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Having survived his harrowing trip through Hell and become purified in passing through Purgatory, the Pilgrim enters Heaven alongside his beloved Beatrice in Dante’s *Paradiso*. Enraptured by her beauty, the Pilgrim considers nothing else until she prompts him to note his surroundings,¹ at which point he discovers himself to be in the realm of the Moon, the first of ten heavenly spheres he will ascend through. This celestial body, with its many phases, has been known to represent inconstancy, and houses the soul of Piccarda Donati. The encounter with her will raise questions about apparent contradictions in her situation. The various subject matters of these, while confusing in themselves, only lead to a problem of even greater significance: the presence of paradox itself. Defined as a statement or situation “that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true,”² it may have been fitting amid the damned in *Inferno*, but in Paradise one would expect the words of blessed souls to produce answers, rather than more questions. The Poet uses this encounter with Piccarda to introduce the idea of paradox and its implications in Paradise, making the point that our understanding as human beings is limited, yet ultimately reaffirming that to question is the key to gaining knowledge.

Piccarda’s story and her words immediately elicit several questions about the justice and even logic of Heaven. She tells the Pilgrim—extremely briefly, though his previous knowledge of her

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story made it sufficient for him to recognize her—of how she was dragged away from the convent and forced to marry. Piccarda accepts responsibility for “neglecting” her religious vows, despite the indignation that the injustice against her may well cause in her audience. In fact, though Piccarda acknowledges her own fault, the Pilgrim implicitly expresses doubt that justice has been done in her situation, wondering, “‘If my will to good persists, / why should the violence of others cause / the measure of my merit to be less?’” While critic Richard Lansing explains that Piccarda demonstrated a “lack of faith in herself and in God” in acquiescing to her fate, it seems that Piccarda’s reward in Heaven has been limited through the sins of others, rather than her own. To add to the confusion, Piccarda identifies a companion of hers as Costanza, or Constance, a woman whose story parallels Piccarda’s own of being unwillingly removed from a convent and forced to marry. Piccarda asserts that “the veil upon her heart was never loosed.” This description of her “constancy,” along with the pun on her name, appears to contradict her final residence in the Moon with those who broke their vows. It seems that either Piccarda is lying or mistaken, or Costanza is unjustly placed.

After the spirits disappear, Beatrice reveals why the souls in this sphere are held accountable, and how it could be possible that both Costanza’s place is just and Piccarda’s words are correct. She accomplishes this by differentiating between the absolute and contingent wills. According to her, people who consent to wrongs out of weakness, or who under certain circumstances commit evil, fail in their contingent will but not in their absolute will. This is the case for all the souls in the Moon, and the words of Piccarda are correct because she “means the absolute / will when she speaks.

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3 Par. 3.106-07.
4 Par. 3.56.
5 Par. 4.19-21.
7 Par. 3.118.
8 Ibid., 3.117.
9 Ibid., 4.100-05.
The Pilgrim’s new understanding of this distinction allows him to “eliminate the argument / that would have troubled [him] again—and often.”

The revelation that these two major “paradoxes” result from a particular misperception offers comfort; not only because it resolves a potential flaw in the overall structure of Heaven, but also because the misunderstanding has been permanently eliminated and will clarify his future understanding. However, on another level it raises more problems, calling into question the Pilgrim’s ability to convey his experiences accurately.

In fact, evidence abounds explicitly and implicitly of Dante’s struggle to describe his surroundings. His claims to be unable to describe something—immediately prior to describing it—become almost comical in their frequency. However, readers may do well to pay closer attention to the Poet’s own admission of his limitations, especially in light of the notable mistakes that the Pilgrim makes in the first cantos of Paradiso. In canto 1, he stares uncomprehendingly at the changed appearance of the sun, causing Beatrice to address him for the first time in Heaven: “You make yourself / obtuse with false imagining; you can / not see what you would see if you dispelled it. / You are not on the earth as you believe.”

His “false imagining,” preventing him from even realizing he has entered Heaven, indicates that other inaccuracies in his perception may exist. John Freccero acknowledges this by discussing the “anti-images” in the sphere of the Moon, such as the appearance of the figures being compared to a “pearl … on a white forehead.”

Despite the simile’s clarity in referring to the faintness of the spirits, Freccero argues that the very simplicity of the language is striking, especially compared to the elaborate

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10 Ibid., 4.112-13.
11 Ibid., 4.89-90. This emphasis on understanding souls’ actions—and words themselves—by placing them in the correct context provides resolution to many of the situations that have in fact already troubled the Pilgrim often, especially in regards to souls like Francesca di Rimini, whose damnation may seem ambiguous on the surface.
12 Ibid., 1. 88-91.
14 Par. 3.15.
language in other parts of the poem. Angelo De Gennaro also points to the problems hidden in the abundance of straightforward, clear similes used. Though they seem benign and helpful at first, bringing the reader to the Pilgrim’s level of perception, we later realize that the Pilgrim’s level is not ideal; the illusion of clarity contrasts with the reality of his confusion. John Sinclair, too, notes an extensive failure in “spiritual perception” by mortals in and about the sphere of the Moon. In a reversal of the classic story of Narcissus, the Pilgrim believes the actual spirits he sees to be merely reflections. Moreover, the “calm and crystalline” appearance of Piccarda differs greatly from the goddess-like image her brother Forese in Purgatory has of her: “’My sister … / on high Olympus is in triumph; she / rejoices in her crown already.’” This recognition, that up to this point in The Comedy human perceptions and expectations of Heaven fall vastly short of its reality, emphasizes that the Pilgrim remains a mortal man with incomplete knowledge.

Fortunately, the Pilgrim’s journey largely involves solving problems in his understanding. Because of the entirely metaphorical and intellectual nature of Paradiso, Rocco Montano points out that the journey itself becomes a series of “intellectual experiences,” with a pattern of each sphere containing questions, answers, and revelations for the Pilgrim. His overwhelmed senses and inability to communicate his experiences show his limitations, yet the fact that he continues somehow to find a way to express himself seems to demonstrate an encouraging increase in intellectual capacity. Montano also notes that the Poet does not insert frequent warnings and explications as in the previous canticles, instead simply presenting the “consistent unfolding of the adventure of a soul.” This suggests a growing confidence both in the ability of the Pilgrim to convey truth and in the ability of

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15 Ibid., p 106.
17 Ibid., p 57; Par. 3.17-18
18 Pur. 24.13-16
20 Ibid.
the reader to make proper inferences. The encounter with Piccarda offers a prelude to this manner in which the rest of *Paradiso* will take place because of the particular way in which his questions are posed and answered in the first sphere. The two main subjects addressed in the conversation between the Pilgrim and Beatrice are the Moon’s dark spots and the will. With both, the Pilgrim makes an error on two levels, and the order in which Beatrice corrects him is significant. She first explains why he is mistaken in attributing the Moon’s appearance to “matter dense and rare.” However, she also chides him for the manner of his thinking itself, in purely physical terms based on human understanding. By ascribing the form and movement of the celestial bodies to “the glad nature of [their] source,” she encourages him to think in spiritual terms. In doing so, she challenges him to imagine beyond what seems possible in his mortal mind.

