The Divine Comedy

DANTE ALIGHIERI

The Divine Comedy

Commedia

Translated from the Italian with AI (Claude) and edited



FORAGE
forage.com

The Divine Comedy · Dante Alighieri

Translated from the Italian with AI (Claude) and edited. Reading edition, Forage, October 2026. forage.com/dante/divine-comedy

Italian text: Edward Moore (1835–1916), ed., *Tutte le opere di Dante Alighieri, nuovamente rivedute nel testo*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Stamperia dell'Università, 1904; index by Paget Toynbee, 1855–1932), the "Oxford Dante," transcribed for Forage from the Internet Archive scans of two copies (University of Toronto PIMS and Harvard University) and proofread twice against the page images. Public domain. English: translated from the Italian with AI (Claude), then edited for accuracy and consistency. Not reviewed by a human specialist. Free to reuse under CC BY-SA 4.0. The small numbers set in the text are canticle, canto and line (Inf. = *Inferno*, Purg. = *Purgatorio*, Par. = *Paradiso*).

The original text is in the public domain. This translation is free to share and adapt under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA 4.0): creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0

Set in Source Serif 4.

CONTENTS

Introduction xiii

Inferno 1

Canto 1 1
Virgil 2
Canto 2 4
Beatrice's errand 5
Canto 3 7
Charon 9
Canto 4 10
The poets of Limbo 12
Canto 5 13
Francesca 15
Canto 6 16
Ciacco 17
Canto 7 19
Fortune 21
Canto 8 22
Filippo Argenti 23
The gates of Dis 24
Canto 9 25
The Furies 26
The messenger from heaven 27
Canto 10 29
Farinata 29
Cavalcante 30
Canto 11 32
The plan of Hell 32
Canto 12 35
The river of blood 36

Canto 13 38
Pier delle Vigne 39
Canto 14 42
Capaneus 43
The Old Man of Crete 44
Canto 15 45
Brunetto Latini 46
Canto 16 48
The cord 51
Canto 17 51
The usurers 52
Riding Geryon 54
Canto 18 55
Jason 56
The flatterers 57
Canto 19 58
Pope Nicholas III 59
Canto 20 61
Manto and Mantua 63
Canto 21 65
A magistrate of Lucca 66
Canto 22 68
The Navarrese 69
Canto 23 71
The hypocrites 73
Canto 24 75
The thieves 76
Vanni Fucci 77
Canto 25 78
Thieves transformed 80
Canto 26 82
Ulysses 83
Canto 27 85
Guido da Montefeltro 87
Canto 28 89

The sowers of discord 89
Bertran de Born 91
Canto 29 92
The falsifiers 93
Canto 30 96
Master Adam 97
Canto 31 99
The giants 99
Antaeus 102
Canto 32 103
The frozen lake 103
Ugolino 106
Canto 33 106
Ptolomea 108
Canto 34 110
Lucifer 111
Out of Hell 112

Purgatorio 115
Canto 1 115
Cato, guardian of the shore 116
Canto 2 118
Casella's song 120
Canto 3 121
Manfred 123
Canto 4 124
Belacqua and the late repentant 127
Canto 5 128
Those slain by violence 128
Canto 6 131
Sordello and the lament for Italy 133
Canto 7 135
The valley of the princes 136
Canto 8 138
Nino Visconti and Conrad Malaspina 139
Canto 9 141

Dante's dream of the eagle 142
The gate of Purgatory 143
Canto 10 145
Carvings of humility 145
The proud under their stones 147
Canto 11 148
Omberto Aldobrandesco 149
Oderisi and the vanity of fame 150
Canto 12 152
Examples of pride in the pavement 152
The angel of humility 154
Canto 13 155
The envious 156
Sapia of Siena 157
Canto 14 158
The corruption of the Arno valley 159
Voices of envy punished 162
Canto 15 162
Goods that grow by sharing 163
Visions of meekness 164
Canto 16 166
Marco Lombardo 166
Canto 17 169
Visions of wrath 170
Love and the order of Purgatory 171
Canto 18 172
Love and free will 173
The slothful 174
Canto 19 176
The angel of zeal and the avaricious 177
Pope Adrian V 178
Canto 20 179
Hugh Capet 180
The mountain shakes 182
Canto 21 183

