

## NOTES

### DANTE AS ORPHEUS: 'GEORGICS' 4 AND 'INFERNO' 5

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Critics have struggled to explain the apparent contradiction between *Infèrno* 5.31, where the violent winds of the second circle of hell are said never to rest, and *Infèrno* 5.96, where the wind calms while Dante speaks with Francesca da Rimini. I argue that the winds abate specifically because they also pause when Orpheus visits the underworld in search of Eurydice in *Georgics* 4. With this briefest of allusions Dante fashions himself as another Orpheus, a poet whose art can affect hell itself, into which he has dared (as a character) to descend.

Keywords: Dante, *Infèrno*, *Georgics*, Orpheus, winds, Francesca, Eurydice

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In *Infèrno* 5, as Dante and Virgil enter hell proper, Dante has his first encounter with a sinner suffering *poena sensus*. The second circle concerns the lustful, who are punished by being buffeted eternally by winds for having let their stormy passions lead them astray. Among the myriad lovers Virgil points out Cleopatra, Dido, Helen, and Tristan, but Dante feels most drawn to two “che ’nsieme vanno, / e paion sí al vento esser leggieri” (*Inf.* 5.74–75). Calling them over to speak with him, Dante learns of the tragedy of Francesca da Rimini and her brother-in-law Paolo Malatesta, who were killed, apparently *in flagrante delicto*, by her husband. “E ’l modo ancor m’offende,” Francesca laments. “Amor condusse noi ad una morte. / Caina attende chi a vita ci spense” (*Inf.* 5.102, 106–7).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Musa argues that “e ’l modo ancor m’offende” implies that, killed together, “they must remain together forever in Hell”; this eternal togetherness “‘offends’ Francesca more than the temporary exposure of the lovers in their intimacy” and, indeed, constitutes much of their punishment. Musa, “Behold Francesca Who Speaks So Well (*Infèrno* V),” in *Dante’s Infèrno: The Indiana Critical Edition*, ed. Musa (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 320. Lino Pertile reminds us of the “founding value” of Francesca and Paolo and their sin for Dante’s program: “We begin by yielding to passion, and we end betraying and murdering Caesar and Christ: this is the story of humanity and the map of Dante’s Hell.” Pertile, “Introduction to *Infèrno*,”

This famous scene contains a famous conundrum in the fact that, whereas the lustful souls are said to be buffeted continually by a wind “che mai non resta,” so that there is “nulla speranza li conforta mai, / non che di posa, ma di minor pena,” Francesca nevertheless manages to converse eloquently with Dante some sixty lines later “mentre che ’l vento, come fa, ci tace” (*Inf.* 5.31, 45, 96). How can a wind that never rests pause to allow for a conversation between Francesca and Dante? Or have Francesca and Paolo managed to escape for a moment the wind on which they were already so light and thereby, seemingly necessarily, lessened their pain? Was Dante’s “affettüoso grido” (*Inf.* 5.87) really as powerful as this?

Critics have proposed a variety of solutions to the enigma of Francesca and Paolo’s relief from the storm. Natalino Sapegno imagines some oscillation of the winds, such that sinners come to a moment’s rest before being blown in the opposite direction, but Sapegno himself is not entirely convinced that this suffices as an explanation.<sup>2</sup> Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio are sure that it does not suffice, since “una sosta per le sole due anime che debbono parlare con Dante, o un ritmo alterno di pause e di riprese della bufera, contraddicono all’affermazione perentoria dei vv. 31–33.”<sup>3</sup> Slightly differently, C. H. Grandgent imagines that “in a single spot the gust may die down for a moment,” which seems far too easy.<sup>4</sup> Charles Singleton, considering the possibility of reading either *ci tace* or *si tace* in line 96, states that

either the wind could hush “for us,” i.e., for Francesca and her lover, and so allow them to hover before Dante and Virgil while she tells her story, or the wind could hush “here,” i.e., in this place before Dante and Virgil where Francesca and her lover have been given a brief respite that makes it possible for her to speak. Essentially the meaning is the same in either case. Divine Providence may cause the wind to “be silent” for the special benefit of the wayfaring Dante, so that he may hear of this sinful and tragic love; or Divine Providence may allow this

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in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, 2nd ed., ed. Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72.