She employs a similar multi-level method of explanation in regards to the will. The Pilgrim must first gain clarity as to his logical fallacies—such as recognizing the difference between absolute and contingent will—before Beatrice can even begin to move on to the underlying matter. A fundamental error about the will lies in the Pilgrim’s question to Piccarda about whether she desires a place higher in Heaven, closer to God. This may seem like a harmless, reasonable question; however, according to F. Regina Psaki, the Pilgrim assumes that even in Heaven, “souls’ wills are, like mortal wills, unmoved by and indeed antagonistic to that divine will that places them in the first sphere.” Piccarda’s response emphatically rejects this idea:

21 *Par.* 2.60.
23 *Par.* 2.142.
24 Anderson, *Dante the Maker,* p. 266.
25 *Par.* 3.64-66.
“Brother, the power of love appeases our will so—we only long for what we have; we do not thirst for greater blessedness. Should we desire a higher sphere than ours, then our desires would be discordant with the will of Him who has assigned us here, but you’ll see no such discord in these spheres; ………………………………………
The essence of this blessed life consists in keeping to the boundaries of God’s will, ………………………………………
And in His will there is our peace…”27

Piccarda speaks of her will not as a means to her own desires and interests, but as an agent of the will of God, bound by love. Being in the sphere of the Moon fulfills her deepest desires and represents her total happiness, simply by reason of God placing her there. For the spirits in Heaven, not only does a lack of “discord” exist between their wills and God’s, but their wills actually become united with His. The crucial idea that “in His will there is our peace” reshapes the Pilgrim’s whole concept of the human will from something self-serving into an entirely different entity, a desire completely in harmony with the will of God.28 The changed idea of the will itself is so radical that even with perfected earthly logic, divine help is necessary to understand it. The final conversation in the first sphere relates to this, as Beatrice describes religious vows as relinquishing one’s own will to God while still on Earth, in order to address the Pilgrim’s unspoken query on the matter of whether a soul “through a righteous act, / … can repair a promise unfulfilled.”29 His slowness to grasp fully how the will can become something outside of the self shows the unperfected nature of his understanding.

Beatrice’s answers temporarily satisfy the Pilgrim’s curiosity before the pair ascend to the next sphere, but what he perceives throughout his journey will continue to be beyond his immediate

27 Par. 3.70-76, 79-80, 85.
29 Par. 5.13-14.
understanding. Famous examples include the appearance of the heretic Siger of Brabant alongside St. Thomas Aquinas in canto 10 and the pagan Ripheus in the eye of the Eagle in canto 20. As the Pilgrim approaches the Empyrean, his confusion is often attributed to his mortality. Simply put, the issue of the existence, or even appearance, of paradox itself in Heaven remains unresolved. Lansing claims that because Christianity is based on paradox, it only makes sense that Paradise is paradoxical.\textsuperscript{30} He highlights the “aura of mystery, of elegiac melancholy, of muted celebration and attenuated joy” in the first sphere; moreover, he notes that the paradox of Piccarda’s imperfection contrasts with that of human perfection in the Virgin Mary—the two women between whom all the saints of Heaven are ordered.\textsuperscript{31} Additionally, the Italian word for paradox, \textit{paradosso}, sounds far too similar to \textit{paradiso} to be a coincidence falling from the pen of such a master of language as Dante. That said, taking the narrow view of paradoxes as merely rhetorical strategies actually discredits the Poet and his message. Are we simply to accept that Heaven does not make sense? I think there is much more going on than this unsatisfactory conclusion—while Christianity does contain many mysteries, they are not meant to remain so forever.

The eventual resolution of even the most perplexing ideas introduced in \textit{Paradiso} indicates that we are ultimately meant to understand the truth. This understanding, however, does take time. Beatrice asserts to the Pilgrim while they are still in the first heaven that in reality it is an illusion, and “all those souls grace the Empyrean.”\textsuperscript{32} Heaven itself has been broken down so that the Pilgrim can comprehend it, until he possesses the intellectual and spiritual capacity to view the Empyrean in its true form of the Celestial Rose in canto 30. An even more powerful expression of confidence in the potential of the human intellect appears early on in \textit{Paradiso}, when the Pilgrim announces his desire for perfect understanding of God:

\textsuperscript{30} Lansing, “Piccarda and the Poetics of Paradox: A Reading of \textit{Paradiso} III,” p. 64.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Par.} 4.34.
Then should our longing be still more inflamed to see that Essence in which we discern how God and human nature were made one. What we hold here by faith, shall there be seen, not demonstrated but directly known, Even as the first truth that man believes.\textsuperscript{33}

The final lines of \textit{Paradiso} demonstrate that the fulfillment of this longing is possible, as the Pilgrim grasps the revelation of the Incarnation—the most fundamental mystery of Christianity—and falls back to Earth.\textsuperscript{34} The Poet indicates that Heaven, where souls achieve unity with God, who is and contains all Truth, will provide the answers to things which humans are incapable of understanding. What the continued appearance of paradox and confusion in \textit{Paradiso} reveal is not a paradoxical or incomprehensible God, but a state of incomplete perfection in the Pilgrim and all human beings. Until the summit of understanding is reached, the intellectual journey must continue.

