Dante, in a sense, becomes God.

In *Purg.* xxv. 121, is the Latin phrase: *Summae Deus clementiae*. Taking the u of *Deus* for its equivalent v, consider in these words the following final and contiguous letters:

SUMMAE	AE
DEUS	DEUS
CLEMENTIAE	NTIAE

Read: AVE. SEI DANTE

In *Par.* xxv. 98, is the Latin *Sperent in te*. These words contain a signature which may be deciphered by substituting, as in the phrase: *In te, Domine, speravi*, page 443, an A for the I, and by supplying a D, in accordance with hints in the text to do so. Consider in these Latin words the following initial and contiguous letters:

SPERENT	SPERE
IN = AN	AN
TE	TE

Read: PER SE, ANTE

By supplying a D from the context, the reading may be PER SE, DANTE.

A hint to supply a D may be the fact that the Latin words are immediately followed by *di*, the preposition which may be considered as the spelled form of D.

That DANTE is here concealed is hinted in the acrostic on lines 94-99:

94	E
95	LA DOV
96	QUE
97	E PRIMA
98	SPERENT
99	A

Read: PEREMAS VELO. DANTE PARE QUI

Another hint that the Latin words are to be understood as having a cryptic reference to Dante may be taken from Dante's words, lines 88-89:

Le nuove e le scritte antiche
Pongono il segno, ed esso lo mi addita.

There is surely a double meaning in these words. Dante is referring not only to the New and Old Testaments; he is

referring also to the new and old ways of writing, the manifest and the cryptic. In the present instance, in connection with the Latin *Sperent in te*, Dante says in effect that he is himself referred to.

In *Par.* xv. 28-30, Cacciaguida, the ancestor of Dante, addresses Dante in Latin. His words are:

O sanguis meus, o superinfusa
Gratia Dei! sicut tibi, cui
Bis unquam coeli ianua reclusa?

Consider the following initial and contiguous letters of all the words of this *terzina*:

O	O
SANGUIS	SA
MEUS	ME
O	O
SUPERINFUSA	SUPER
GRATIA	G
DEI	D
SICUT	SIC
TIBI	TI
CUI	CUI
BIS	BI
UNQUAM	UNQUA
COELI	CO
IANUA	IANUA
RECLUSA	RE

Read: PEREMAS VI. SONO QUI IN REBUS TUO CACCIAGUIDA

Rebus is a well recognized word in cryptography.

In connection with the cryptogram in the preceding passage, let me show the cryptogram on the four *terzine*, *Par.* xv. 34-45:

Chè dentro agli occhi suoi ardeva un riso	34
Tal, ch' io pensai co' miei toccar lo fondo	
Della mia grazia e del mio Paradiso.	
Indi ad udire ed a veder giocondo,	37
Giunse lo spirto al suo principio cose	
Ch' io non intesi, sì parlò profondo:	

Nè per elezion mi si nascose, 40
 Ma per necessità, chè il suo concetto
 Al segno dei mortal si soprappose.
 E quando l' arco dell' ardente affetto 43
 Fu sì sfocato che il parlar discese
 Inver lo segno del nostro intelletto;

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these terzine:

34 CH
 37 I
 40 N
 43 E

Read: NICHE.

This may be an Italian transliteration of the Greek νίκη.

There are several hints in this passage: *cose ch' io non intesi, sì parlò profondo, 38-39; Ne per elezion mi si nascose, 40; segno del nostro intelletto, 45.*

Νίκη, Greek for "victory," expresses Dante's satisfaction in his meeting with Cacciaguida, who as a benign father image contrasts with the malignant and hated father image as it appears in Filippo Argenti.

In *Par. vii. 1-3*, is a *terzina* composed entirely of a combination of Latin and Hebrew. This *terzina* recalls the foregoing Latin *terzina*, in which a *rebus* is discovered.

Consider in the words of the present *terzina* the following initial and contiguous letters:

OSANNA	O
SANCTUS	SA
DEUS	DE
SABAOTH	SAB
SUPERILLUSTRANS	SUPERI
CLARITATE	CLARI
TUA	T
FELICES	FELI
IGNES	IGNE
HORUM	HOR
MALACHOTH	MALA

Read: PEREMAS. SUO FIGLIO DANTE RISCHIARA BELLA

In Gnostic symbolism the divine son, as Light, in the incestuous relation with the divine mother through whom he is to be reborn, is described as shining upon, or illuminating, her.

In *Purg.* xxvi. lines 140–147, there is a passage in Provençal, as if uttered by the Provençal poet Arnaut. The passage is:

Tan m' abellis vostre cortes deman,	
Qu'ieu no-m puesc, ni-m voil a vos cobrire.	
Ieu sui Arnaut, que plor, e vau cantan,	142
Consiros vei la passada folor,	
E vei jauzen lo jorn qu' esper, denan.	
Ara vos prec per aquella valor,	145
Que vos guida al som de l' escalina,	
Sovenha vos a temps de ma dolor.	

Consider on all the lines in Provençal the following marginal letters:

140	TAN M ABELL
141	QU I
142	IEU
143	CON
144	E V
145	ARA
146	QU
147	SQ

Read: QUASI VECE ARNAUT, NOMO QUI BELLA

Notice, moreover, that the first and last words of the first line of the Provençal:

TAN DEMAN,

spell DANTE, MAN. The MAN suggests, like “hand” in English, “signature.”

