More than twenty years ago, in his insightful essay “Cather’s Mortal Comedy,” D. H. Stewart analyzed Death Comes for the Archbishop as a truncated Divine Comedy structured around the seven virtues and their corresponding vices and crowned at the end by the “Beatific Vision” of Latour’s last thoughts. Although his analysis is forced in places, Stewart succeeds in making a case for Dante as a possible Cather “influence” and indicates references to him in her writing. In Cather’s essay “Escapism,” Dante is among the great men she wishes to rescue from the “iconoclasts and tomb-breakers” of this century, who dispose of him “because he was a cryptogram and did not at all mean to say what the greatest lines in the Italian language make him say” (25–26). Stewart also calls attention to the passage in My Ántonia where Jim Burden’s mentor Gaston Clerc reads “the discourse between Dante and his ‘sweet teacher’ Virgil . . . and the lines of the poet Statius, who spoke for Dante” in honoring the Aeneid as “mother to me and nurse to me in poetry” (261–62).¹

Other references to and borrowings from the Italian poet that Stewart does not mention establish Dante as a definite influence. For example, in the early story “A Death in the Desert” (1903), Katherine Gaylord describes her visit to Adriance Hilgarte in his Florentine palace where beneath a bust of Dante they clung together like Francesca and Paolo “on a spar in mid-ocean
after the shipwreck of everything” until Adriance’s wife returned home, “and in the book we read no more that night” (73). Later, for the story of Emil Bergson and Marie Shabata in her first Nebraska novel, O Pioneers! (1913), Cather drew on the same Dante pair to illustrate the tragic consequences of sexual passion as well as to evoke sympathy for the lovers. These examples suggest Cather’s appreciation of the human drama, although not necessarily the moral dimension, in Dante. But by 1925, three years after her conversion to Episcopalianism and early in the period of her spiritual quest novels—The Professor’s House (1925), My Mortal Enemy (1926), Death Comes for the Archbishop (1927), and Shadows on the Rock (1931)—Cather’s appreciation seems to have deepened. In a lecture that year at Bowdoin College she emphasized love rather than hate as the art-generating passion and distinguished “Dante’s Inferno and the whole Commedia [as] inverted evil, hatred of evil because of the love of good. The great characters in literature are born out of love,” she said, “often out of some beautiful experience of the writer” (In Person 156).

Like the Commedia, Cather’s novels of the postwar period reveal a personal need for a spiritually reflective and well-ordered universe. In The Professor’s House, for example, Godfrey St. Peter yearns for the time when for “every man and woman who crowded into the cathedrals on Easter Sunday [and] was a principal in the gorgeous drama with God, glittering angels on one side and the shadows of evil coming and going on the other, life was a rich thing” (68). In My Mortal Enemy, Myra Henshawe returns to the Catholic faith of her youth because it gives significance to her death. In Death Comes for the Archbishop, Father Latour sees the Redemption reflected in a twisted tree, in the color of the mountains, and in the rock of Ácoma. Shadows on the Rock presents the world view of the Commedia through religious women and children. To the devout nuns “this all-important earth [was] created by God for a great purpose, the sun which He made to light it by day, the moon which He made to light it by night,—and the stars, made to beautify the vault of heaven, like frescoes, and to be a clock and compass for man” (97). When Cécile and Jacques light candles before the castelike altar of Notre Dame de
la Victoire and watch the flames reveal its highlights, they imagine “that the Kingdom of Heaven looked exactly like this from the outside and was surrounded by such walls. . . . and it was comforting . . . to know just what Heaven looked like,—strong and unassailable, wherever it was set among the stars” (64–65).

A world tailored to Christian mythology and values is aesthetically appropriate for the pilgrimage that Dante dramatizes through the Inferno, the Purgatorio, and the Paradiso and Cather in Death Comes for the Archbishop and the second half of My Mortal Enemy. Inspired by the via crucis, the journey in each work represents a departure from worldliness, imitating Christ’s submission to the Father, an interior journey symbolized in an exterior one containing purgatorial elements that prepare the pilgrim for God (Turner and Turner 1–17, 248–51). Shadows on the Rock emphasizes these components through a place resembling Dante’s purgatorial setting rather than a journey, but when combined with the earlier novels, it completes a Catherian New World Divine Comedy. In considering the three novels I begin with My Mortal Enemy because it anticipates the more comprehensive journey from Hell to Paradise in Death Comes for the Archbishop. Shadows on the Rock will serve as a coda to the journey that is symbolized in Father Latour’s travels through the vast southwestern landscape.