<sup>2</sup> *La Divina Commedia*, ed. Natalino Sapegno (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1968), comment on *Inf.* 5.96, <https://dante.dartmouth.edu>: “Sembra la piú aderente al testo e alla situazione immaginata dal poeta; e pur lascia qualche dubbio.” *Inf.* 5.28–30, 43 could support such an idea, yet the tenor of these lines implies almost *constant* change of direction, certainly with no hope of the sort of pause that would allow Francesca and Paolo to leave Dido’s flock and come to Dante to speak at length. Subsequent commentary material from *The Dartmouth Dante Project*, <https://dante.dartmouth.edu>, will be cited by DDP; bibliographical details for each commentary are available there under the “List of Commentaries” link.

<sup>3</sup> Comment on *Inf.* 5.95–96 (DDP).

<sup>4</sup> Comment on *Inf.* 5.96 (DDP).

pair to come out of the wind to where Dante and Virgil stand unassailed by the blast.<sup>5</sup>

Generally speaking, critics will grant an exceptional moment of rest for Francesca and Paolo only so long as it is stressed that the rest occurs for Dante's edification and does not in fact represent any diminution of punishment. As Giacomo Poletto writes, "Per divina disposizione il vento, pur continuando per le altre anime, momentaneamente si tace [. . .] per i due cognati [. . .]; ma ciò non vuol dire che se per loro cessava il vento, cessasse anche la pena."<sup>6</sup> Yet I cannot see how, if these lovers cease to be blown about by the tempest, that they do not necessarily cease to experience, for the length of their conversation with Dante, the very *contrapasso* of the second circle. In Renato Poggioli's classic reading of the fifth canto, he acknowledges that "nothing less than a miracle" occurs here, since "it is clear that God has granted Dante's wish, that he has allowed the two sinners to heed his friendly and tender call."<sup>7</sup>

I wish to reaffirm Poggioli's idea of a miracle in this scene: Dante's call has in fact calmed the winds of hell for a moment for this couple. I have previously considered the possibility that this moment inaugurates a certain "anesthetics of presence" with respect to Dante the pilgrim, whose disruption in the everyday routine of hell effects a moment of relief for some of the sinners with whom he speaks. As an additional example, in Canto 28 the schismatics pause in their march of periodic wounding and constant suffering to stare in wonder at the living Dante, "obliando il martiro."<sup>8</sup> I wanted to see in this a distant echo of the Paul of the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Paul*, who obtains Sundays off from punishment for the damned. But Dante would indeed be "non Paolo" by comparison with *that* feat, and it remains true also that Dante's presence can add to a sinner's pain, as when he tears a branch from Pier delle Vigne (*Inf.* 13.31–36) or kicks Bocca in the head (*Inf.* 32.78).<sup>9</sup> Yet

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<sup>5</sup> Comment on *Inf.* 5.96 (DDP). In his 2013 commentary, Saverio Bellomo cites "ci" as either "qui" or "per noi" but seems uninterested in the stilling of the winds as such. He takes the lightness of Francesca and Paolo as evidence of their greater-than-typical guilt as *incestuous* fornicators. Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, ed. Bellomo (Turin: Einaudi, 2013), n. to 5.96; pp. 74–75.

<sup>6</sup> Comment on *Inf.* 5.94–96 (DDP).

<sup>7</sup> Renato Poggioli, "Tragedy or Romance? A Reading of the Paolo and Francesca Episode in Dante's *Inferno*," *PMLA* 72 (1957): 325.

<sup>8</sup> *Inf.* 28.53–54. Oddly, Bosco and Reggio allow the schismatics to forget their suffering momentarily when they would not allow the wind to calm for Francesca and Paolo: "La cosa è talmente prodigiosa che queste anime si dimenticano persino delle loro pene" (comment on *Inf.* 28.54 [DDP]).

<sup>9</sup> See Thomas Rendall, "'La Guerra de la Pietate': Dante's Definition of Moral Subject in the 'Inferno,'" *Bibliotheca Dantesca* 2 (2019): 29–30 for a recent consideration of

my present focus is a bit different: I wish to suggest that the calming of the winds in *Inferno* 5 has a specific source in Virgil's fourth *Georgic*, a suggestion that, to my knowledge, only one other scholar has heretofore explored. This allusion has the specific effect of associating Dante with Orpheus, an association that some previous commentators, beginning with Benvenuto da Imola and continuing up to the present, have suggested for other reasons.<sup>10</sup>

Virgil tells the tragic story of Orpheus near the end of the *Georgics*. Losing his new bride Eurydice to a deadly snakebite, the great musician Orpheus dares to descend into hell in an attempt to recover her. There he charms the shades with his irresistible song. Indeed, so irresistible is Orpheus's song that

quin ipsae stupuere domus atque intima Leti  
Tartara caeruleosque implexae crinibus anguis  
Eumenides, tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora,  
atque Ixionii vento rota constitit orbis.

the very house of Death and deepest abysses of Hell were spellbound,  
and the Furies with livid snakes entwined in their hair;  
Cerberus stood agape and his triple jaws forgot to bark;  
the wind subsided, and Ixion's wheel came to a stop.<sup>11</sup>

Orpheus stops the wind with the power of his musical voice, and I want to claim that Dante's call to Francesca and Paolo has the same force and the same effect. In each case a poet shows up in hell and "charms" it, at least for a moment, with his words.