In *Purg.* xxx there is a series of Latin quotations, all of which are to be considered as containing a hidden meaning. The first appears on line 11: *Veni, sponsa, de Libano*. This phrase is followed, line 15, by *alleluiando*, which may be considered as another foreign word. In these five foreign words consider the following initial and contiguous letters:

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VENI	VE
SPONSA	S
DE	D
LIBANO	LIB
ALLELUIANDO	ALLE

Read: DISVELA BELLA

The next Latin phrase is: *ad vocem tanti senis*, line 17. Consider in these words the following initial and contiguous letters:

AD	AD
VOCEM	VO
TANTI	TA
SENIS	SENI

Read: SAVIO DANTE

Possibly the two phrases, with *alleluiando*, should be read together, thus:

VENI	VE
SPONSA	S
DE	D
LIBANO	LIBANO
ALLELUIANDO	ALLE
AD	A
VOCEM	VOC
TANTIS	TA
SENIS	SENI

Read: SAVIO DANTE SI VELA CON BELLA

The phrase: *Veni, sponsa, de Libano* is uttered by *un di loro, quasi da ciel messo*. The association of these words with Dante appears from the consideration of the phrases: *del ciel messo*, and *messo da dio* (see p. 235).

Immediately following the two Latin phrases just considered are two others. They appear in lines 19–21: *Benedictus qui venis*, and *Manibus o date lilia plenis*.

Consider the following initial and contiguous letters in these Latin words:

BENEDICTUS	BEN
QUI	QUI
VENIS	VEN
MANIBUS	MA
O	O
DATE	DATE
LILIA	LILIA
PLENIS	PLE

Read: VELI, DANTE, BELLA QUI IN POEMA

In *Par.* xii. 93, is the Latin phrase: *decimas quae sunt pauperum Dei*. Consider in these words the following telestic letters, taking the final u of *pauperum* as its equivalent v:

DECIMAS	AS
QUAE	AE
SUNT	NT
PAUPERUM	PERUM
DEI	DEI

Read: PEREMAS VI DANTE

In *Par.* xiii. 100, is the Latin phrase: *si est dare primum motum esse*. Consider in these words the following initial and contiguous letters:

SI	SI
EST	E
DARE	DA
PRIMUM	PR
MOTUM	MO
ESSE	E

Read: PEREMAS DIO

In *Purg.* ix. 140, is the Latin sentence: *Te Deum laudamus*. These words contain a signature, DANTE, in which the letter N is missing, and the missing N is unmistakably referred to in the passage in which the words occur. Consider the following initial and contiguous letters in the Latin words:

TE	TE
DEUM	DEV (U and V being equivalent)
LAUDAMUS	LA

Read: VEL: DATE

With an N the reading would be VEL: DANTE. Now there are various hints in the text that this VEL: DATE is to be understood as VEL: DANTE. The similarity of the sound of the two phrases is so confusing that, as Dante suggests, line 145,

Or sì or no s'intendon le parole.

And in line 132 there is an expression which is so phrased that it may be understood, when taken from its context, as a direct allusion to the missing N: *chi 'ndietro si guata*. By removing the *chi* from this phrase there appears the following: *N dietro si guata*.

Dante has further indicated the silent N in an acrostic in the passage in which the Latin phrase appears. The last ten lines of the canto are:

Non ruggiò sì, nè si mostrò sì acra	136
Tarpeia, come tolto le fu il buono	
Metello, per che poi rimase macra.	
Io mi rivolsi attento al primo tuono,	139
E <i>Te Deum laudamus</i> mi pareo	
Udir in voce mista al dolce suono.	
Tale imagine appunto mi rendea	142
Ciò ch' io udiva, qual prender si suole	
Quando a cantar con organi si stea:	
Che or sì or no s' intendon le parole.	145

Consider on the regular ten-line frame the following marginal letters:

136	N
139	I
142	TA
145	C

Read: TACI N

The passage which concludes with the lines just quoted records a curious instance of disobedience on the part of Dante. The angel of God has just permitted Dante and Virgil

to pass through the entrance into Purgatory proper, and in admitting the poets he says, lines 131-132:

Entrate; ma facciovi accorti
Che di fuor torna chi 'ndietro si guata.

Now in spite of the threatened penalty of being turned out if he looked back, Dante states, line 139, that

Io mi rivolsi attento al primo suono.

But why, if the angel meant what he said, was the penalty not inflicted? Why was Dante not compelled to *tornare di fuor*? There is apparently no answer given to this question in the poem, but the answer is implied in the cryptogram which has just been deciphered. Dante was turned out, as a result of looking back, in the sense of having his *name turned out of Te Deum laudamus*.