The Commedia begins with Dante’s midlife confusion in the Dark Wood of Error, which Beatrice later defines as his turning from divine to human sciences, turning “his steps aside from the True Way, pursuing the false images of good” (Purgatorio 30.130–31). Having given up her God for worldly love in a marriage never blessed by the church or with children, Myra Henshawe has descended into darkness, “come on evil days” (Mortal Enemy 60). Her husband Oswald, like a soul in Hell, has the “tired face of one who has utterly lost hope” (61), and Myra’s complaint about the plight of humanity—“Ah-ha, I have one more piece of evidence, one more, against the hideous injustice God permits in this world!” (65)—reminds me of Dante’s similarly resentful Vanni Fucci, who makes obscene gestures toward God. The infernal extreme of Myra’s condition is evident when the
mother of the southern family tramping in the apartment overhead transforms into a tormenting serpent: "She has the wrinkled, white throat of an adder... and the hard eyes of one" (74).

The turning point in Myra's story is her initial visit to the headland above the Pacific, where she begins to desire forgiveness, "to see this place at dawn... a forgiving time" (73). Hers is the purgatorial struggle of detachment from worldly things (McCabe 46), the headland rising above the sea recalling Dante's mountain in the southern seas which sinners must climb before translation through the spheres of Paradise. With narrator Nellie Birdseye, Myra repeatedly returns to the headland and its solitary cedar, an echo of Dante's Tree of Life atop Purgatory, anticipating Father Latour's cruciform tree at the beginning of *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Dante's journey to the summit begins on the steps of Penance and ends with purification, once he confesses straying from spiritual to worldly pursuits and Matilda washes him and makes him sip the waters of Lethe to dissolve his guilt. The three steps through the gate where the Angel Guardian, representing the priest confessor, uses the keys of discernment and absolution to forgive sinners symbolize confession, contrition, and gratitude for God's mercy. This same sequence is present in Cather's novel. The first step in Myra's journey is recognition of sin, and in her consternation she laments to Oswald the very happening of their lives together: "Why must I die like this, alone with my mortal enemy?" (95). Her haunting question is essentially a lament of dependence on the occasion of her sinfulness rather than any condemnation of Oswald.2

In receiving the Eucharist, Myra—while perhaps not purged of her sins—is restored to grace. Consequently, she takes up her crucifix and makes her final journey to the headland, where she had equated dawn with the kind of purification Dante experiences on the summit of Purgatory. "When that first cold, bright streak comes over the water," Myra tells Nellie, "it's as if all our sins were pardoned; as if the sky leaned over the earth and kissed it and gave it absolution. You know how the great sinners always came home to die in some religious house, and the abbot or the abbess went out and received them with a kiss?" (73). One must hope that Myra survives until dawn and concludes her journey in
light, just as Dante ends his in light, light within the soul as well as striking the eyes. The result is peace (which flows from harmony with God) and understanding (which flows from peace):

as I grew worthier to see,
the more I looked, the more unchanging semblance
appeared to change with every change in me.

(Paradiso 33.112–14)

At the beginning of Death Comes for the Archbishop, Father Latour is lost in a maze of trails and conical hills. His story too involves a painful progress from worldliness to surrender to God's will. The pattern upon which the priest's pilgrimage is modeled is clarified in his contemplation of Christ's suffering at the cruciform tree: "The Passion of Jesus became for him the only reality; the need of his own body was but part of that conception" (20). Just as Dante is rescued by the Virgin's sending Virgil to guide him, Latour is led by the Virgin to Hidden Water—a symbol, like Beatrice, of Christian faith.

The way to God cannot be easy for these pilgrims. As Virgil points out to Dante, there is no easy way up the hill crowned with light: "I . . . will lead you forth through an eternal place. There you shall see the ancient spirits tried in endless pain, and hear their lamentations as each bemoans the second death of souls. Next you shall see upon a burning mountain souls in fire and yet content in fire" (Inferno 1.106–12). Latour, shut out of Santa Fe, must pursue a circuitous route to and from Durango—his own penitential journey—to be admitted to the city. "Salvation must grow out of understanding," notes John Ciardi. "Total understanding can follow only from total experience, and experience must be won by the laborious discipline of shaping one's absolute attention. The object is to achieve God, and Dante's God exists in no state of childlike innocence: He is total knowledge and only those who have truly experienced knowledge can begin to approach him" ("How to Read Dante" 343).