Statius 184
Canto 22 187
How Statius was saved 187
The inverted tree 190
Canto 23 190
Forese Donati 191
Canto 24 193
Bonagiunta and the sweet new style 194
The second tree 196
Canto 25 197
Statius on the soul and the body 198
The terrace of lust 200
Canto 26 201
Guido Guinizelli and Arnaut Daniel 203
Canto 27 204
The wall of fire 205
Dream of Leah 206
Virgil's last words 207
Canto 28 208
The lady by the stream 209
The garden explained 210
Canto 29 211
The procession appears 212
The chariot and the griffin 214
Canto 30 215
Beatrice appears 216
Beatrice's accusation 217
Canto 31 219
Immersion in Lethe 221
Canto 32 222
The stripped tree 223
The chariot's transformations 225
Canto 33 226
Beatrice's prophecy 227
Eunoe 228

Paradiso 231
Canto 1 231
Canto 2 234
The spots on the moon 235
Canto 3 237
Piccarda 238
Canto 4 240
Canto 5 243
The heaven of Mercury 245
Canto 6 246
Romeo of Villeneuve 250
Canto 7 250
Why God became man 251
Canto 8 253
Charles Martel 255
Canto 9 257
Cunizza 258
Folco and Rahab 259
Canto 10 261
Thomas Aquinas and the wise 263
Canto 11 264
The life of Saint Francis 265
Canto 12 267
The life of Saint Dominic 269
Canto 13 271
Solomon's wisdom 272
Canto 14 274
The cross of Mars 276
Canto 15 278
Cacciaguida 278
Florence of old 280
Canto 16 281
The old families of Florence 282
Canto 17 285
The prophecy of exile 286

Dante's mission 288
Canto 18 289
The heaven of Jupiter 290
Canto 19 292
Justice beyond understanding 293
The bad kings of Christendom 294
Canto 20 295
The eye of the eagle 296
Canto 21 298
The golden ladder 299
Peter Damian 301
Canto 22 302
Saint Benedict 302
Into the fixed stars 304
Canto 23 305
The triumph of Christ 306
The crowning of Mary 307
Canto 24 308
Examined on faith 309
Canto 25 312
Saint James and hope 312
Canto 26 315
Adam 317
Canto 27 318
Peter's invective 319
The Primum Mobile 320
Canto 28 322
The point and the nine circles 322
Canto 29 325
Against vain preachers 327
Canto 30 328
The river of light 329
The heavenly rose 331
Canto 31 332
Saint Bernard 333

Mary in glory 334
Canto 32 335
Canto 33 338
The vision of God 339
Three circles 340

INTRODUCTION

"Midway on the journey of our life I found myself in a dark wood." So begins the *Comedy*, the poem in which Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), a Florentine poet and politician exiled from his city in 1302, imagines himself traveling through the three realms of the dead over Easter week of the year 1300. The Roman poet Virgil guides him down through Hell, where sinners suffer punishments that mirror their sins, and up the mountain of Purgatory, where souls are cleansed before they can rise. At its summit Beatrice, the Florentine woman Dante loved in his youth, takes over and leads him through the heavens to the vision of God.

Dante called the poem simply a *Comedy*, because it moves from misery to happiness and is written in the everyday language of Italy rather than in Latin; "Divine" was added by later admirers. Along the way he meets popes and emperors, poets and philosophers, and many people he knew in Florence: Francesca, damned for her love of Paolo; Ulysses, still restless after death; Count Ugolino in the ice; his own ancestor Cacciaguida, who foretells his exile. The poem is at once an encyclopedia of medieval learning, a fierce commentary on the politics of his time and a story of one person's turning toward the good.