In *Purg.* xxx. 83-84, are two Latin phrases: *In te, Domine, speravi* and *pedes meos*. These Latin words indicate the beginning and end of a passage in a Psalm sung by the angels. But why does Dante indicate the exact limits of the passage? He does so, as I shall show, as a means of getting the exact letters needed for a cryptogram. Notice, in the first place, the suggestion of his name in *In te, Domine*. Of the first five letters in this phrase four belong to the poet's name. The coincidence can scarcely be imagined to have escaped the attention of Dante. Now the letters *In te, D* can be converted into *An te, D* by the cabalistic method of considering the letter I, which is a *one* in the Arabic notation, as the letter corresponding to one, or A, the first letter of the alphabet. Consider now the following initial and contiguous letters, changing by the recognized cabalistic method the I of *In* and the I of *Domine* into A's:

IN	=	AN	AN
TE			TE
DOMINE	=	DOMANE	DOMA
SPERAVI			SPERA
PEDES			PE
MEOS			ME

Read: PEREMAS POEMA. DANTE

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In *Par.* xi. 62, is the Latin phrase: *Et coram patre*. Consider in these words the following initial and contiguous letters:

ET	E
CORAM	C
PATRE	PA

Read: PACE

Consider in the same words the following final and contiguous letters:

ET	T
CORAM	MA
PATRE	RE

Read: MATER

I suspect that in the use of single Latin words in the text of the *Divina Commedia* there may be a double meaning. This double meaning may appear in an anagrammatic rearrangement of the word.

We have seen the anagram AVE—EVA. Another is *velle*, which appears in *Par.* iv. 25 and *Par.* xxxiii. 143. This may be read EL VEL, *el* being a good form for *il*. Another example is *Delectasti*, *Purg.* xxviii. 80, quoted from Psalm xcii. 4. This word is an anagram for CELASTI DE. As DE is a symbol of Dante, the meaning of the anagram is: CELASTI DANTE.

In *Par.* xxvi. 17, reference is made to the Greek letters *alpha* and *omega*. These letters may be considered as suggesting a signature, in that *alpha*, or A, is the beginning and *omega*, or O, is the end, of ALDIGHIERO. A . . . O, as used for ALDIGHIERO, is exactly analogous to the constant use of DE, or ED, for DANTE. The identification of Dante and Christ, expressed many times and in many ways in the *Divina Commedia*, is implicit again in these letters, for "I am Alpha and Omega . . . saith the Lord."

GROUPS OF PROPER NAMES

We have already seen in Chapter III examples of cryptograms constructed on the proper names of a passage. The

first cryptogram of this kind which I showed is constructed on the names of the group of souls that accompanied Christ in his ascent from Hell to Heaven. And I suggested that by signing his name in a cryptogram on the first letters of their names Dante identifies himself with them. I give here examples of cryptograms on other groups of proper names.

In the *nobile castello* Dante sees the heroes and heroines of antiquity and then the philosophers. Both these groups show cryptographic signatures on the first letters of the proper names. The passage containing the heroes and heroines, *Inf.* iv. 121–129, is as follows:

Io vidi Elettra con molti compagni,	121
Tra' quai conobbi Ettore ed Enea,	
Cesare armato con gli occhi grifagni.	
Vidi Cammilla e la Pentesilea,	124
Dall' altra parte vidi il re Latino,	
Che con Lavinia sua figlia sedea.	
Vidi quel Bruto che cacciò Tarquino,	127
Lucrezia, Julia, Marzia e Corniglia,	
E solo in parte vidi il Saladino.	

Note that the initials of these three *terzine* are:

121	I
124	V
127	V

Read: v i v, that is, 515.

Consider the following initial and contiguous letters in all the proper names in this passage of heroes and heroines:

ELETTRA	ELE
ETTORE	E
ENEA	ENE
CESARE	CESA
CAMMILLA	CAM
PENTESILEA	PE
LATINO	L
LAVINIA	LAV
BRUTO	BRUTO

TARQUINO	TARQU
LUCREZIA	L
IULIA	I
MARZIA	M
CORNIGLIA	CO
SALADINO	SALAD

Read: PEREMAS VEL. ECCO QUI DANTE COLLA SUA MATRE
BELLA

The following passage, *Inf.* iv. 130-144, contains the philosophers:

Poi che innalzai un poco più le ciglia, Vidi il Maestro di color che sanno, Seder tra filosofica famiglia.	130
Tutti lo miran, tutti onor gli fanno. Quivi vid' io Socrate e Platone, Che innanzi agli altri più presso gli stanno.	133
Democrito, che il mondo a caso pone, Diogenes, Anassagora e Tale, Empedocles, Eraclito e Zenone:	136
E vidi il buono accoglitore del quale, Dioscoride dico: e vidi Orfeo, Tullio e Lino e Seneca morale:	139
Euclide goemetra e Tolommeo, Ippocrate, Avicenna e Galieno, Averrois, che il gran comento feo.	142

The first philosopher whom Dante sees is *il maestro di color che sanno*, line 131. It is to be noted that Dante, who is here referring to Aristotle, does not mention him by name. The reason that Dante does not mention Aristotle by name is simply for the sake of the duplicity of his intention. In referring to *il maestro di color che sanno* he is indicating not only Aristotle but himself. A similar duplicity appears in the anonymous allusions to David, *Par.* xx. 38, Æneas, *Inf.* i. 73-74, and Homer, *Purg.* xxii. 101.

Aristotle is seated, as Dante says, *tra filosofica famiglia*, with Socrates and Plato nearest to him. These three form a philosophic trinity as a family analogous to the divine Trinity. This philosophic trinity is likewise analogous to the

poetical trinity of Virgil, Statius, and Dante. Regarded thus as a trinity, the three supreme philosophers are separated from the rest and are named by Dante in his poem separately, lines 130–135. Notice that in the line in which he mentions Plato and Socrates:

Quivi vid' io Socrate e Platone,

the QUIVI VID'IO is the equivalent of QUIVI 515, or Dante himself.