Dante's journey into darkness has its counterpart in Latour's visit to the "Stone Lips" cave, where earth's mysteries challenge the patriarchal order the priest represents. A similar challenge occurs at Ácoma, where he feels defeated and doubts the effi-
cacy of Calvary among the remote Indians. Less mysterious but equally challenging are Latour’s confrontations with the Seven Deadly Sins, which Dante presents on the cornices of Purgatory. While some of the sinners with whom Latour must deal possess a cluster of qualities that move them toward roundness of character, each is typified by a dominant fault: Lust is the boast of Padre Martínez, Gluttony is Fray Baltazar’s, Avarice is Padre Lucero’s, and Sloth is represented by his nephew Trinidad; Buck Scales is the type of Wrath; Manuel Chavez is Envy; and Doña Isabella represents a venial form of Pride. Although Hell and Purgatory are fused in Archbishop, Cather presents her lost sinners first: Scales, Martínez, Lucero (recall Lucero’s deathbed vision of Martínez in torment—“Eat your tail, Martínez, eat your tail!”; 171). We journey toward less serious failings and even feel affection for Isabella in her vanity, though the vanity she personifies has serious overtones in Latour’s own spiritual development.

Latour’s chief failings are selfishness and pride, and pride is the very sin Dante acknowledges in Purgatorio as his own chief failing. Evident in his tendency to control and order, which is challenged in the cave and at Ácoma, Latour’s vanity centers on cathedral building. In fact, spiritual progress can be traced in his changing attitudes toward this project. At first it is a “very keen worldly ambition . . . that such a building might be a continuation of himself and his purpose, a physical body full of his aspirations after he had passed from the scene” (Archbishop 175). Much later, when Vaillant fails to be enthusiastic about “fine building, when everything about [them] is so poor—and [they themselves] are so poor,” Latour insists that “the Cathedral is not for us. . . . We build for the future” (244). His concern is that such plans might involve worldliness. Finally, the cathedral functions as his sanctuary. When he enters Santa Fe for the last time and sees it leaping operatically out of the mountains and black pines, it has taken the place of Vaillant in his life: “He felt safe under its shadow; like a boat come back to harbour, lying under its own sea-wall” (273). This building comes to represent the church for which he had surrendered his will in giving Vaillant the opportunity to go to Colorado.

To apply Christ’s submission-to-the-Father journey to Latour’s,
we must understand the personal need he has for his friend Joseph’s companionship and enthusiasm. Vaillant’s “impassioned request” to serve the poor Americans in Arizona spoils Latour’s “cherished plan” to keep him in Santa Fe and is “a bitter personal disappointment.” The “sharp struggle” going on within Latour is climaxed as he breaks off a spray of flowering tamarisk “to punctuate and seal, as it were, his renunciation” (208–09). This begins his Gethsemane, anticipating the additional pain involved in offering Vaillant the opportunity to go to Colorado. During Vaillant’s preparation for departure we realize that the dependence is mutual, that Vaillant too suffers in leaving his old friend behind.

Finally, Cather clothes her priests in beatitude by making their lives remarkably similar in spirit and imagery to two celebrated saints in Paradiso. In the Sphere of the Sun, Thomas Aquinas tells Dante of “two Princes” sent by Providence to serve the fallen away Bride of Christ, the church (11.28–108). One of these, Francis of Assisi, is praised as “like the seraphim” in his love; Aquinas extols his marriage to Lady Poverty, despite the wrath of his father, a prosperous wool merchant, who opposed his son’s vocation. Aquinas enumerates Francis’s missionary journeys to Greece and Egypt and his projected pilgrimage to Spain, and praises his ability to attract followers—Bernard, Egidius, and Sylvester, who bound themselves with the humble cord of the Franciscan order. Humble birth and voluntary poverty translated into regal dignity and spiritual riches in Francis’s life, says Aquinas, who concludes with a reference to the saint’s receiving the stigmata during his vision of Christ in 1224.