It is written in *terza rima*, linked three-line stanzas that Dante invented, in 100 cantos and 14,233 lines. The translation here is in prose, a few stanzas at a time beside the Italian.

Inferno

Hell
Lost in a dark wood, Dante is led by Virgil down through the circles of Hell to the center of the earth.

CANTO 1

Inf. 1.1 Midway on the journey of our life I found myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost. And how hard a thing it is to tell what it was like, this wood so savage, harsh and dense, which in my thoughts renews the fear! It is so bitter that death is little more so; but to deal with the good I found there, I will tell of the other things I saw there. I cannot rightly say how I entered it, I was so full of sleep at that moment when I abandoned the true way.[1] Inf. 1.13 But after I had reached the foot of a hill, there where that valley ended which had pierced my heart with fear, I looked up and saw its shoulders already clothed in the rays of the planet that leads others straight on every road. Then the fear was quieted a little that had lasted in the lake of my heart through the night I had passed in such distress.[2] Inf. 1.22 And as one who, with laboring breath, has escaped from the open sea to the shore, turns to the perilous water and stares, so my mind, which was still fleeing, turned back to gaze again at the pass that never yet let anyone go alive. After I had rested my weary body a little, I took up my way again across the deserted slope, so that my firm foot was always the lower; and there,

1 Dante sets the journey in the spring of 1300, when he was thirty-five, half of the biblical span of seventy years.
2 The planet is the sun, counted among the planets in medieval astronomy.

almost at the beginning of the steep, was a leopard, light and very swift, covered with a spotted hide. Inf. 1.34 And it would not go from before my face; rather, it so hindered my way that many times I turned to go back. The time was the beginning of the morning, and the sun was rising with those stars that were with it when divine Love first set those beautiful things in motion; so that the hour of the day and the sweet season gave me reason to hope well of that beast with the gaily colored hide; but not so much that I was not struck with fear by the sight of a lion that appeared to me.[3] Inf. 1.46 This one seemed to be coming against me with head held high and with ravenous hunger, so that the air itself seemed to fear him; and a she-wolf, who in her leanness seemed laden with every craving, and who has already made many peoples live in misery. She brought such heaviness upon me, with the fear that came from the sight of her, that I lost hope of the height.

VIRGIL

A shade comes to Dante's aid in the wilderness and names himself as the poet Virgil.

Inf. 1.55 And like one who gladly gains, and then the time comes that makes him lose, so that in all his thoughts he weeps and grieves, such did the beast that knows no peace make me, as, coming toward me, little by little she drove me back to where the sun is silent. While I was falling back down to the low place, there appeared before my eyes one who seemed faint from long silence. When I saw him in the great wilderness, "*Miserere* [Have mercy] on me," I cried to him, "whoever you are, whether shade or real man!" Inf. 1.67 He answered me: "Not a man; once I was a man, and my parents were Lombards, both of them Mantuans by birth. I was born *sub Iulio* [under Julius], though late, and I lived in Rome under the good Augustus, in the time of the false and lying gods. I was a poet, and I sang of that just son of

3 Medieval tradition held that the sun was in Aries at the Creation, so the scene is a spring dawn.

Anchises who came from Troy after proud Ilium was burned. But you, why do you return to such misery? Why do you not climb the delightful mountain, which is the beginning and cause of all joy?"[4] Inf. 1.79 "Are you, then, that Virgil, that fountain that pours forth so wide a river of speech?" I answered him, with a shamefaced brow. "O honor and light of the other poets, may the long study and the great love that made me search your volume avail me now. You are my master and my author; you alone are the one from whom I took the beautiful style that has brought me honor. Inf. 1.88 See the beast because of which I turned back; help me against her, famous sage, for she makes my veins and pulses tremble." "You must take another road," he replied, when he saw me weeping, "if you wish to escape from this savage place; for this beast, at which you cry out, lets no one pass along her way, but hinders him until she kills him; and her nature is so wicked and vicious that she never fills her greedy appetite, and after feeding she is hungrier than before. Inf. 1.100 Many are the animals with which she mates, and there will be more still, until the greyhound comes who will make her die in pain. He will not feed on land or pewter, but on wisdom and love and virtue, and his birthplace will be between Feltro and Feltro. He will be the salvation of that humble Italy for which the virgin Camilla, Euryalus, Turnus and Nisus died of their wounds. He will hunt her through every town until he has put her back in Hell, from where envy first let her loose.[5] Inf. 1.112 Therefore I think and judge it best for you that you follow me, and I will be your guide and lead you from here through an eternal place, where you will hear the desperate cries of those ancient spirits in pain who each cry out for the second death; and then you will see those who are content in the fire, because they hope to come, whenever it may be, among the blessed people. To them, if you then wish to rise, there will be a soul