The fact that the Poet equates perfect understanding with perfect holiness in \textit{The Comedy} further elevates the power he attributes to questioning and pursuing knowledge in the face of perplexity. Considering \textit{Paradiso} from this perspective presents two necessary conclusions. On one hand, we have no way to comprehend fully fundamental truths about existence and the universe while on Earth; therefore, \textit{The Comedy} warns against putting too much faith in one’s own abilities and mortal intellect. However, the Poet does not intend for his readers to resign themselves to never understanding anything about God or Heaven while on Earth. He levels no condemnation at the Pilgrim for desiring to know lofty truths. On the contrary, he demonstrates that the only way the Pilgrim achieves his final revelation is through the process of questioning and making mistakes. As Massimo Verdiccio points out, “[o]ur intellect is not appeased until our understanding is completely satisfied, until it does not acquire a truth outside of

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Par.} 2.40-45.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Par.} 140-45.
which there can be no other truth." Made as rational beings, our human nature compels us to question and seek truth. It would seem frankly irrational that Heaven, our highest purpose, would be contradictory. We as humans are not discouraged from seeking knowledge, especially fundamental truths about God. Rather, *The Comedy*, and *Paradiso* in particular, are a testament to what heights the human intellect *is* capable of reaching. Dante presents paradox so that the reader will learn not to accept it, but to reject their own confusion and boldly pursue Truth.

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A Novel Investigation Therapeutic for Head and Neck Cancer

Vincent Phan

Background – Head and Neck Cancer is one of the most potent cancers today, and treatment for it hasn’t improved over the last 2 decades. Head and Neck Squamous Cell Carcinoma (HNSCC) has a 5-year survival rate of 50%. This means that people may not even make it past 5 years after they put their cancer into remission. This is motivation for us to try to find better alternatives that can preserve life. We experimented with EC359, which is a pipeline drug that was made to treat mainly pancreatic cancer but can inhibit the group of Head and Neck Cancer. We also used the cancer cell lines HSC-3 (tongue cancer) and CAL-27 (salivary gland cancer) because they had the most metastatic potential against the body.

Methods – We did several different in-vitro tests with EC359 against the cancer cells. We would grow cancer cells in T-flasks until we had enough cells to start experiments with. We did Fold Growth and MTT assays to see the cytotoxicity of EC359 against the cancer cell lines. We followed that with Fluorescence Microscopy to see whether apoptosis or necrosis was occurring within the cells. We followed this with western blotting to try to understand which apoptotic pathway EC359 took. Then we finished with a Scratch Assay to see if EC359 had any effect on the metastatic capabilities of CAL-27 and HSC-3.

Conclusions – EC359 showed cytotoxicity in CAL-27 and HSC-3 at low Nano-molar range. EC359 showed the ability to suppress the viability of CAL-27 and HSC-3 cells and inhibited their proliferation. EC359 induced apoptosis in CAL-27 and HSC-3 cells by initiating the intrinsic apoptotic pathway. EC359 exhibited slight inhibition on the migration of CAL-27 but seemed ineffective against HSC-3 cells.
A Clinical and Genomic Investigation of Stress and Depression in Young Adults
Tiffany Y. Han¹, F. Mamdani², J.V. Patterson

Depression is a serious mental illness that is often associated with stress and suicide. It is a mood disorder that is regularly said to cause a loss of interest and a persistent and overwhelming feeling of constant sadness. Past findings have proposed multiple factors that may be related to depression. In this study, these proposed factors, specifically gene expression and environmental stress, were explored to determine their association with depression. This study expands on current knowledge of specific genes being associated with depression, as well as environmental and personal stressors that can alter gene expression and predict depression. We investigated the expression of the FK506 binding protein 5 (FKBP5) gene, which has been associated with depression, treatment response, and early childhood adversity. The participants were administered rating scales assessing levels of stress, childhood trauma, anxiety, hopelessness, and severity of depression in order to study their association with gene expression and diagnosis. Participants included 25 healthy controls and 27 subjects diagnosed with major depressive disorder; including 19 males and 33 females. Significantly higher scores were found for the MDD compared to the control group for the scales measuring depression, childhood trauma and adverse events, anxiety, and stress, and hopelessness. The correlation between FKBP5 and total Adverse Child Events (ACE) score approached significances (p=0.09) for the MDD group. There were no significant correlations between FKBP5 and the clinical scales in the control group. These findings indicate that adverse child events can be an important predictor of future depression.

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Walt Whitman Technical Analysis
Joe Scholz

Although Walt Whitman generally avoids employing consistent, metrical verse, he nevertheless writes “O Captain! My Captain!” in conventional accentual-syllabic meter. Markedly different from Whitman’s free-verse poetry, its traditional, accentual-syllabic style effects an air of formality, gravity, and solemnity. This disciplined meter also makes clear and gives weight to the poem’s prominent quadripartite conceit. In “O Captain! My Captain!,” Whitman creates a simple yet decidedly dramatic, emotionally charged ode to his beloved president, Abraham Lincoln, and to a resilient post-Civil War America. His utilization of repetition, metaphor, and consistent stanza structure emphasize the inescapable, heavy permanence of personal tragedy, even amid success and celebration.

The most prominent trope in “O Captain! My Captain!” is Whitman’s quadripartite conceit. Throughout the poem, he depicts himself as a sailor and President Abraham Lincoln as the “Captain” of the triumphant ship, the United States of America, which has emerged victorious from the bitter storms of domestic strife: “O Captain! My Captain! our fearful trip is done, / The ship has weathered every rack.”¹ Through using this conceit, Whitman effectively conveys what he believes to be the grave injustice – on both the cosmic and personal level – committed against President Lincoln, who ‘helmed’ the nation through its darkest days. In one of his many proclamations directed towards the late President, Whitman commands: “Rise up – for you the flag is flung – for you the bugle trills.”² His prominent parenthesis in this command also indicate the central importance of Lincoln’s role in the Union victory, which he wishes his “Captain” could fully experience and celebrate.³ His anaphoric and repetitive “For you” continues this theme of gratefulness and remorse.⁴

The repetitive placement of the line “O Captain! my Captain!” at the beginning of the poem’s first and second stanzas constitutes a

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¹ Walt Whitman, "Oh Captain! My Captain!" 1, 2
² Ibid, 10
³ Ibid, 9
⁴ Ibid, 8-11
centrally important aspect of its structure. The tone of this plaintive address, which precedes Whitman’s procelees in both stanzas, changes drastically from the first stanza to the second, despite its seemingly simple repetitiveness. This change is effected by the powerful repetitive phrase with which each stanza ends: “Fallen cold and dead.” Although Whitman’s address initially reflects an exclamatory feeling of relief and celebration, Whitman reveals by the end of the first stanza that his “Captain” has “Fallen Cold and dead.” Thus, in the following stanza, the shout which once seemed joyful now seems sad, futile, and desperate. This purposeful repetition demonstrates, firstly, the internal struggle of Whitman qua narrator to process the loss of his beloved Captain; indeed, the second stanza ends with his declaration of disbelief, stating that Lincoln’s death is merely “some dream.” Yet, in the final stanza, the sailor paces by his dead captain, who he acknowledges as dead and with “no pulse nor will.” Whitman has journeyed from mere observation to anguished denial. In the final stanza, he finally – as sailor, narrator, and American – accepts the death of his beloved captain.