Although Cather based her portrait of Father Joseph Vaillant on William J. Howlett’s biography of Colorado’s Bishop Machebeuf, her emphasis on details paralleling Dante’s Francis seems more than coincidental. Joseph’s father is a prosperous baker, a stern and jealous man who opposes his son’s missionary ambitions. Like Francis, Joseph voluntarily embraces poverty; in Colorado he sleeps on a straw mattress, eats on oilcloth-covered planks, and uses wornout shirts for towels. Although he begs and invests in property for the church, “for himself, Father Joseph was scarcely acquisitive to the point of decency. He owned nothing in
the world but his mule Contento. . . . [He] was like the saints of the early Church, literally without personal possessions” (227). Like Francis, Joseph inspires many followers. When the dying Father Revardy travels to Denver to assist at Vaillant’s funeral, Latour reflects on “the extraordinary personal devotion that Father Joseph had so often aroused and retained so long, in red men and yellow men and white” (289).

When Dante’s Aquinas concludes, Saint Bonaventure relates the story of Saint Dominic, a “cherubim” in his wisdom. Where Francis eschewed learning and praised the simple mind, Dominic founded an order of scholars to preach the pure faith. Married to Faith, as Francis was to Poverty, Dominic became a husbandman, laboring in the garden sown by Christ:

he soon became

a mighty doctor, and began to go
his rounds of that great vineyard where the vine,
if left untended, pales and cannot grow.

Dominic’s particular charge was

to smite

the stumps and undergrowths of heresy.
And where the thickets were least passable,
there his assault bore down most heavily.

And from him many rivulets sprang to birth
by which the Catholic orchard is so watered
that its little trees spring greener from the earth.

(Paradiso 12.34–111)

The parallels to Latour and his mission are obvious. Latour directs the construction of a lake in the rectory garden to water the lotus bulbs he imported from Rome. He transports fruitbearing trees and associates the Mexican church with the apparently defunct tamarisks and desert cottonwoods capable of sudden and surprising flowering. Vaillant, in his endearing simplicity, must verbalize what is obvious to Latour: The lost Catholics in Arizona, he says, “are like seeds, full of germination but with no moisture. A mere contact is enough to make them a living part
of the Church” (206). Vaillant looks for direction to Latour, the Cathedral builder, who guards the purity of the faith and contends with the clerical corruptions and heresy reflected in the ruined peach tree stumps in Fray Baltazar’s garden at Ácoma. As befits a husbandman, Latour retires to a garden: “He grew such fruit as was hardly to be found even in the old orchards of California. . . . He urged the new priests to plant fruit trees wherever they went, and to encourage the Mexicans to add fruit to their starchy diet” (267).

Not only these individual lives but their complementary qualities and activities parallel Dante’s portraits. Francis and Dominic, says Bonaventure, are each a wheel of the great chariot in which the church rides; they are the two champions sent by Christ to teach and give example. “To extol one or the other,” says Aquinas, “is to speak of both in that their works led to a single goal” (Paradiso 11.40–42).

Additional Dantean elements in Archbishop include Marian protection, Bernardine ministry, and emphasis on light. Both Latour and Vaillant are assisted by the Blessed Virgin throughout their struggles, as when Latour is directed to Hidden Water, discovers the slave Sada one December night, and after Vaillant departs (with a petition for Mary’s guidance—“Auspice, Maria!”) feels a solitude “of perpetual flowering. . . . filled by Her who was all the graces; Virgin-daughter, Virgin-mother, girl of the people and Queen of Heaven: le rêve suprême de la chair” (256). During his final years Latour is accompanied by his student Bernard, just as Saint Bernard accompanies Dante during the final stage of his journey to the Godhead. Like Dante, Latour is directed toward light, toward “the blue and gold, into the morning, into the morning!” (276). And he moves beyond time, which “ceased to count for him” (290).

Shadows on the Rock generally restricts the physical pilgrimage to the purgatorial place. Emphatically static, set firmly on the rock of Quebec, it nevertheless incorporates a variety of events in time and place into the account of a year in the lives of apothecary Euclide Auclair and his daughter Cécile. Quebec itself is a replica of Mount Purgatory crowned with the Earthly Paradise. The initial description of the town compares it to an artificial mountain
broken up into cliffs and ledges and hollows to accommodate groups of figures on their way to the manger” to pay deference to the Christ Child (5). Like the French Nativity scene Auclair recalls, Purgatory is a series of ledges and cliffs, and at its top, beyond the wall of fire and night’s shadows, Dante experiences the radiance of the Heavenly Pageant.