The philosophers grouped about Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates are named in the next lines, 136–144.

Recall first that Dante has spelled his name by the “string” cipher method on line 137:

Diogenes, ANassagora e Tale.

The signature is especially plain because the first letters of the three names spell in themselves: DANT.

In addition to these three philosophers, Diogenes Anassagora, and Tale, who give a DANT by themselves, there are grouped about the philosophic trinity of Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato the following: Democrito, Empedocles, Eraclito, Zenone, Dioscoride, Orfeo, Tullio, Lino, Seneca, Euclide, Tolommeo, Ippocrate, Avicenna, Galieno, and Averrois.

Take of these names the following contiguous letters, beginning with the initials, noticing that the I of Ippocrate is aspirated in the original Greek and so may be regarded as supplying an H:

DEMOCRITO	D
EMPEDOCLES	E
ERACLITO	ER
ZENONE	ZENO
DIOSCORIDE	DI
ORFEO	OR
TULLIO	TU
LINO	LI
SENECA	S
EUCLIDE	E
TOLOMMEO	T

'IPPOCRATE	HI
AVICENNA	A
GALIENO	G
AVERROIS	A

Read: DANTE ALDIGHIERO, TU SEI ZERO

Or, by regarding the "zero" as the equivalent of an o: SEI TU, O DANTE ALDIGHIERO.

I believe that this cryptogram is to be understood in the double sense which I have here indicated. Dante is here arrogating to himself the combined wisdom of all the philosophers and saying at the same time that the wisdom of man is nothing.

Notice, moreover, how nearly Dante comes to spelling his name on the initials of lines 140-144:

D
T
E
I
A

With the next line, in which he says with a double meaning,

Io non posso ritrar di tutti appieno,

he completes the spelling. Consider for this spelling the following marginal letters:

140	D
141	T
142	E
143	I
144	AV
145	IO N

Read: IO VI, DANTE

Interesting in connection with Dante's play on the names of the ancient philosophers is his reference to Thomas Aquinas, *Par.* x. 97-99, which is so phrased as to suggest the name of Dante. Thomas Aquinas, who is speaking, indicates thus the names of his companions and himself:

Questi che m' è a destra più vicino,
 Frate e maestro fummi, ed esso Alberto
 È di Colonia, ed io Thomas d' Aquino.

The words in which he refers to himself, *ed io Thomas d' Aquino*, begin with Dante's symbol ED IO, and the letters beginning the two proper names that follow may be considered as T and D'AQUIN, which may be read: DANT QUI. Notice also that IO DANTE is spelled by the initial T of *Thomas* and the six letters immediately preceding: NA ED IO T.

There is a group of proper names in *Purg.* vii. 91-112. The first five terzine of this passage are as follows:

Colui che più sied' alto, e fa sembianti	91
D' aver negletto ciò che far dovea, E che non move bocca agli altrui canti,	
Ridolfo imperador fu, che potea	94
Sanar le piaghe ch' hanno Italia morta, Sì che tardi per altri si ricrea.	
L' altro, che nella vista lui conforta,	97
Resse la terra dove l' acqua nasce, Che Molta in Albia, ed Albia in mar ne porta:	
Ottacchero ebbe nome, e nelle fasce	100
Fu meglio assai che Vincislao suo figlio Barbuto, cui lussuria ed ozio pasce.	
E quel Nasetto, che stretto a consiglio	103
Par con colui ch' ha sì benigno aspetto, Morì fuggendo e disfiando il giglio:	

Consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of these terzine:

91	C
94	R
97	LA
100	O
103	E

Read: E CLARO

The initials of the first five proper names in this passage are:

RIDOLFO	R
ITALIA	I
MOLTA	M
ALBIA	A
ALBIA	A

Read: MARIA

The rest of the proper names in the passage are:

OTTACHERO
VINCISLAO
FRANCIA

Consider the following initial and contiguous letters of these names:

O
VI
FRA

Read: VI FARO

Thus the complete reading on this group of proper names is: VI FARO MARIA.

This passage occurs in the description of the Valley of the Princes, the *grembo* which, as I have already shown, is associated in Dante's symbolism with the divine mother, Maria.

In *Inf.* xvi. 94-102, is a group of proper names (and we have a right to regard *Alpe* as a proper name). Of these names consider the following contiguous letters beginning with the initials:

VESO	V
APENNINO	APEN
ACQUAQUETA	A
FORLI	FORLI
BENEDETTO	BEN
ALPE	AL

Read: FANNO VIA PER BELLA

The passage shows Dante's elaborate water and river symbolism. Note that immediately following is the symbol of the cord and the *lonza*.

In *Purg.* xiv. 16–48, is a group of proper names of which we consider the following initial and contiguous letters:

TOSCANA	TO
FALTERONA	FALTER
ARNO	A
PELORO	PEL
CIRCE	CI
BOTOLI	B

Read: **FACTITO PER BELLA**

Factito is Latin. This passage is an elaborate description of the Arno and is another instance of Dante's river-mother symbolism.