More broadly, Whitman’s use of repetition and refrain are well suited to the patriotic nature of his poem. His repeated use of apostrophe in addressing an abstract and idealized yet absent President Lincoln continues a long tradition of abstract address in patriotic poetry.

Whitman’s accentual-syllabic style in “O Captain! My Captain!” serves two primary functions. It works with the common-tongue, accessible vocabulary of the poem to create its conversational foundation. In this conversation, Whitman, speaking as a sailor, addresses first his “Captain” and then, qua narrator, the reader. Whitman creates three intersecting dialogues: himself as poet with himself as sailor, himself as sailor with his captain, and himself as poet with his readers. The poem’s

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5 Ibid, 1, 9
6 Ibid, 8, 16, 24
7 Ibid, 7, 8
8 Ibid, 15
9 Ibid, 18
10 Ibid, 1
iambic feet evince Whitman’s serious tone but also the dialogic nature of his proclamation; in classically Whitmanesque fashion, he synthesizes the personal, universal, and patriotic aspects of his experience of loss into a proclamation that invites conversation. His iambic meter also facilitates clear, powerful moments of passion, emphasized through repeated anapestic substitutions. He features two anapestic substitutions in the first line of the first and second stanza, respectively, each of these emphasizing Whitman’s direct command to his Captain: “O Captain! my Captain! rise up.” In the first line of the third and final stanza, however, the anapestic substitution is centrally placed, emphasizing both the sober nature of the sentiment expressed and, also, the significance and centrality of Whitman’s poetic movement towards acceptance: “My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still.” Whitman evokes an elegy with his mourning-poem’s use of iambic meter, although he eschews other conventions of more formal elegiac poetry.

Although this poem may seem to be a stark temperamental departure from Whitman’s less structured, ‘earthier’ American Civil War poetry in *Drum Taps*, his formal technique indicates, rather, a different authorial intent that is nevertheless entirely authentic. Whitman’s lament of Lincoln’s death is infused with his palpable sense of relief that the war is won and the union safe: “The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done.” His synecdoche – “the swaying mass, their eager faces turning” – evokes the unity for which he long had wished. Yet, throughout “O Captain! My Captain!” Whitman juxtaposes the celebratory with the funereal, most prominently and movingly in his phrase “bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths,” which takes on a new tone considering the poem’s final stanza. Indeed, “O Captain! My Captain!” emphasizes, as Whitman so often has, the harsh reality of necessary sacrifice and of death in service of a just cause. It is not a departure from his war poetry but, rather, a tragic yet hopeful (albeit propaganda-esque) culmination of his themes and motifs, and his technique makes this significance evident.

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11 Ibid, 9
12 Ibid, 24
13 Ibid, 27
14 Ibid, 19
Astronomers believe that virtually all large galaxies revolve around supermassive black holes. Researchers have confirmed predictions that galaxies across the universe bound by a cosmic web of dark matter that has until recently has remained unobservable.

an undetermined fraction of the universe
is populated by
spiders of various sizes

webs are filaments of silk
and dark matter and capillaries
and occupy a lack or space

a lack bridges tree
branches and organs and space
touches every galaxy

the largest spiders are made up
of massive cells and the cells of atoms’
black hole nuclei and electron stars

for spiders whose webs are flight
paths electrons are our bustling bodies
revolving around nucleonic cities
The Loch Phrēn
John Duong

In the mists deep in the mind,
I saw, surely I did see, the
Vague outline of a horned,
Winged, infinitely-legged
Beast.
It slithered as it
Rampaged and soared,
Always in the blurred space beyond
Apprehension,
Always fading into fog
The moment I grasp.

Yet each time I pick up my pen,
Obscurity condenses into ink, and
I seem to see the grayed body
Appear a little nearer, as though
While vacillating in its
Indistinct haunts, it
Desires substance just
As I do.
In Search of David
Genevieve Frank

Rough-hewn, half-wrought
A block of halted thought
Each time the chisel taken up to follow a song
Heard as if from round the corner
That stops.
Bodiless.
And makes short work of the best intentions.

Just form!
Wake up from your marble slab,
Stop this series of dreams and prove
That muse is not myth,
Mind not mere flash,
And sketch not tethered to the incomplete.

This hallway,
Flanked by witnesses of impotence,
Salutes the interminable “again,”
Making memorial to the chains of inspiration.
Monemvasia, 1998
Genevieve Frank

Solid stones, who knows how high,
Support feet, legs, a coat blown back by wind.

There is no background, just a mist or fog,
Perhaps truly there, or maybe just the light.

The wall looks shallow; it must border
On something uncaptured, so now unreal.

Her face upturned, she looks for birds,
Or feels the mist on her skin, or simply poses.

Two small blue dots mark the passing of times:
The picture has been taken, and viewed, and stored.

The image, faded to begin, follows the law of entropy.
Her memory, or that of the person who caught her here,

Must also disintegrate, and leave more fog
To fill with mountains, sea, a stretching plain.
Iambs Made by Kusama’s Pumpkins
Vincent Christianson

Japan’s Kusama
filled a mirror room
with pumpkins: echoes
yellow, glowing, black
imagine space as
if the plump balloons
and beads of autumn’s
dew have gathered, made
an ocean. Pumpkins
marry, bloom, reverse—
they kiss an endless
rhythm. Light unfurls
the lilt of waves in
lines of rolling peaks
and pits—a raw i-
ambic. Fading lines
are verse. Designed, the
lines concede their end
to wild horizon.
Always gazing outward towards the street
rooted to the same spot without a way
to escape from where the walls meet,
I’m caught behind my small square of today,
as if the panes of glass have become my
prison wall. Here I stand: the watcher.
The woman from next door sighs as she walks by;
the father laughs while he holds his daughter;
the old lady wanders past in her robe
bound by routine: a self-made lunatic;
and now, just beginning to get sober,
I see my mind has played a trick.
There is no prison here except the mind
and no prisoner behind glass walls, just me—
I am the watcher waiting to be free.
An Encounter
Declan Hamilton