4 The speaker is Virgil (70–19 BC), born under Julius Caesar; the son of Anchises is Aeneas, hero of his Aeneid.

5 The greyhound's identity is disputed; "between Feltro and Feltro" may point to the lands of Can Grande della Scala of Verona. Camilla, Euryalus, Turnus and Nisus are warriors killed in the war for Italy in Virgil's Aeneid.

more worthy of it than I; with her I will leave you when I depart; Inf. 1.124 for that emperor who reigns up there, because I was a rebel to his law, does not wish anyone to come into his city through me. He governs everywhere, and there he rules; there is his city and his high throne. Oh, happy the one he chooses for it!" And I to him: "Poet, I beg you, by that God whom you did not know, so that I may escape this harm and worse, lead me where you have just said, so that I may see the gate of Saint Peter and those whom you describe as so sorrowful." Then he moved on, and I kept behind him.

CANTO 2

Inf. 2.1 The day was departing, and the darkening air was releasing the creatures that are on earth from their labors; and I alone was preparing to endure the struggle both of the journey and of the pity, which my mind, which does not err, will portray. O Muses, O high genius, help me now; O mind that wrote down what I saw, here your nobility will show. I began: "Poet who guide me, consider my strength, whether it is enough, before you trust me to the hard pass. Inf. 2.13 You tell how the father of Silvius, while still corruptible, went to the immortal world, and went there in the body. So if the adversary of all evil was gracious to him, considering the high outcome that was to come from him, and who and what that would be, it does not seem unfitting to a man of understanding; for in the empyrean heaven he was chosen as father of glorious Rome and of her empire; and both of these, to tell the truth, were established as the holy place where the successor of the greater Peter sits.[6] Inf. 2.25 On this journey, for which you praise him, he learned things that were the cause of his victory and of the papal mantle. Later the Chosen Vessel went there, to bring back strength to that faith which is the beginning of the way of salvation. But I, why should I go there? Or who allows it? I am not Aeneas, I am not Paul; neither I nor anyone

6 The father of Silvius is Aeneas, who visits the underworld alive in Book 6 of the Aeneid.

else believes me worthy of it. So if I give myself up to going, I fear the going may be folly; you are wise, you understand better than I can explain."[7] Inf. 2.37 And like one who unwills what he willed, and changes his purpose with new thoughts, so that he draws back entirely from what he began, so I became on that dark slope; for by thinking it over I wore away the undertaking that had been so quick in its beginning. "If I have understood your words rightly," replied that shade of the great-souled one, "your soul is stricken with cowardice, which often weighs a man down so that it turns him back from an honorable undertaking, as a false sight turns a beast when it shies.

BEATRICE'S ERRAND

Virgil tells how Beatrice came down to Limbo and sent him to rescue Dante.