Believing for some time that my connection of the calming of the winds in the *Georgics* to that in the *Inferno* was novel, I

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Dante's possible use of the *Apocalypse of Paul*. Especially intriguing is the idea that Dante's occasional pity for sinners, typically rebuked by Virgil, may reflect Paul's pity and the angel's (questionable) rebuke in the *Visio Pauli*.

<sup>10</sup> Benvenuto da Imola seems to be the first to have seen a Dante-Orpheus connection (comment on *Inf.* 4.139-40 [DDP]), although he primarily wants to distinguish the Orpheus who looked back (allegorically, to vice) and lost his reward from the Dante who remained steadfast. With respect to allegory, Dante cites in *Convivio* 2.1.3 Orpheus charming the rocks and trees (after losing Eurydice) in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to exemplify the second of the fourfold modes of exposition.

<sup>11</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid 1-6*, ed. G. P. Gould and H. R. Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 2nd Loeb Classical ed., 4.481-84, my emphasis. See Gary B. Miles, *Virgil's Georgics: A New Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 270-89 for a skillful explication of the Orpheus story within the context of the *Georgics*. See Christine G. Perkell, *The Poet's Truth: A Study of the Poet in the Georgics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 80-9, who reads Aristaeus and Orpheus primarily as symbolizing gain and loss, respectively.

recently discovered that Hugo Francisco Bauzá also sees an “Orphic effect” (“efecto órfico”) in the calming of the wind in Canto 5. However, Bauzá attributes the Orphic power to *Francesca’s* voice rather than Dante’s: “So intense and heart-rending [was] the unfortunate woman’s song that even ‘the infernal storm that never rests’ stopped to listen to her lament.”<sup>12</sup> This is an evocative interpretation, one that certainly captures the effect of Francesca’s tale on the pilgrim Dante, but it seems to me that his call, the “affettüoso grido,” must be given the primary credit for calming the storm so that Francesca might speak. Bauzá’s reading imagines an Orphic effect with no properly Orphic figure; it also seems to require that the wind anticipate the contents of her lament and thus reverses the order of causation (unless her *captatio* alone is judged sufficiently captivating).

Virgil does not directly state the reason that a wind blows in the underworld of the *Georgics*. Homeric precedent would allow for either the windy underworld of the *Odyssey*, in which gusts blow away the fruit that tantalizes Tantalus (11.590), or the windless Tartarus that Zeus threatens for Hera in *Iliad* 8.481. Both R. A. B. Mynors and Richard F. Thomas suggest that it is the wind that drives Ixion’s wheel, which seems a sufficient (if not strictly necessary) explanation for the wind’s presence.<sup>13</sup> With respect to Dante’s hell, we know that the storm rages in the second circle because it is the appropriate *contrapasso* for the lustful; Robert Hollander suggests that 2 Peter 2.10–22 may be the biblical origin for this imagery, especially with verse 17 denouncing the lustful as “carried with a tempest.”<sup>14</sup> But why describe this wind as one that

<sup>12</sup> Hugo Francisco Bauzá, “Virgil y el orfismo,” *Nova Tellus* 32, no. 2 (2015): 255, my trans. The original reads: “Tan intenso y desgarrador el canto de la desdichada que hasta ‘la borrasca infernal que nunca cesa’ se detuvo para escuchar el lamento de la joven.” Bauzá adds, rightly, that the problem of the contradiction between *Inf.* 5.35 and 96 is not to be settled by suggesting that Dante “slept” (à la *bonus Homerus*).