The entrance to the house was dark as night and open for those who would dare to pass. There, standing erect, keeping watch on the world, a single guard, with his back to the void. He stood alone, between the void and I. I stood alone in the light of the day. His robes flowed in patterns of wind as I have seen water do when struck by a breeze but the wind could not break the stillness of the void. And I wondered what would happen if I passed through, from the light of today to the darkness behind. As the congregation left, he stood there. And watched, then he shut the doors to the void. There I remained in the Sun: dark inside.
Poetic Vision and the Invisible Wavelengths of the Soul in *All the Light We Cannot See*
Rose Safranek

Anthony Doerr’s exquisite novel *All the Light We Cannot See* celebrates the vastness of life, urging the reader that there are more things in heaven and earth than man can immediately perceive. Set in Europe during World War II, the story explores the intersection of the visible and the invisible, of the physical and the spiritual, and maps field lines between its characters as they interact with both modes of existence. Breathtaking and heartbreaking discoveries draw characters and reader alike through a stunning experience of seeing that courses from the receptivity of the eye to the echoes of the soul.

In the orphanage Werner Pfennig wakes every morning and “begins interrogating the world” with outdoor explorations, experimental crafting, and creative questions that range from everyday, banal habits to the expanses of space, to human perception, and to death.¹ When he discovers and fixes up a rudimentary radio, he and his sister Jutta find company in their investigations of the world’s wondrous “whys” and “hows”: the Frenchman’s broadcasts reveal to the children hidden physical phenomena. He emphasizes the marvelous truth that, “mathematically, all of light is invisible.”² Not only is light invisible, it is also somehow eternal, shapeshifting, for the coal that “is heating your home tonight” was once sunlight “one hundred million years” ago.³ Such a humble, joyous posture before the universe transfigures Werner and his surroundings, opening up to him something vital, as though he had stumbled upon an “ancient sea spilling the streets, the air streaming with possibility.”⁴ Jutta also revels in these natural curiosities. When Werner informs her that certain metal objects can pick up radio signals, Jutta delights in the prospect that her old German neighbor may be able to hear broadcasts in her tooth

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¹ Anthony Doerr, *All the Light We Cannot See*, 24-25
² Ibid, 53
³ Ibid, 48
⁴ Ibid, 49
filings: “Songs in your teeth?... I like to think about that.” Such a potential lends a certain, secret dignity to teeth, that they might conduct music; just as the Frenchman’s genealogy of coal from sunbeams casts a hidden, historic splendor upon the Pfennigs’ dim, coal mining community.

When the Nazis recruit Werner for a youth training program, the discipline and sense of duty that the program enforces enthralled the boy: “never has Werner felt part of something so single-minded. Never has he felt such a hunger to belong.” Werner becomes engrossed in scientific work, entranced by the ability to harness the many invisible wavelengths streaming past him. However, as he increasingly patterns his actions in accord with the program’s ideals, he feels as though “he is betraying something.” He feels shame most when with his friend Frederick. Werner writes his sister, “You would like Frederick I think. He sees what other people don’t.” Frederick’s love for wildfowl reminds Werner of Jutta’s vision of the world, an all-embracing, primal vision from which Werner now feels sadly removed: “Werner tries to see what Frederick sees: a time before photography, before binoculars... brimming with the unknown...not so much full of birds as full of evanescence, of blue-winged, trumpeting mysteries.” Frederick’s unsalaried, uncontrolling reverence for creation calls to the reader’s mind G. K. Chesterton’s paean to poetic vision: “Poetry is sane because it floats easily in an infinite sea...The poet only desires exaltation and expansion, a world to stretch himself in. The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens.” Werner realizes, conflicted, that such a free receptivity contrasts sharply with his teachers’ intellect-crushing ideology: “Minds are always drifting toward ambiguity, toward questions, when what you really need is certainty. Purpose. Clarity. Do not trust your minds.” Although Frederick is preoccupied primarily with the natural world, it is

5 Ibid, 67
6 Ibid, 139
7 Ibid, 250
8 Ibid, 163
9 Ibid, 221
11 Doerr, 264
precisely this condemned world of the empirically unverifiable to which Frederick’s public actions attest. With his head in the clouds, he is attuned to some invisible, moral wavelength that his superiors and fellow trainees, especially Werner, choose to ignore. He evinces this attention when he momentously refuses to take part in the torture of a prisoner.

Hundreds of miles away, a blind French girl attempts, unsuccessfully, to convince herself that a spiritual reality does not exist: “maybe curses aren’t real, maybe her father is right: Earth is all magma and continental crust and ocean. Gravity and time. Stones are just stones and rain is just rain and misfortune is just bad luck.” But Marie-Laure cannot shake an awareness of some invisible energy at work. Her blindness causes her to experience the world around her not only with a heightened sense of hearing but also with the vivid visual palette stored up in her imagination. She “has no memories of her mother but imagines her as white, a soundless brilliance,” whereas her father “radiates a thousand colors.” Her father diffuses a rich sensory array, but only her mother combines the entirety of visible wavelengths to appear to Marie’s imagination as white light, as if the soul possesses a coloration wholly separate from that of physical bodies. The imperceptible presence of her mother transcends not only the zones of the color wheel but also the auditory sense: she is “soundless brilliance.”

Upon meeting her great-uncle Etienne, Marie learns that he had gone mad years before and “saw things…things that were not there,” i.e. not sensibly present. Etienne’s insanity arose after the death of his brother Henri, Marie’s grandfather; since then Etienne has become agoraphobic. Marie asks him if he misses the world, to which Etienne responds that his books and his radio collection offer sufficient access to the world. However, Marie recognizes that he is not content, but rather terrified, for the radios cannot fulfill Etienne’s purposes. He repeatedly broadcasts from the giant radio transmitter in his attic the recordings that he and his brother had made together, in the hope that these wavelengths will

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12 Ibid, 55
13 Ibid, 45
14 Ibid, 111
15 Ibid, 157
reach Henri; but tragically, frightfully, his brother has never “talked back.”