Quebec too is haloed with light, as a catalogue of Cather’s descriptions illustrates: “the red-gold autumn sunlight poured over the rock like a heavy southern wine” (33); when the “autumn fog was rolling in from the river. . . a glow of orange [appeared] overhead where the sun was struggling behind the thick weather. It was like walking in a dream . . . in a world of twilight and miracles” (61–62); on St. Nicholas’s Day “the sunlight on the glittering terraces of rock was almost too intense to be borne; one closed one’s eyes and seemed to swim in throbbing red” (98); “that second afterglow, which often happens in Quebec, had come on more glorious than the first. All the western sky . . . was now throbbing with fiery vapours, like rapids of clouds; and between, the sky shone with a blue to ravish the heart,—that limpid, celestial, holy blue that is only seen when the light is golden” (103–4); “when the sun came up over the Ile d’Orleans, the rock of Kebec stood gleaming above the river like an altar with many candles, or like a holy city in an old legend, shriven, sinless, washed in gold” (169). Cather’s use of light suggests reality beyond this earth, a world above the world, and her personification of the sun suggests the Deity: “the sun emerged . . . an angry ball, and all the snow-covered rock blazed in orange fire. The sun became a half-circle, then a mere red eyebrow, then dropped behind the forest, leaving the air clear blue” (70–71). “Throughout The Divine Comedy the sun . . . is a symbol for . . . Divine Illumination,” observes Ciardi. “In Purgatorio, for example, souls may climb only in the light of the sun. . . . Only in the light of God may one ascend that road, and that is the light to which the soul must win” (“How to Read Dante” 340–41).

Shadows on the Rock emphasizes the theme of purgation or expiation, the concept that we must suffer for a time before we enjoy the Beatific Vision that escapes Dante’s descriptive powers at the end of Paradiso, where “in a great flash of light” he discovers
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"just how our [human] image merges" in the triune rainbow representing God (33.137). Cather's novel reads like a compendium of pain (Stouck 149–61), indicating that human incompleteness is at once the circumstance of suffering and an indication of the need for the perfection that will come through it. Blinker's face is misshapen from an ulcerated jaw; Bishop Laval suffers varicose legs; Mother Juschereau is laid up with a sprained ankle; Madame Renaude has a harelip; hero Henri de Tonti has only one arm; Madame Pommier is severely lame; Antoine Frichette suffers a hernia after his brother-in-law fatally opens his leg from ankle to knee; during bad March weather "many people in the town were sick . . . and Cécile herself caught a cold and was feverish" (156); finally, Count Frontenac declines and dies. Such realities of this flawed world looking toward the next explain the novel's title: "The shades of the early martyrs and great missionaries drew close about [Cécile on All Souls' Day]. All the miracles . . . and the dreams . . . came out of the fog. . . . When one passed by the Jesuits', those solid walls seemed sentinelled by a glorious company of martyrs. . . . at the Ursulines', Marie de l'Incarnation overshadowed the living" (95).

The theme of suffering for sins is understood even by the children. When Jacques lets slip a nasty word, Cécile washes his mouth with soap: "Is it gone?" (53) he asks solemnly when she finishes. And after his loose-living mother spends a night with boatmen from Montreal, the little boy attempts reparation by making the Stations of the Cross. A major occasion is All Souls' Day, which the colonists spend praying to shorten the suffering time of their departed loved ones. Every year on the anniversary of his hanging, the Auclairs have a Mass said for unfortunate Bichet, who was executed for stealing two brass kettles from a Parisian coach house. Early in the novel Mother Juschereau tells of the appearance to Sister Catherine of the soul of the sinner Marie, who appealed for prayers and Masses to shorten her term in Purgatory. After the Masses were said, Marie returned, "a happy soul, more brilliant than the sun, which smiled and said: 'I thank you, my dear Catherine, I go now to paradise to sing the mercies of God for ever, and I shall not forget to pray for you'" (39).

Cather's story of Laval's successor involves several relevant
Dantean touches. Bishop Saint-Vallier is thoughtless, fickle, theatrically extravagant, and high-handed; his “face recalled the portraits of eccentric Florentine nobles” (121), the largest group in Hell. In the Epilogue, however, Saint-Vallier returns from France to Quebec humbled and broken by years of captivity: “Even his enemies were softened at seeing how the man was changed. In place of his former assurance he seemed to wear a leaden mantle of humility; he climbed heavily up the hill to the Cathedral as if he were treading down the mistakes of the past” (272). These details cleverly combine Dante’s punishment for damned hypocrites (who struggle under great cloaks, golden and fair on the outside but leaden and heavy within) and the punishment of the proud in Purgatory (who labor around the mountain doubled over beneath enormous slabs of rock that press down according to the degree of their sin). Saint Vallier himself recognizes the other-worldly aspects of the rock of Quebec, which somehow remains outside of time; in this place he will attempt to make amends for the excesses of his life. “You have done well to remain here where nothing changes,” he tells Auclair (277).