<sup>13</sup> R. A. B. Mynors notes that Pindar has Ixion whirling on a winged wheel turned by the wind; a Campanian amphora likewise pictures such a scene. When Orpheus sings, the wheel “stands still upon the wind or is stilled by the wind.” Virgil, *Georgics*, ed. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), n. to 4.481–84. Richard F. Thomas speaks of “the wind which drives the wheel of Ixion”; his literal translation of “Ixionii vento rota constitit orbis” can be pieced together as “the wheel of Ixion’s turning was stopped in the wind.” (I would modestly suggest “with the wind” for *vento* rather than “in the wind.”) *Georgics*, vol. 2, ed. Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), nn. to 4.481–84 and 484. Marthe Dozon suggests that there may be some vague correspondence between Lucifer’s production of wind in *Inf.* 34 and the winds that blow Ixion’s wheel in the *Georgics*. Marthe Dozon, *Mythe et Symbole dans la Divine Comédie* (Florence: Olschki, 1991), 344.

<sup>14</sup> *The Inferno*, trans. Robert and Jean Hollander (New York: Anchor-Random House, 2002), comment on *Inf.* 5.26–33. Hollander offers several other allusions to

never ceases only then to make it momentarily cease for Francesca and Paolo when Dante calls? The poet must be doing this intentionally, and I believe that he intends for us to see an allusion to Orpheus. The lustful are blown about by a wind, per the New Testament; but the winds of hell exist also to be stopped by the miraculous intervention of a poet, as it were, per the *Georgics*.

When he reprises Virgil's scene in *Metamorphoses* 10, Ovid omits the wind being stopped and Cerberus being charmed but keeps the effect on the Furies and on Ixion and adds in Tantalus forgetting his thirst, Sisyphus sitting down on his stone, the Danaids laying down their urns, and Tityus enjoying a moment's break from the vultures. Ovid also adds a moving *captatio* in which Orpheus beseeches Hades and Persephone simply to loan Eurydice back to him for a space; they, being mortal, will necessarily return some day to stay forever.<sup>15</sup> But far more significantly, Ovid adds an entirely new coda in *Metamorphoses* 11 wherein, following his death at the hands of the Bacchantes, Orpheus makes his second and final return to the underworld and enjoys an eternal, if non-living, companionship with Eurydice:

Umbra subit terras, et quae loca viderat ante,  
cuncta recognoscit quaerensque per arva piorum  
invenit Eurydicen cupidisque amplectitur ulnis;  
hic modo coniunctis spatiantur passibus ambo,  
nunc praecedentem sequitur, nunc praevisus anteit  
Eurydicenque suam, iam tuto, respicit Orpheus.

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the *Georgics* in the *Commedia*, including what he terms an "amalgam" of two passages from Virgil (*Aen.* 6.309–12 and *Geo.* 2.82) in *Inf.* 3.112–20 (n. to *Inf.* 3.112–20); he also sees *Geo.* 1.414 behind the doves of *Inf.* 5.82–84 (n. to *Inf.* 5.82–84). Hollander credits Bernardino Daniello as the first to recognize that Dante's triple repetition of "Virgilio" in *Purg.* 30.49–51 echoes Orpheus's triple "Eurydicen" of *Geo.* 4.525–27. See Robert Hollander, "Dante's Virgil: A Light that Failed," *Lectura Dantis* 4 (1989): 7. See Paola Rigo, *Memoria classica e memoria biblica in Dante* (Florence: Olschki, 1994), 31, 45–46, for similar observations.

<sup>15</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, ed. Frank Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), Loeb Classical ed., 10.17–39 (see 4.447–80). I cannot forgo a comment on W. S. Anderson's claims that "Ovid transforms the Virgilian tragic failure into a character entirely appropriate to his different poem: a melodramatic, egoistic poet of overblown rhetoric and shallow self-indulgent sentimentality," a "third-rate poet-orator" who "works with cheap, flashy, and specious rhetoric" ("The Orpheus of Virgil and Ovid: *flebile nescio quid*," in *Orpheus: The Metamorphosis of a Myth*, ed. John Warden [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982], 36, 40). What to say? I simply cannot read the scene this way; I find Orpheus's *captatio* a moving plea for the return of one lost too soon. It is surely relevant that Anderson omits discussion of the happy ending of *Met.* 11 that he is forced to include on his (quite useful) comparative *Georgics/Metamorphoses* table (39).