Inf. 2.49 So that you may free yourself from this fear, I will tell you why I came and what I heard at the first moment when I grieved for you. I was among those who are suspended, and a lady called me, so blessed and beautiful that I begged her to command me. Her eyes shone brighter than the star; and she began to speak to me, gently and softly, with an angelic voice, in her own speech:[8] Inf. 2.58 'O courteous Mantuan soul, whose fame still endures in the world and will endure as long as motion lasts: my friend, who is no friend of fortune, is so hindered on his way on the deserted slope that he has turned back in fear; and I fear he may already be so lost that I have risen too late to help him, from what I have heard of him in Heaven. Inf. 2.67 Now go, and with your ornate speech, and with whatever is needed for his escape, help him so that I may be consoled. I am Beatrice, who make you go; I come from a place to which I long to return; Love moved me, and makes me speak. When I am before my Lord, I will often praise

7 The Chosen Vessel is Saint Paul (Acts 9:15), who was said to have been caught up into heaven while alive (2 Corinthians 12).

8 "Those who are suspended" are the souls of Limbo, neither punished nor in bliss.

you to him.' Then she fell silent, and then I began: Inf. 2.76 'O lady of virtue, through whom alone the human race surpasses everything contained within that heaven which has the smallest circles: your command pleases me so much that to obey, had I obeyed already, would be late; you need not open your wish to me further. But tell me the reason why you do not shrink from coming down here into this center from the spacious place to which you burn to return.' 'Since you wish to know so deeply, I will tell you briefly,' she answered me, 'why I am not afraid to come in here.[9] Inf. 2.88 One should fear only those things that have power to do harm; not the others, for they are not to be feared. I am made by God, in his grace, such that your misery does not touch me, nor does any flame of this burning assail me. There is a noble lady in Heaven who so grieves at this hindrance to which I send you that she breaks the stern judgment up there. She summoned Lucy with her request and said: "Your faithful one now has need of you, and I commend him to you."[10] Inf. 2.100 Lucy, enemy of everyone cruel, moved and came to the place where I was, sitting with ancient Rachel. She said: "Beatrice, true praise of God, why do you not help the one who loved you so much that he left the common crowd for your sake? Do you not hear the anguish of his weeping? Do you not see the death that assails him on that flood over which the sea cannot boast?"[11] Inf. 2.109 Never in the world were people so quick to seek their profit or to flee their harm as I, after such words were spoken, came down here from my blessed seat, trusting in your honest speech, which honors you and those who have heard it.' After she had said this to me, she turned her shining eyes away, weeping; which made me quicker to come. And I came to you just as she wished; I took you from before that beast that robbed you of the short way up the beautiful mountain. Inf. 2.121 So what is it? Why, why do you hold back? Why do you harbor such cow-

9 The heaven with the smallest circles is the sphere of the moon, the nearest to the earth.

10 The noble lady is understood to be the Virgin Mary; Lucy is Saint Lucy, the martyr of Syracuse.

11 Rachel, wife of Jacob in Genesis, sits beside Beatrice in Heaven.

ardice in your heart? Why do you not have daring and boldness, since three such blessed ladies care for you in the court of Heaven, and my words promise you so much good?" As little flowers, bent and closed by the chill of night, all straighten up open on their stems when the sun brightens them, so did I with my flagging strength; and so much good courage rushed to my heart that I began like someone set free: Inf. 2.133 "Oh, compassionate is she who helped me! And you, courteous, who obeyed so quickly the true words she spoke to you! With your words you have so disposed my heart with desire to come that I have returned to my first intent. Now go, for there is one single will in us both: you are my guide, you my lord, and you my master." So I spoke to him; and when he had moved on, I entered along the deep and savage way.

CANTO 3

Inf. 3.1 Through me is the way into the grieving city; through me is the way into eternal sorrow; through me is the way among the lost people. Justice moved my exalted Maker; I was made by the divine power, the highest wisdom and the first love. Before me nothing was created that is not eternal, and I endure eternally. Abandon all hope, you who enter! These words, dark in color, I saw written above a gate; at which I said: "Master, their meaning is hard for me."[12] Inf. 3.13 And he answered me, like one who understands: "Here all misgiving must be left behind; here all cowardice must die. We have come to the place where I told you that you would see the grieving people who have lost the good of the intellect." And when he had placed his hand on mine, with a cheerful face that comforted me, he led me in among the hidden things. Here sighs, laments and loud wailing resounded through the starless air, so that at first I wept at it. Inf. 3.25 Different tongues, horrible languages, words of pain, accents of anger, voices loud and faint, and the sound of hands along with them,

