

Poem by Robert Pinsky

Paradise

Perfection is the mote in the maker's eye.
The ape believes he's meant for a better place
Than this our prison of shadows – that is why

Dante could stare at the sun in Paradise:
“*There, many things are granted to be done
That here on Earth are beyond our faculties,*

For Paradise was designed for humankind.”
Unlike this world. So Dante stared at the sun
For a long while, and it did not make him blind.

He took his time and studied that fire of fire
Brighter than molten iron, he says. In his mind
Day had been added to day, as though the Power

That made one sun had added a second one –
And that doubled sun, redoubling itself, consumed
Our shadows forever, and our one doomed sun.

Robert Pinsky, a Fellow of the American Academy since 1993, is professor of English and creative writing at Boston University. He is the author of numerous collections of poetry, including “The Figured Wheel” (1996), which received the 1997 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize and was a Pulitzer Prize nominee, “Jersey Rain” (2000), and most recently “Gulf Music: Poems” (2007). He has also published two works of translation: “The Separate Notebooks, Poems by Czeslaw Milosz” (with Renata Gorczynski and Robert Hass, 1984) and “The Inferno of Dante” (1994). From 1997 to 2000, he served as the United States Poet Laureate and Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress.

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