The poet's shade fled beneath the earth, and recognized all the places he had seen before; and, seeking through the blessed fields, found Eurydice and caught her in his eager arms. Here now side by side they walk; now Orpheus follows her as she precedes, now goes before her, now may in safety look back upon his Eurydice.<sup>16</sup>

I have included this excursus into Ovid primarily as evidence that the story of Orpheus ends on a happier note in one of its two most important classical occurrences, a fact that may have some relevance to Dante's placement of Orpheus in Limbo (*Inf.* 4.140) and that could even have helped to contribute to the parallel of Orpheus with Christ that comes to be developed.<sup>17</sup> Eleanor Irwin cites Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius as key patristic voices interested in the parallel between these characters who “harrow hell,” and the *Ovide moralisé* continues the effort in the Middle Ages.<sup>18</sup> Christ will of course successfully rescue souls from hell, there being no danger in his case of an accidental or incontinent backwards glance. In this sense Christ is the antitype of Orpheus, Orpheus as he might have been (were he truly divine).

Indeed, some past efforts to consider a parallel between Dante and Orpheus have seen the same sort of antithesis as with Orpheus and Christ. Lee Foust argues that Dante the pilgrim is never figured as Orpheus, nor Beatrice ever likened to Eurydice, because the roles of savior and saved are reversed: Beatrice is the

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<sup>16</sup> *Met.* 11.61–66. Peter S. Hawkins has worked on the use of imagery from Ovid's Orpheus scenes in the encounter between Dante and Matelda in *Purg.* 28. Hawkins, “Watching Matelda,” in *Dante's Testaments: Essays in Scriptural Imagination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 167–68.

<sup>17</sup> The very brief mention by Aeneas of Orpheus's descent in *Aen.* 6.119–20 seems also positive, as far as it goes. Boethius, in the *Consolation of Philosophy* 3.12, another important source of the story for the Middle Ages, reads it as straightforwardly cautionary allegory—don't look back. See Zygmunt G. Baranski, “Notes on Dante and the Myth of Orpheus,” in *Dante: mito e poesia*, eds. Michelangelo Picone and Tatiana Crivelli (Florence: Franco Cesati, 1999), 133–54 on “the range of Dante's possible knowledge of the Orpheus legend” (135). See Julius Wilhelm, “Orpheus bei Dante,” in *Medium Aevum Romanicum: Festschrift für Hans Rheinfelder*, ed. Heinrich Bihler (Munich: Max Hueber, 1963), 397–406.

<sup>18</sup> Eleanor Irwin, “The Songs of Orpheus and the New Song of Christ,” in *Orpheus: The Metamorphosis of a Myth*, ed. John Warden (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 51, 56. See in the same collection Patricia Vicari, “*Sparagmos*: Orpheus among the Christians” on the *Ovide moralisé* (68–70). Also see John B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), section III for much more on Clement and Eusebius and the development of the Orpheus-Christus figure. (Friedman eventually discusses the essential figure David, who as musician-poet-shepherd helps connect Orpheus to Christ, but only later in his study [148–56].)

lover saving Dante not from death already suffered but from potentially eternal death to come. Foust also claims that Orpheus sets a negative precedent, since his descent comprises “an impious and illicit attempt to drag a dead spirit back into the land of the living, rather than a faith-affirming journey into the otherworld.”<sup>19</sup> Yet that argument could easily be spun another way: whereas Orpheus’s self-willed decent fails—although not in any manifestly rebukable way; he errs only in looking back too soon—Dante’s descent, sought by the Virgin Mary herself, will necessarily succeed. (And we see this pattern as well in Dante’s presentation of Ulysses in *Inferno* 26: a self-willed transgressive journey fails, whereas Dante’s divinely sanctioned transgression will succeed.)

Some critics, to whom I am obviously sympathetic, find the connection between Dante and Orpheus to be more positive. Marthe Dozon terms the inversion of male-female roles in Beatrice’s pursuit of Dante an “Orphic scheme reprised and corrected.” Indeed, Dozon, adding to the famous “double denial” of *Inferno* 2.32, finds in Dante’s visit a “totalization” of the descents of Orpheus and Aeneas and the biblical ascent of Paul.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, Stefano Carrai, correcting Giorgio Padoan’s contention that Dante never makes use of Orpheus’s *catabasis*, sees a distinct reference to it in the warning of the angel in *Purgatorio* 9.131–32 that anyone who looks back is lost. But more than this, Carrai points to Guglielmo Gorni’s work on the *Vita Nova* for the overarching parallel between the poets Dante and Orpheus in that each loves a young lady who dies young and each wants to make her live again by poetic means. In Dante, then, we have “una sorta di Orfeo corretto o redento” (Carrai) or “un nuovo Orfeo” (Gorni), who both saves and is saved by his beloved.<sup>21</sup>

So Dante may be another Aeneas, another Paul, another Orpheus—a sort of each of these—with all of the necessary distinctions being made and with all of the attending complexities of his

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<sup>19</sup> Lee Foust, “Dante’s *Commedia* and the Poetics of Christian *Catabasis*” (PhD diss., New York University, 2008), 302, 349–50, <http://search.proquest.com/>.