The following passage, *Purg.* vii. 4–9, contains Virgil's description of himself:

'Prima che a questo monte fosser volte 4
 L' anime degne di salire a Dio,
 Fur l' ossa mie per Ottavian sepolte.
 Io son Virgilio; e per null' altro rio 7
 Lo ciel perdei, che per non aver fè':
 Così rispose allora il Duca mio.

Of the three proper names in this passage consider the following initial and contiguous letters:

DIO	DI
OTTAVIAN	O
VIRGILIO	V

Read: **DIVO**

Consider the following initial and contiguous letters of all the proper names of the last ten lines of *Purg.* vii:

BEATRICE	BEATRI
MARGHERITA	MAR
COSTANZA	CO
ARRIGO	A
INGHILTERRA	I
GUGLIELMO	GUGLIEL

MARCHESE	M
ALESSANDRA	ALE
MONFERRATO	MO
CANAVESE	CANAVE

Read: ECCO VI NOM. MATRE BELLA EGUAGLIA MARIA

The first name in the series is BEATRICE. The cryptogram thus associates Bella, Beatrice, and Maria. Compare this with the acrostic: EGUAGLIA COSI LA MADRE, shown on page 337.

There are two other cryptograms on groups of proper names which include the name BEATRICE.

Consider, first, the following initial and contiguous letters of all the proper names in *Par.* xxix. 1-9:

LATONA	LA
MONTONE	MON
LIBRA	L
BEATRICE	BEA

Read: NOMA BELLA

Now consider the following marginal letters of the first lines of the first four *terzine* of *Par.* xxxii:

I	A
4	L
7	NEL
10	S

Read: SNELLA

The passage refers to Eve, and the meaning may be that Eve is quick or prone to sin.

Now consider in this passage the following initial and contiguous letters of the proper names:

MARIA	MA
RACHEL	RA
BEATRICE	BEATRICE
SARA	SA
REBECCA	RE
JUDIT	IUD

Read: BEATRICE VI SARA MADRE

Consider, finally, the following marginal letters of the first six lines of the passage:

1	A
2	LIB
3	E CO
4	L
5	QU
6	EC

Read: ECCO QUI BELLA

ACROSTICS ON FIRST LINES OF CONSECUTIVE CANTOS

It is a recognized device in cryptography to use for acrostics not only the initial positions of lines or of stanzas but also of larger units of text, as in the signature of Francesco Colonna in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. This signature, as I have already explained, is written on the initials of the chapters of the book. I will now show that in an analogous way Dante makes use of the initial positions of his cantos. I am unable, however, to find a continuous reading through all the cantos. Imagine that the first lines of the cantos are written one under the other like the lines of a poem. The first lines of the first four cantos of *Inferno*, written thus together, appear as follows:

<i>Inf.</i>	i.	1.	Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
<i>Inf.</i>	ii.	1.	Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aer bruno
<i>Inf.</i>	iii.	1.	Per me si va nella città dolente
<i>Inf.</i>	iv.	1.	Ruppemi l'alto sonno nella testa

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

i.	NEL
ii.	LO
iii.	P
iv.	RU

Read: PRUNELLO

This acrostic PRUNELLO, as the evil or fruitless tree, stands thus at the beginning of *Inferno*. Compare the thorn symbolism of the New Testament, and also *pruno*, *Inf.* xiii. 32.

Consider now in connection with this acrostic PRUNELLO the first lines of the first thirteen cantos of *Inferno*:

Inf. i. 1. Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Inf. ii. 1. Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aer bruno
Inf. iii. 1. Per me si va nella città dolente
Inf. iv. 1. Ruppemi l'alto sonno nella testa
Inf. v. 1. Così discesi del cerchio primaio
Inf. vi. 1. Al tornar della mente, che si chiuse
Inf. vii. 1. Pape Satan, pape Satan aleppe
Inf. viii. 1. Io dico seguitando, ch'assai prima
Inf. ix. 1. Quel color che viltà di fuor mi pinse
Inf. x. 1. Ora sen va per un secreto calle
Inf. xi. 1. In su l'estremità d'un' alta ripa
Inf. xii. 1. Era lo loco, ove a scender la riva
Inf. xiii. 1. Non era ancor di là Nesso arrivato

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

i.	NEL	viii.	IO D
ii.	LO	ix.	QU
iii.	P	x.	O
iv.	RU	xi.	I
v.	C	xii.	E
vi.	AL T	xiii.	NO
vii.	P		

Read: COPIO QUI LO PRUNELLO. DANTE

This acrostic is appropriate to the symbolism of *Inferno*, in which Dante "copies the thorn-tree" in the sense that he represents himself as leading the evil life of which the thorn-tree is the symbol. Notice that the acrostic is read on the first lines of thirteen cantos. The symbolism of the number of thirteen as unlucky or evil is appropriate to the meaning of the acrostic. Notice, moreover, that it is in the thirteenth canto, on which the acrostic ends, that the *pruno*, suggesting the *prunello* of the acrostic, is mentioned.