Etienne’s distress lies in the failure of physical wavelengths to harmonize predictably with spiritual ones, the inability of his constant efforts to juxtapose the physical and the spiritual worlds like two marching bands commingling on the same parade ground. Marie relays Etienne’s bitter disenchantment to Madame Manec: “‘Uncle Etienne says heaven is like a blanket babies cling to. He says people have flown airplanes ten kilometers above the earth and found no kingdoms there. No gates, no angels...Don’t you ever get tired of believing, Madame? Don’t you ever want proof?’” And Madame responds in words that remain with Marie long after their speaker’s death: “‘You must never stop believing. That’s the most important thing.’”

Like Etienne, Werner also had come to find the potential power of physical wavelengths alluring; he refers to Hertz as the man “who made the invisible visible.” But the power of scientific, calculated control that years among the Nazis have impressed upon him blinds him to the possibility that physical wavelengths are not the only invisible energies affecting mankind. “Werner despairs of any safety and rationality...[he] feels he is gazing down into the circuitry of an enormous radio, each soldier down there an electron flowing single file down his own electrical path, with no more say in the matter than an electron has.”

He loses faith in those philosophic and poetic efforts of man, most important and most free because most useless:

It strikes Werner just then as wondrously futile to build splendid buildings, to make music, to sing songs, to print huge books full of colorful birds in the face of the seismic, engulfing indifference of the world—what pretensions humans have! Why bother to make music when the silence and wind are so much larger? Why light lamps

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16 Ibid, 161
17 Ibid, 292
18 Ibid, 68
19 Ibid, 343, 355
when the darkness will inevitably snuff them?.... Opera houses! Cities on the moon! Ridiculous.\textsuperscript{20}

And yet when Werner’s own miscalculation leads his company to murder a young girl, some force beyond science forever urges her dead visage into his mind, a face that becomes more real than his physical surroundings. Confined within the dark basement of the Hotel of Bees, Werner “can see nothing, but he can see her... and in the center of her forehead he can see a hole blacker than the blackness around him.”\textsuperscript{21} Remarkably, after the child’s haunting murder, Werner had immediately called to mind the Frenchman’s declaration that “all of light is invisible.”\textsuperscript{22} This scientific truth pursues Werner, demanding his attention, exhorting him to reorient himself along the field lines of invisible energy that had led Frederick to stand up against his peers in mercy and decency. In the midst of his fear and despair, Werner suddenly hears again, after years of silence, the old, familiar Frenchman’s broadcast that had been for him “a loom on which to spin his dreams,” this time transmitted from Etienne’s attic by Marie herself.\textsuperscript{23} Sitting in the back of the German truck, Werner’s only light “comes from the amber filament inside [his] signal meter,” the machine enabling his destructive calculations; but the broadcast’s advent replaces that hostile glow, its peaceful, musical chords “each a candle leading deeper into the forest,” reminding him of a time when “the cords of his soul” were “not yet severed.”\textsuperscript{24}

The broadcast jolts the enslaved Werner from the Nazi circuitry, and he chooses to forgo his mission in order to protect the French broadcaster. When he frees Marie from the preying German sergeant, Werner finally feels as though he has woken up and lived his life, something he hasn’t done “in years.”\textsuperscript{25} With Marie he feels again the poetic wonder that he and his sister had shared years before, that he had admired in Frederick. Werner becomes

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 364-365
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 449-450
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 369
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid, 389
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 406-407
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 469
\end{itemize}
attuned to some innate reality that broods beneath the sensible landscape, a sort of soul-scape that Marie herself had discerned as “a rawer and older world, where surface planes disintegrate.”

Werner describes it as “a great, sad,” swarming static “that seems to have been here long before humans figured out how to hear it.” Poet Richard Wilbur, who also experienced Europe during World War II, expressed a similar idea: beneath the sensible, factual, demonstrable reality there dwells a deeper “cognate splendor” from which “all things came,” which is ever-present “there before us; there before we look / Or fail to look; there to be seen or not / By us.”

Living well into old age, Marie continues to wonder at the simultaneity of invisible wavelengths, both physical and spiritual: “is it so hard to believe that souls might also travel those paths?... That great shuttles of souls might fly about, faded but audible if you listen closely enough?...the air a library and the record of every life lived, every sentence spoken, every word transmitted still reverberating within it.”

The reader cannot leave the novel without feeling newly attuned to the world, blessed with a fresh pair of soul-lenses and a spiritual antenna. Doerr himself raises up a gossamer of creative and beautiful metaphors that weave uncommon field lines between the seen and the unseen, a web of delight upon the threshold between the two, “seeking the spheres to connect them.”

At the close of the book, the great hope and prayer goes up, that such loving attention to the world’s mysteries may afford among the suds of this life some glimpse not only of rainbows, but also of angel feathers.

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26 Ibid, 390
27 Ibid, 334
28 Richard Wilbur, "Lying," 27-29
29 Doerr, 529
30 Walt Whitman, "A Noiseless Patient Spider," 8
31 Richard Wilbur, "A Plain Song for Comadre"
Of all the memories from his early life that Augustine recounts in his *Confessions*, the narrative of his friend’s death in Book 4 is perhaps the most striking, if not the most intriguing. As he recalls the immense pain of losing a beloved friend, Augustine conveys the intense sorrow that flooded his soul at the time, nearly plunging it into despair. Yet in the midst of these overtures of grief, tempting the compassionate reader to sympathize with Augustine, a crucial question emerges: why does Augustine not call his dear friend by name? Given the apparent depth of their friendship and the extreme anguish after its loss, it seems odd that Augustine would leave such a dear companion nameless, and given the intricacy of the rest of the work, one can hardly suppose that such an omission is merely accidental. On the contrary, the subtle yet deliberate anonymity of the friend indicates the way in which Augustine’s deep friendship and subsequent grief at its loss departs from the traditional model of true friendship to which he once believed it had adhered, revealing instead an insidious corruption at its roots. As indicated both by his controlling behavior and the obsessive nature of his grief, Augustine’s friendship with the anonymous friend ultimately stemmed from a disordered love: his affection was no longer ordered towards the person himself but instead towards an ultimately non-existent entity that he tried to shape, thus depersonalizing the friend and rendering him nameless.

“You took him from this life after barely a year’s friendship, a friendship sweeter to me than any sweetness I had known in all my life.”

Although their friendship lasted only a short time, Augustine’s violent reaction to his anonymous friend’s death speaks of a much deeper unity than such a brief acquaintance would usually grant. As he describes his grief in language that borders on theatrical, Augustine paints the poignant picture of a friendship as steadfast as might be found in the great works of tragedy. He compares his friend and himself to Orestes and

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Pylades, friends “who wanted to die for one another or, failing that, to die together, because for either to live without the other would have been worse than death.”