12 The power, wisdom and love that made the gate are the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

made a tumult that whirls forever in that air dark without time, like sand when the whirlwind blows. And I, whose head was wrapped in horror, said: "Master, what is this I hear? And what people are these, who seem so overcome by pain?" Inf. 3.34 And he to me: "This miserable condition is borne by the wretched souls of those who lived without disgrace and without praise. They are mingled with that worthless choir of angels who were neither rebels nor faithful to God, but were for themselves. The heavens drove them out so as not to be less beautiful, and the depth of Hell does not receive them, for the wicked would have some glory from them." And I: "Master, what is so heavy upon them that it makes them lament so loudly?" He answered: "I will tell you very briefly. Inf. 3.46 These have no hope of death, and their blind life is so low that they are envious of every other lot. The world does not let any fame of them remain; mercy and justice disdain them. Let us not speak of them, but look, and pass on." And I, looking again, saw a banner that ran, whirling, so swiftly that it seemed to me to scorn all rest; and behind it came so long a line of people that I would never have believed death had undone so many. Inf. 3.58 After I had recognized some among them, I saw and knew the shade of him who through cowardice made the great refusal. At once I understood, and was certain, that this was the company of the worthless, displeasing to God and to his enemies. These wretches, who were never alive, were naked and much stung by gadflies and by wasps that were there. These streaked their faces with blood, which, mixed with tears, was gathered at their feet by loathsome worms.[13] Inf. 3.70 And when I gave myself to looking farther on, I saw people on the bank of a great river. So I said: "Master, now grant that I may know who they are, and what custom makes them seem so eager to cross over, as I can make out by the faint light." And he to me: "These things will be made known to you when we halt our steps on the sad shore of Acheron." Then, with eyes

13 He is usually identified with Pope Celestine V, who resigned the papacy in 1294.

ashamed and lowered, fearing that my words had been a burden to him, I kept from speaking until we reached the river.[14]

CHARON

The ferryman Charon tries to turn Dante back, and the damned crowd into his boat.

Inf. 3.82 And there, coming toward us in a boat, was an old man, white with ancient hair, crying: "Woe to you, wicked souls! Never hope to see heaven! I come to lead you to the other shore, into the eternal darkness, into heat and into cold. And you there, living soul, get away from these who are dead." But when he saw that I did not go away, he said: "By another way, by other ports, you will come to shore to make your crossing, not here: a lighter vessel must carry you." Inf. 3.94 And my guide to him: "Charon, do not be angry: it is so willed there where what is willed can be done, and ask no more." At this the woolly cheeks of the ferryman of the livid marsh, who had wheels of flame around his eyes, grew still. But those souls, who were weary and naked, changed color and gnashed their teeth as soon as they heard the cruel words. They cursed God and their parents, the human race, the place, the time, and the seed of their begetting and of their birth.[15] Inf. 3.106 Then all of them together drew back, weeping loudly, to the evil shore that awaits every man who does not fear God. Charon the demon, with eyes like glowing coals, beckoning to them, gathers them all in; he strikes with his oar any who linger. As in autumn the leaves fall away one after another, until the branch sees all its spoils upon the ground, so the evil seed of Adam: they cast themselves from that shore one by one, at his signals, like a bird to its lure. Inf. 3.118 So they go off over the dark water, and before they have landed on the far side, a new band is already gathering on this side. "My son," said the cour-

14 Acheron: a river of the underworld in classical myth; here it marks the boundary of Hell proper.

15 Charon: in classical myth the ferryman who carries the dead across the rivers of the underworld.

teous master, "those who die in the wrath of God all assemble here from every land; and they are eager to cross the river, for divine justice spurs them on, so that their fear is turned into desire. Inf. 3.127 No good soul ever crosses here; and so, if Charon complains of you, you can well understand now what his words mean." When this was ended, the dark plain trembled so violently that the memory of my terror still bathes me in sweat. The tearful ground gave forth a wind, which flashed with a crimson light that overpowered all my senses; and I fell like a man whom sleep seizes.