Following are the first lines of the last three cantos of *Inferno*:

Inf. xxxii. 1. S'io avessi le rime aspre e chioce
Inf. xxxiii. 1. La bocca sollevò dal fiero pasto
Inf. xxxiv. 1. Vexilla Regis prodeunt inferni

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

xxxii. SI
 xxxiii. LA
 xxxiv. VE

Read: SI VELA

Following are the first lines of the last two cantos of *Purgatorio*:

Purg. xxxii. 1. Tanto eran gli occhi miei fissi ed attenti
Purg. xxxiii. 1. Deus, venerunt gentes, alternando

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

xxxii. TAN
 xxxiii. DE

Read: DANTE

Following are the first lines of the first four cantos of *Paradiso*:

Par. i. 1. La gloria di colui che tutto move
Par. ii. 1. O voi che siete in piccioletta barca
Par. iii. 1. Quel sol, che pria d'amor mi scaldò il petto
Par. iv. 1. Intra due cibi, distanti e moventi

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

i. LA
 ii. O VO
 iii. QUE
 iv. INTRA D

Read: LAVORO QUI DANTE

There is another reading on the marginal letters, thus:

i. L
 ii. O
 iii. QU
 iv. I

Read: LOQUI

Following are the first lines of cantos xxvi to xxviii of *Paradiso*:

- Par.* xxvi. 1. Mentr'io dubbiava per lo viso spento
Par. xxvii. 1. Al Padre, al Figlio, allo Spirito Santo
Par. xxviii. 1. Poscia che contra alla vita presente

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

xxvi. ME
 xxvii. A
 xxviii. PO

Read: POEMA

Following are the first lines of cantos xxiv to xxix of *Paradiso*:

- Par.* xxiv. 1. O sodalizio eletto alla gran cena
Par. xxv. 1. Se mai continga che il poema sacro
Par. xxvi. 1. Mentr'io dubbiava per lo viso spento
Par. xxvii. 1. Al Padre, al Figlio, allo Spirito Santo
Par. xxviii. 1. Poscia che contra alla vita presente
Par. xxix. 1. Quando ambedue i figli di Latona

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

xxiv. O
 xxv. SE MAI
 xxvi. MENT
 xxvii. AL PA
 xxviii. PO
 xxix. QUANDO A

Read: QUI DANTE POSA MANO AL POEMA

Following are the first lines of the last four cantos of *Paradiso*:

- Par.* xxx. 1. Forse sei milia miglia di lontano
Par. xxxi. 1. In forma dunque di candida rosa
Par. xxxii. 1. Affetto al suo piacer quel contemplante
Par. xxxiii. 1. Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio

Consider the following marginal letters of these lines:

xxx.	F
xxxī.	IN
xxxīī.	A
xxxīīī.	VE

Read: FIN. AVE

These last two readings on the first lines of the last cantos of the *Divina Commedia* should be considered together:

DANTE POSA QUI MANO AL POEMA. FIN. AVE.

Or it may be that the readings on the first lines of the last cantos of the three canticles should be read together thus: SI VELA DANTE. FIN. AVE.

Some of the cryptograms which I have shown in the present chapter are so apparent that there can be no question of the validity of the reading. Others are obscure, and the reading is problematic. But I have presented them for two reasons, first, because as a group they show indications of intention, and second, because as a group they point to a cryptographic plan in the *Divina Commedia* more inclusive than I have been able to prove. Part of my purpose, therefore, in showing cryptic readings of which I am not certain, is to suggest the direction which should be followed in further investigations of Dante's cryptography.

PROBLEMS OF MEANING

Turning now from the problems of cryptography to the problems of meaning, let me in conclusion enumerate the formal elements of which the *Divina Commedia* is composed and indicate the opportunities which these elements offer for further analysis.

The *Divina Commedia* of Dante Aldighiero is an unsurpassed, if not the supreme, synthesis of human thought. It condenses into a unit of almost unbelievable complexity the universe of knowledge as it existed in Dante's time. It is a compendium of the political, artistic, philosophical, and religious history of the world.

But the historical element in the *Divina Commedia* is by no means paramount. As Dante himself declares, the *Divina Commedia* is an allegory, a kind of poetical creation which, by his own definition, expresses, along with a literal or historical meaning, a non-historical or allegorical meaning.

Now as an allegory the *Divina Commedia* has a peculiar feature which it shares with many other allegories, but not with all. It purports to be the record of a dream. It is called a vision by Dante himself, and in addition to its dream form as a whole, it contains within itself a number of other dreams and many observations as to the meaning of dreams. It is obvious, therefore, that Dante attaches an importance to dreams as a mode of expression, and that in casting the *Divina Commedia* in the form of a dream he may be either recording some actual dream-material or else attempting to make the dream-poem express in form and in meaning what he understands of the form and meaning of dreams in general.

The main action of the *Divina Commedia*, which, as we have now seen, is an allegory cast in the form of a dream and embodying an important element of history, is a journey which Dante, as the author, tells of making while he is still alive through the post-mortem regions of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. The idea of the journey of a living man through the abodes of the dead is fundamental in the *Divina Commedia*, but it is not, of course, original with Dante. It appears, indeed, in countless forms in the mythologies of all peoples. Among the heroes of classical mythology who descended alive to the underworld of the dead are Odysseus, Æneas, Theseus, and Hercules; and Ganymede was taken alive to Heaven. In Christian belief St. Paul was "caught up to the third heaven," and it is recorded of Christ, in the Apostles' Creed, that he descended into Hell after the crucifixion and after three days ascended into Heaven. All these instances are expressly cited in the *Divina Commedia*. They set, so to speak, the example for Dante's journey and prove that Dante consciously adapted an ancient myth for the main action of his poem.