Pairing this reference with the common trope of a dear friend being “half one’s own soul,” Augustine portrays his relationship—at least as he then saw it—as a profound bond between two persons, the loss of which could only be met with an even more profound grief to match it. This understanding of friendship sets up the following equation: the greater the love, the greater the sorrow and utter hatred of death at its loss, the strength of these respective passions being directly proportionate to each other.

Yet while his deep sorrow seems to point towards a relationship with depth to match, when recounting the situation after much reflection and his own experience of conversion, Augustine confesses that their “union fell short of true friendship.” Rather than supporting each other through true charity on the path to virtue, Augustine instead led his friend “intellectually astray,” bringing him as well to reject the faith and join the ranks of the Manichees. As the toxicity of their friendship grows evident, Augustine also realizes the unhealthy nature of his own grief: “I wept very bitterly and found repose in the bitterness. Miserable as I was, I held even this miserable life dearer than my friend.”

His grief becomes such that it is no longer the fitting response to such a situation, turning instead to an exaggerated form of despair. His tears signify neither a “hope” that his friend would come back to life nor “a plea that he should,” but rather reflect only a soul completely “beset with misery and bereft of [his] joy.”

While it might be tempting to conclude that the faults within Augustine’s friendship stem from loving a human being too much or in a way that befits only God, James Wetzel warns readers against such a tidy yet ultimately “disastrous” conclusion.

2 Augustine, 4.6.11.
3 Ibid, 4.6.11.
4 Ibid, 4.4.7.
5 Ibid, 4.4.7.
6 Ibid, 4.6.11.
7 Ibid, 4.4.9.
8 James Wetzel, “Book Four: The Trappings of Woe and Confession of Grief,” in A Reader’s Companion to Augustine’s Confessions, ed. Kim Paffenroth and
he reflects upon the nature of Augustine’s grief, he argues that Augustine fell into error not because he loved his friend too much or God too little but rather because “he lost touch with the man he was loving and so had no way to take in the magnitude of his loss.” In other words, Augustine failed to love his friend in a way proper to a friend—as one who, while bonded by love and shared interests, must still be recognized as a unique rational and free being who is ultimately other than oneself. Rather than respecting this incommensurable otherness, Augustine regarded his friend as a part of his own soul: “I felt that my soul and his had been but one soul in two bodies.” Seeing his friend as an extension of himself, Augustine, at times even forcibly, tries to mold him according to his own form, making him into a complete mirror of himself, a “fiction” of his own “interior poverty.” And so Augustine convinces his friend to become a Manichee too, having “lured him from the true faith” just as he himself had been lured. When the friend at last rebukes his interference, chastising the disdain with which Augustine treats his emergency baptism, Augustine is shocked at his “amazing, new-found independence,” but reassures himself that once in normal health “he would be able to do what he liked with him” yet again. Given this pattern of unhealthy influence and even downright manipulation, it is fitting that Augustine does not give this friend a name when retelling this narrative; for what Augustine truly loved and mourned was not the person of the friend himself but the non-existent image of a person whom he tried to befriend.

To call someone by name is to acknowledge their personhood, recognizing the interior essence of another that is utterly separate and irreducible to oneself. Such an act of transcendence utterly contradicted Augustine’s formerly egoistic approach to friendship, making it so that in hindsight he could genuinely call him by no other name than “my friend.” When he later confesses this,

9 Wetzel, 69.
10 Augustine, 4.6.11.
11 Wetzel, 69.
12 Augustine, 4.4.7.
13 Augustine, 4.4.8.
Augustine admits guilt not over loving a human being too much but over not loving a human being as a human being should be loved, that is, loving him “in God.”

In thus failing to love his friend in his Creator, Augustine fails to love his friend as person wondrously created, but instead he loves a creature he finds compatible, or attempts to make compatible, with his own sinful nature: a creature he seeks to create for himself. This obsessive attachment no longer orders itself towards a person, as does true friendship, but instead craves only the affirmation of one’s own passions. Not being loved in the manner worthy of a person, the anonymous friend must live and die within the text in a manner similarly unworthy of a true friend, coming and going without even being called by his own name.

14 Wetzel, 69.
Holy Suds! The Ordinary Visions
in Wilbur’s “A Plain Song for Comadre”
Rose Safranek

When a person considers poetry, he does not ordinarily call to mind that which is, in fact, most ordinary--say, a housefly’s annoying buzz. But, thankfully, poet Richard Wilbur is able to see in the ordinary and even banal things of this world a glimpse of the holy. In his “A Plain Song for Comadre,” Wilbur proposes that skeptic, saint, and cleaning woman alike have access to and communion with the holy, the divine, simply by attending with love to the everyday duties and experiences that lie before them.

Wilbur begins with a paradox, as most good, old, thought-provoking pieces must: “Though the unseen may vanish, though insight fails, / And doubter and downcast saint / Join in the same complaint.” How is it that something already unseen can vanish? Both he who aspires to know the divine (saint) and he who cannot see it (doubter) expect that the supernatural must somehow present itself, if it exists, somewhere along their abstract queries and contemplations. When such a long-expected, unseen presence somehow vanishes, so then does any interior inspiration or faith, and the gap between believer and unbeliever narrows. But these first three lines constitute a subordinate clause: they are introduced by “though,” and call for an inevitable turn in the trajectory of the thought. In fact, the statement ends with a rhetorical question: “What holy things were ever frightened off / By a fly’s buzz, or itches, or a cough?” The near vulgarity of these three, everyday annoyances lightly ridicules the high, philosophic despair of the preceding subordinate clause, and this bathos is seen even phonetically: the long, drawn-out diptongh “-ai” with which the first three lines end is discontinued, replaced by the short, lighter “-off” sound. But the “ai” returns again in line 6, as if to assure doubter and saint that their complaint will somehow be answered: “What holy things were ever frightened off / By a fly’s buzz, or itches, or a cough? / Harder than nails // They are, more

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1 Richard Wilbur, "A Plain Song for Comadre," 1-3
2 Ibid, 4-5
warmly constant than the sun” (my italics).³ The speaker assures that truly holy things will not vanish, vulnerable to the intuitor’s distraction. The idiom “harder than nails,” already a metaphor that conventionally refers to a person, is stretched to refer to the seemingly intangible, indefinite “holy things.” The idiom declares the toughness of holy things that is not an aggressive but rather a comforting presence, “more warmly constant than the sun.”