CANTO 4

Inf. 4.1 A heavy thunderclap broke the deep sleep in my head, so that I started up like someone woken by force; and, standing upright, I moved my rested eyes around and gazed intently to make out the place where I was. The truth is that I found myself on the brink of the sorrowful valley of the abyss, which gathers the thunder of endless wailings. It was dark, deep and cloudy, so that, though I fixed my sight on the bottom, I could make out nothing there. Inf. 4.13 "Now let us go down into the blind world here below," the poet began, deathly pale. "I will be first, and you will be second." And I, who had noticed his color, said: "How shall I come, if you are afraid, you who are used to being the comfort of my doubts?" And he to me: "The anguish of the people who are down here paints on my face that pity which you take for fear. Inf. 4.22 Let us go, for the long way urges us on." So he set out, and so he made me enter the first circle that girds the abyss. There, as far as could be told by listening, there was no weeping, only sighs, which made the eternal air tremble. This came from the sorrow without torments felt by the crowds, which were many and great, of infants and of women and of men. Inf. 4.31 My good master to me: "Do you not ask what spirits these are that you see? Now I want you to know, before you go farther, that they did not sin; and if they have merits, that is not enough, because they did not have baptism, which is part of the

faith that you believe. And if they lived before Christianity, they did not worship God as was due; and I myself am one of these. For such defects, and not for any other wrong, we are lost, and only so far afflicted that without hope we live in longing." Inf. 4.43 Great sorrow seized my heart when I heard him, because I recognized people of great worth who were suspended in that Limbo. "Tell me, my master, tell me, lord," I began, wishing to be certain of that faith which overcomes every error, "did anyone ever go out from here, by his own merit or by another's, who was afterward blessed?" And he, who understood my veiled speech, answered: "I was new to this state when I saw a mighty one come here, crowned with a sign of victory.[16] Inf. 4.55 He drew out from here the shade of our first parent, of Abel his son, and that of Noah, of Moses the lawgiver, the obedient; Abraham the patriarch, and David the king, Israel with his father and with his children, and with Rachel, for whom he did so much, and many others; and he made them blessed. And I want you to know that before them no human spirits were saved." We did not stop walking while he spoke, but kept passing through the wood all the while—the wood, I mean, of crowded spirits.[17] Inf. 4.67 We had not yet gone far from the place where I had slept when I saw a fire that overcame a hemisphere of darkness. We were still some little distance from it, but not so far that I could not partly make out that honorable people occupied that place. "O you who honor both knowledge and art, who are these, who have such honor that it sets them apart from the manner of the others?" And he to me: "The honored fame that sounds of them up in your life wins grace in heaven, which so advances them."

16 Limbo (Latin limbus, "border") is the first circle of Hell. The "mighty one" is Christ, whose descent into Hell after the Crucifixion to free the righteous of the Old Testament is known as the Harrowing of Hell.

17 Israel is Jacob, son of Isaac, who served fourteen years to win Rachel as his wife (Genesis 29).

THE POETS OF LIMBO

Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucan greet Virgil and make Dante one of their company.