There are thus, according to the foregoing analysis, four

principal elements in the *Divina Commedia*: history, allegory, dream, and myth. Of these four elements the historical is the one that has been most adequately studied in the past, though the failure of the historians to identify correctly Beatrice, the *dux*, and the *Veltro* has led to a complete misunderstanding of the entire poem. If the identifications of these characters which I have made in the preceding pages be accepted, the chief historical difficulties of the poem are solved.

The remaining three elements into which the *Divina Commedia* may be analyzed, allegory, dream, and myth, however they differ from each other, have an important feature in common. In contrast with history, which is limited to expressing its single literal meaning, allegory, dream, and myth are capable respectively of expressing more than one meaning at once.

In regard to the duplicities of allegory the reader of Dante is left in no doubt; for the letter to Can Grande and the *Convivio* contain two profound definitions of allegory in which its multiple meanings are precisely distinguished.

The duplicity of dreams as having a rational as well as their obviously irrational meaning has been believed from early antiquity, and this belief is confirmed by the modern study of dreams.

The rational as well as the irrational meaning of myths was recognized in antiquity, and is likewise confirmed by modern scholarship. In popular usage, indeed, the mythical is *per se* untrue, unreal. But the popular view of the mythical is obviously in contradiction to the recognized character of myths as primitive theories of cosmogony. However false the theories thus expressed may appear in the light of modern science, they cannot on that account be denied the possession of some sort of rational meaning. In its original sense, a myth is merely a *something said*; and the *something said* contrasts with a *something done* in a primitive ceremony of a magical character, a ceremony performed with the object of bringing about a change in nature similar to the change indicated in symbolic form by the words and the action. In other terms,

the myth was originally the spoken part of a drama enacted for a practical purpose; and with the gradual disappearance of the drama itself the spoken part survived in narrative form.

Two fundamental errors are to be found, I believe, in much of the modern study of myths. The first is the error that the symbolism of ancient myths is always unconscious symbolism, analogous to the symbolism of dreams. This error is based on the failure to recognize that the most archaic forms of myth, which must indeed have originated unconsciously in dream-like phantasies, were reshaped at a very early period by highly self-conscious and sophisticated priests and poets, such as the Hebrew priests in the period of the Babylonian Captivity and the poets of the Homeric period and the great Greek dramatists. In this reshaping of the archaic material the symbolism which we are at last beginning to recognize must have been a self-conscious expression of the priests and poets who used it.

The second error which appears in modern myth interpretation is the error of supposing that the ancient myth-makers were personifying, in the so-called sun myths and vegetation myths, the annual or diurnal progress of the sun or the recurrence of crops. Man, and especially primitive man, is too egocentric to be so exclusively preoccupied with the life of a nature that is not his own. In the last analysis the so-called sun and vegetation myths must be understood to be purely *autobiographical*, borrowing from the recurrent life of the sun and the crops *merely the symbols of the manner in which man imagines that he himself may survive*. The so-called sun and vegetation myths must all be interpreted, therefore, as symbolizing, not the rebirth of the sun or the crops, but the rebirth of man.

In view of the rational, as well as of the irrational, meaning that must thus be recognized in allegory, dream, and myth, it appears that there is needed for the interpretation of the *Divina Commedia*, first, a serious analysis of Dante's own definition of allegory, a study of this definition, indeed, in the light of the Aquinian account of knowledge; and, second, a study of the dream and myth elements of the poem in the

light of the modern analysis of dreams and myths in general. No adequate analysis of Dante's definition of allegory has yet, it seems to me, appeared; nor has any attempt, so far as I know, been made to interpret the poem as a dream and as a myth.

Moreover, as allegory, as dream, and as myth, the poem must be completely reexamined in the light of the identification of Beatrice with Bella and of the *DXV* and the *Veltro* with Dante.

Limited as I have been in the present volume by the primary purpose of presenting the cryptography of the *Divina Commedia*, I have postponed to a study now in preparation, *The Symbolism of the Divina Commedia*, the presentation of my own views of the *Divina Commedia* as allegory, dream, and myth.

But as these views are implicit in the partial interpretation of the poem as a whole which I have made already, I wish, in conclusion, to define them as briefly as possible.

The analysis that I propose to make of the *Divina Commedia* as an allegory will show that the various ways in which an allegory is to be understood must correspond to the various ways we have of understanding. In other words, the four meanings which Dante declares that the *Divina Commedia*, as an allegory, expresses, correspond to the four *modes of cognition*. The literal meaning corresponds to sensation; the allegorical meaning to perception; the moral meaning to conception; and the anagogical or symbolical meaning to the mode of cognition which appears in the Aquinian account of knowledge as *revelation*, and in other accounts as intuition, *apperception* and *interpretation*.* This view of the multiple meanings of allegory will lead to a new definition of symbolism, according to which allegory is based on the use of things *as signs of other things* and symbolism is based on the use of things *as signs of mind or mental states*. This fundamental distinction between allegory and symbolism, entailed in the fundamental distinction between the four meanings of allegory as based on the four modes of cognition, will make it possible to analyse with precision the four distinct and con

* See J. Royce: *The Problem of Christianity*.

sistent meanings which Dante actually expresses in the *Divina Commedia*.