Other factors suggest this novel as a New World Purgatorio. The seasonal coming of the ships to Quebec recalls the coming of Dante’s Ship of Souls. To the Auclairs, the first ship appears as a gleam of white, dipping, rising, and growing “larger and larger, the canvas of sails set full, with the wind well behind them” (206). Dante sees the angel ship speeding toward him: “From each side of it came into view an unknown something—white; and from beneath it, bit by bit, another whiteness grew. We watched till the white objects at each side took shape as [the Angel Boatman’s] wings” (2.22–26). As in Dante, Cather’s figurative level extends to people as well as to place. The waif Jacques Gaux becomes the novel’s Christ figure. Auclair watches him making the Stations of the Cross, and old Bishop Laval kisses his feet as a “reminder of his Infant Saviour” (Shadows 75). North American martyr Noël Chabanel becomes the type of self-denial for the missionary Father Hector; and recluse Jeanne Le Ber, vowing to be as a sanctuary lamp, represents the light of faith for the people in general. In fact, Cather’s models of heroic virtue parallel Purgatory’s system of Whips, which remind the suffering of the virtues they
lacked through examples from the life of the Virgin, from Holy Scripture, and even from pagan lore. In *Shadows* the same virtues are celebrated: the nuns practice chastity; Bishop Laval confines himself to meager, unappetizing food; Mother Juschereau is ever diligent, her fingers constantly constructing artificial flowers for the churches as she oversees her nuns; Jeanne Le Ber gives away her fortune to the church; Noël Chabanel is a model of meekness, Sister Catherine of caritas, and little Jacques of humility.

These observations, I believe, are the tip of an iceberg. Dantian influences and similarities are a fruitful field because they tell us much about Cather’s art and mind and help us understand some of her characters. In the area of artistry, Dante considered himself an innovator of the “sweet new style” of natural expression, the principles of which are comparable to Cather’s ideas about unadorned style and lack of clutter in fiction (Ciardi, *Notes to Canto 24*). Also, Dante’s principal structural technique, like Cather’s, is the paralleling of episodes and characters, what critics call “back illumination” (Ciardi, “How to Read Dante” 349–50). Boatman Charon in *Inferno*, for example, stands in meaningful relationship to the Angel Boatman in *Purgatorio* much as the Hidden Water episode in *Archbishop* stands in meaningful relationship to Junipero Serra’s miracle of the Holy Family. In characterization, Dante leaned heavily on historical and local figures and used them freely, as did Cather throughout her novels, most notably in *My Ántonia*, *Archbishop*, and *Shadows*. The keys to understanding Father Latour and Myra Henshawe are to be found, I think, in Dante and his Catholic world. Both characters reflect Cather’s deep need for the kind of order that gives meaning to individual lives, and their spiritual quests are pilgrimages toward the integration of personal and communal visions. Cather’s attraction to a Dantian system was not a matter of orthodoxy so much as a desire for an integrating spiritual context. When in *Shadows on the Rock* Count Frontenac is dying, we are told that in spiritual matters he had always accepted the authority of the church and that he believed that his spirit would go before God to be judged: “He believed this, because he had been taught it in childhood, and because he knew there was something in himself and in other men that this world did not explain” (247). It is this “something”
that emerges in Cather’s fiction and Dante’s poem. It is what gives significance to their technical achievements and makes their accomplishments valuable.

NOTES

1. A significant echo of the meeting of Statius and Virgil occurs in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* when Vaillant, preparing to return to Denver after a visit to New Mexico, reminds Latour that they are growing old. Latour kneels and asks a blessing. “Blanchet,” he says, “you are a better man than I. You have been a great harvester of souls, without pride and without shame... If hereafter we have stars in our crowns, yours will be a constellation. Give me your blessing” (261–62).

2. Some have dismissed Myra’s journey as religiosity, citing 1 John 4: 20–21: “Anyone who says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, is a liar, since a man who does not love the brother that he can see cannot love God, whom he has never seen.” However, Matthew 9:37–39 is more appropriate for an evaluation of Myra’s situation: “Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me. Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.” See Bennett, whose position is seconded by Tanner.

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