The second stanza praises the power of the sun, “at whose continual sign / The dimly prompted vine / Upbraids itself to a green excellence.”⁴ Wilbur crafts a clever and beautiful pun in “upbraids.” At the sun’s ritual prompting, the vine both rebukes itself to excellence and braids itself upward in winding tendrils toward the sun; thus the vine rights itself, becoming what it is meant to be. Two more rhetorical questions follow:

What evening, when the slow and forced expense
Of sweat is done,

Does not the dark come flooding the straight furrow
Or filling the well-made bowl?
What night will not the whole
Sky with its clear studs and steady spheres
Turn on a sound chimney?⁵

In contrast with the preceding lines, now it is not sunlight but rather darkness that makes fruitful the furrow, the bowl, and the chimney. Critic William Tate regards the darkness as an image of entropy, of the postlapsarian curse of sin that works to undo human labor.⁶ On the other hand, Donald Hill sees the coming of dark and the turning of the evening sky as, in fact, blessings upon the “[g]ood work and things well made during the day.”⁷ That which

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³ Ibid, 4-7
⁴ Ibid, 9-10
⁵ Ibid, 11-18
⁶ William Tate, Tate, William (Presenter) & Covenant College. “Convocation: Labor of Love: A Plain Song for Comadre.” SoundCloud (28 August 2014), 29:15
is normally seen as fearsome and evil counterintuitively responds to, orders and completes the human labor of the farmer, the potter, and the mason. The furrow and bowl, made “straight” and “well,” are disposed to the dependable blessing of the night and by it become that which they are meant to be, i.e., filled. Furthermore, the cold night sky turns on the soundly-constructed chimney; that is, the chimney becomes for the firmament what it is for hearth and home: a sort of reference point and center of rotation. At the same time, the ambiguous verbal phrase “turns on” could present the chimney as a sort of light switch that the night sky activates, enlivens, makes fruitful. If the dependable cycle of day and night is constant blessing to vine, furrow, bowl, and chimney, how much more so are holy things, that are even “more warmly constant than the sun”?

The turning of the spheres is followed by an abrupt turning point in the poem, a sort of response to or specific instantiation of the three prior questions:

It is seventeen years
Come tomorrow
That Bruna Sandoval has kept the church
Of San Ysidro, sweeping
And scrubbing the aisles, keeping
The candlesticks and the plaster faces bright
And seen no visions but the thing done right
From the clay porch

To the white altar. For love and in all weathers
This is what she has done.
Sometimes the early sun
Shines as she flings the scrubwater out, with a crash
Of grimy rainbows, and the stained suds flash
Like angel feathers.8

8 Wilbur, "A Plain Song for Comadre," 17-30
The conventional phrasing “come tomorrow” signifies the culmination of seventeen years worth of tomorrows, in which Bruna Sandoval’s dependable work has kept order in the church day after day. She is caretaker not of marble monuments but of simple candles and plaster figures; but even so she does honor to holy things through their material images. But the enjambment of “clay porch” to “white altar” that stretches across the stanzaic break emphasizes that her work is a monumental bridge in itself: it spans the entirety of the holy space, from the threshold, whereat the mortal and mundane approach the sublime, all the way to the sacrificial altar itself. She expects no visions, as do the doubter and the saint of the first stanza. Rather, “the thing done right” is vision enough for her, and she is motivated by “love.” The poem hurries past this word, giving the reader a sense that Bruna herself does not linger long over love as a feeling or emotion. Rain or shine, she simply does right by the immediate things of the world, no matter how lowly they may seem, for love. The simplicity of her act of will is brought out in simple language: after appearing in line 23, the word “done” is repeated in the frank, unsophisticated phrase “[t]his is what she has done.”

In stanza 2, “sun” and “done” are quite separated, bookending the ABBCCA stanza scheme. In the final stanza, however, they appear again in reverse order much closer together, as a couplet. The work that Bruna has “done” right is complemented and transfigured immediately by the presence of the “early sun,” even if the sun only “[s]ometimes” creates “grimy rainbows” in the suds. The “scrubwater” must, of course, be flung out at the proper angle in order for a rainbow to be seen in it; however, the sun is “warmly constant,” ever-present, and the “holy things” are even more so, “there before we look / Or fail to look; there to be seen or not / By us.” Through the quiet honor and attention Bruna gives to the necessary duties before her, she is graced by an occasional sight of rainbows, optical phenomena, and finally of angel-feathers, the hints of the spiritual that doubter and saint were unable to discern. The visions to which Bruna is privy do not fail

9 Tate, 36:45  
10 Wilbur, "Plain Song for Comadre," 26  
11 Wilbur, "Lying," 33-34
(as do those for which the downcast saint hopes) because they are rooted in the world present before her. The “straight furrow,” the “well-made bowl,” and the “sound chimney” were earlier in the poem given new significance by the flooding dark and the clear stars. Similarly, Bruna’s modest, right action disposes her to the subtle spectacular, and Wilbur’s language shifts from the resolute but nondescript “[t]his is what she has done” to the breathtaking “crash” and “flash” and “fling” and “shine,” description so rich and so audibly colorful that even the reader’s imagination cannot help but tingle at its own synesthetistic glimpse of angel-feathers.

Wilbur’s praise is a “Plain Song,” a simple tribute to Bruna Sandoval’s patient attention. However, expressed as a single word, plainsong refers to the liturgical chant that the choir sings in unison. By the poem’s completion, Wilbur has rhetorically united readers in this plainsong, this holy acclaim: who can finish reading the poem and not love Bruna? Her admirable constancy and Wilbur’s masterful craft draw the reader in, just as the poem’s sentences, never ending with the stanza, continually pull the reader across the stanzaic break. The reader cannot help but upbraid himself to imitate Bruna. For only by solemnly, lovingly encountering the physical world already given to us, with all its stains and suds, may we see truly holy things; as Wilbur declares in another poem, “Charge me to see / In all bodies the beat of spirit.” Wilbur, “The Eye,” 43-44

Simultaneously, our loving encounter with the world, “the thing done right,” is itself holiness; it is the everyday vision we seek, the ordinary glimpse of that “huge attention” we long to know. Wilbur, "Mind-Reader," 129