In my analysis of the *Divina Commedia* as dream I oppose to the Freudian view of dreams as symbolizing the sexual life in its literal aspects my view that the sexual life appears in dreams as itself the symbol of something else—as the symbol, indeed, of the *personified* conflict of the intellect, emotion, and will of the dreamer himself as an individual. This view of the sex symbolism of dreams in general will illuminate the profounder implications of the sex symbolism of the *Divina Commedia*.

I also dissent from the Freudian view of dreams as *wish-fulfillments*. This view involves the Freudians in the difficulty of explaining as wish-fulfillments dreams that have every appearance of *failing* to fulfill wishes; and to help themselves out of this difficulty they have invented a quite too gullible “censor.” The wish is invariably fulfilled, according to the Freudian view, *in spite of* the censor, who strives to thwart the wish. But how can it be shown that the thwarting power, whatever it is, is always evaded or defeated, and that the wish is always fulfilled in spite of it? In dreaming, as in any other activity, asleep or awake, there is doubtless a wish that strives to fulfill itself; but there is nothing in the evidence of dreams themselves to warrant the belief that the striving to fulfill a wish is any oftener, or in any other way, successful in dreaming than it is in waking life. Dreams have no such one hundred per cent success in fulfilling the wishes implied in the dream activity. By virtue of their very liability to failure dreams are more *lifelike* than the Freudians represent them to be, and they are accordingly better fitted to the use which Dante makes of the dream-form as the form of life.

I have been obliged, in advance of my forthcoming study, to treat in some detail of the mythical element of the *Divina Commedia*, the myth of the journey of a living person through the abodes of the dead. But the interpretation of the myth as I have expressed it in the present volume remains, as I wish to say with all possible emphasis, incomplete.

Our examination of the myth has resulted, so far, in the

discovery that it implies a parallel between the structure of the universe and the structure of the human body; the universe is a womb in which man is at once and in eternal repetition the child that is expelled from it, the seed that reenters it, and the foetus that remains in it. But the parallel between the universe and the human body is only the shell of the meaning of the myth; it implies, as its fundamental meaning, a parallel between the universe and the human mind, a psycho-physical parallelism which I will discuss in *The Symbolism of the Divina Commedia*. In the light of this psycho-physical parallelism the relation which I have been obliged, for want of a better term, to call incestuous in the present volume will appear to be a special relation between the three faculties of the mind, will, intellect, and emotion, which are to be understood as dramatized, in the myths of rebirth, as Father, Son, and Mother in conflict and in union.

An identical use of the *family* as a symbol of the *individual* appears in the Christian account of the divine Trinity, in which the Three Persons correspond on the one hand to Father, Son, and Mother and on the other hand to the three faculties of the human individual, will, intellect, and emotion. The Trinity as a family is unmistakably implied in the early Gospel of the Hebrews, where the Holy Ghost is represented as saying to Christ at the time of the baptism: "Thou art my first-born son;" and where Christ Himself is represented as saying in the account of the temptation: "My mother, the Holy Spirit, lately took me by one of my hairs and carried me to the great mountain Tabor." Further support for the maternal character of the Holy Ghost may be found in L. L. Paine's "The Ethnic Trinities." That the Trinity, which was recognized as a family, was likewise recognized as corresponding to the human individual appears in the work on the Trinity by St. Augustine, where a comparison is made between God as a Trinity and man as having a trinity of faculties. The same correspondences between the Trinity and the human family and the human individual are expressed by Dante, and it is essential to the interpretation of the *Divina Commedia* that these correspondences be recognized as the

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means by which Dante expresses, primarily, the identification of himself with God, and so, in general, the divine, or universal, nature of man.

FINIS.

LIST OF CRYPTOGRAMS

LIST OF CRYPTOGRAMS

Following the cryptograms here listed are bracketed letters which indicate the classifications to which the cryptograms belong. [Ac] means Acrostic; [An] Anagram; [C] Cabala; [I S] Interior Sequence; [L S] Letter Sequence; [P] Pun; [S C] String Cipher; [Sep L] Play on Separate Letters; [T] Telestic.

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1-12	NATI [Ac]	24-25, 31-34, 37-39, 103, 396-397
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47-50	BELLA [I S]	186-187
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51-54	MADRE [I S]	186-187
55-66	"IO VIDI" QUA ME, DANTE [Ac]	141
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100-114	PEREMAS QUI POEMA. ECCO DANTE, QUASI VELTRO IN FELTRO [Ac]	171-173
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127-136	INDICA ED IO [Ac]	40-41
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53-55	BELLA [I S]	355
53	BELLA [P]	355
58-60	DEO [Ac]	193-194
58-69	O LEO [Ac]	193-194
61-63	SNELLA [Ac]	193-195
67-69	LEO [Ac]	193-194
68-71	MATRE [I S]	355-356
71-75	MADRE [I S]	355-356
70-72	VIA [Ac]	355-356
91-94	MADRE [I S]	356
101-103	DANTE [I S]	356
102-105	MATRE [I S]	356
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130-144	SEI TU, O DANTE ALDIGHIERO (DANTE ALDIGHIERO, TU SEI ZERO) [Ac]	476-478
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64-75	IL POETA VI NOMA ESSI: GUIDO E DANTE [Ac]	415-416
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85-87	DANTE, SE' QUI [Ac]	69-70
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