<sup>20</sup> Dozon, *Mythe et Symbole dans la Divine Comédie*, 72, 82, my trans. Dante’s descent could also include a *descent* of Paul, not just an ascent, if we allow Dante’s use of the non-canonical *Apocalypse of Paul* along with 2 Corinthians 12.

<sup>21</sup> Stefano Carrai, *Dante e l’antico: L’emulazione dei classici nella “Commedia”* (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2012), 119–22; see Guglielmo Gorni, “La Beatrice di Dante, dal tempo all’eterno,” intro to *Vita Nova*, ed. Luca Carlo Rossi (Milan: Mondadori, 1999), XXIII–XXXIV. Carrai and Gorni are correcting Padoan’s entry for “Orfeo” in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*. It is true, of course, that there is a possible biblical (as opposed to classical) source for the purgatorial warning not to look back in Lot’s wife (Gen. 19) and in Jesus’s words to the disciples in Luke 9.62.



fusion of classical and Christian material. One of the many challenges that Dante poses us is which distinctions to make where, and on what basis. A key similarity of this group of four as I am viewing them is that all four characters experience the otherworld before death, and, if we allow Paul's *descent* (as I personally think we should), all four characters affect the underworld in some way by their visits.<sup>22</sup> Aeneas would seem to have the least effect in the sense that I am intending, although he does bring some solace to Palinurus and Anchises and some pique to Charon; he also gets to frighten the ghosts of the Greeks in a bit of revenge for Troy. (Indeed, he sees Orpheus in *Aeneid* 6.645–47, still playing his music, though to less dramatic effect than before.) The Paul of the *Apocalypse of Paul* certainly would have the most dramatic and most lasting effect of these visitors, with Orpheus having a dramatic though only temporary effect. Dante, then, would be somewhere in the mix, bringing moments of relief and moments of heightened anguish. Even the relief from the storm that he brings Francesca is tempered by the fact that he makes her remember her previous happiness in her present misery, than which, according to her, there could be “nessun maggior dolore.”<sup>23</sup> But could one say, crudely, that more pain in hell is irrelevant, whereas even one fewer pain is remarkable? (And I presume that Francesca never really manages to forget her previous happiness anyway.) We need think only of the parable of Dives and Lazarus to support this notion: the rich man, tormented in flames, would have accepted as unimaginably wonderful merely the touch to his tongue of Lazarus's finger dipped in water, a sentiment shared by Master Adam in *Inferno* 30.<sup>24</sup> Surely

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<sup>22</sup> I am taking some inspiration here from Erich Auerbach's famous chapter in *Mimesis*, where he observes that Dante's narrative adds to the history of visits to hell and gives those with whom he converses “their only chance in all eternity to speak to one from among the living,” which “impels many to express themselves with the utmost intensity and [. . .] brings into the changelessness of their eternal fate a moment of dramatic historicity.” Auerbach, *Mimesis*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 191–93.

<sup>23</sup> *Inf.* 5.121–23. Rigo (*Memoria classica*, 58–59) cites Francesca's words as evidence that “l'inferno dantesco, al contrario di quello visitato da Orfeo, non conosce pause che ristorano, la parola non porta sollievo a nessuno”; Dante's hell is more a place “della sconfitta della parola che non può [. . .] ‘mansuocere corda’ (*Georg.* IV, 470).” But just as Orpheus's song does in fact soften the hearts that cannot be softened, so I argue that Dante's visit produces a pause that offers at least a moment's respite from the *contrapasso*.

<sup>24</sup> Luke 16.19–31. See *Inf.* 30.62–63 for Master Adam, who once had it all, now craving “un gocciol d'acqua.” Luigi Bennassuti seems to have been the first to see the allusion to Dives (comment on *Inf.* 30.63 [DDP]); surprisingly, Hollander does not note it. Benvenuto da Imola compares Francesca's “nessun maggior dolore” to Master Adam's complaint (comment on *Inf.* 30.62–63 [DDP]).

Dante's pity for Francesca, and the momentary reprieve from the storm, count as such a drop of water. His is an "Orphic effect" with the effect that the lovers' *contrapasso* is suspended, if only for a moment, as he passes through hell on his way to Beatrice and to God.