Inf. 4.79 Meanwhile a voice was heard by me: "Honor the loftiest poet; his shade returns, which had departed." After the voice had stopped and was quiet, I saw four great shades coming toward us; their look was neither sad nor glad. My good master began to say: "Look at him with that sword in his hand, who comes before the three as their lord. That is Homer, sovereign poet; the next who comes is Horace the satirist; Ovid is the third, and the last is Lucan.[18] Inf. 4.91 Since each of them shares with me the name that the single voice proclaimed, they do me honor, and in that they do well." So I saw gathered the fair school of those lords of the loftiest song, which flies like an eagle above the others. When they had talked together a while, they turned to me with a sign of greeting; and my master smiled at this. And they did me far greater honor still, for they made me one of their company, so that I was sixth among such great wisdom. Inf. 4.103 So we went on as far as the light, speaking of things about which it is well to be silent, as it was well to speak of them there where I was. We came to the foot of a noble castle, seven times circled by high walls, defended all around by a fair little stream. This we passed over as if it were solid ground; through seven gates I entered with these sages; we came to a meadow of fresh green. There were people there with slow, grave eyes, of great authority in their bearing; they spoke seldom, with gentle voices. Inf. 4.115 So we drew aside to one of the edges, into an open place, luminous and high, so that all of them could be seen. There, straight before me on the green enamel, the great spirits were shown to me, so that I exult within myself at having seen them. I saw Electra with many companions, among whom I

18 Horace (65–8 BC) wrote satires and odes; Ovid (43 BC–AD 17) the Metamorphoses; Lucan (AD 39–65) the Pharsalia, an epic of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey.

recognized Hector and Aeneas, and Caesar in armor, with his hawk-like eyes. I saw Camilla and Penthesilea; on the other side I saw King Latinus, who was sitting with Lavinia his daughter.[19] Inf. 4.127 I saw that Brutus who drove out Tarquin, Lucretia, Julia, Marcia and Cornelia; and alone, apart, I saw Saladin. When I raised my eyes a little higher, I saw the master of those who know, sitting among a philosophic family. All gaze at him, all do him honor. There I saw Socrates and Plato, who stand nearer to him than the others; Democritus, who ascribes the world to chance, Diogenes, Anaxagoras and Thales, Empedocles, Heraclitus and Zeno;[20] Inf. 4.139 and I saw the good collector of qualities—Dioscorides, I mean; and I saw Orpheus, Tully and Linus and Seneca the moralist; Euclid the geometer and Ptolemy, Hippocrates, Avicenna and Galen, and Averroes, who made the great commentary. I cannot portray them all in full, for the long theme so drives me on that many times the telling falls short of the fact. The company of six dwindles to two: by another way the wise guide leads me, out of the quiet into the air that trembles; and I come to a place where nothing shines.[21]

CANTO 5

Inf. 5.1 So I went down from the first circle into the second, which encloses less space, and so much more pain that it goads to wailing. There Minos stands, horrible, and snarls; he examines the faults at the entrance, he judges and sends each one down according to how he wraps himself. I mean that when the ill-born soul comes before him, it confesses everything; and that discerner of sins sees which place in Hell is for it; he winds his

19 Electra was the mother of Dardanus, founder of Troy. Camilla, a warrior maiden in Virgil's Aeneid, and Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, both died in battle.

20 This Brutus is Lucius Junius Brutus, who expelled Rome's last king, Tarquin, and Saladin was the sultan of Egypt and Syria (d. AD 1193), admired in the Middle Ages for his generosity. "The master of those who know" is Aristotle.

21 Dioscorides was a Greek physician who catalogued the medicinal qualities of plants; Tully is Cicero. Averroes wrote the great commentary on Aristotle.

tail around himself as many times as the levels he wants it to be sent down.[22] Inf. 5.13 Always there stand many of them before him; they go, each in turn, to the judgment; they speak and hear, and then are hurled below. "O you who come to the sorrowful inn," said Minos to me when he saw me, leaving off the act of so great an office, "watch how you enter and in whom you trust: do not let the breadth of the entrance deceive you!" And my guide to him: "Why do you keep shouting? Inf. 5.22 Do not hinder his fated journey: it is so willed there where what is willed can be done, and ask no more." Now the sorrowful notes begin to make themselves heard by me; now I have come where much weeping strikes me. I came into a place mute of all light, which bellows as the sea does in a storm when it is battered by warring winds. The infernal whirlwind, which never rests, sweeps the spirits along in its violence; turning and striking them, it torments them. Inf. 5.34 When they come before the ruin, there are the shrieks, the moaning and the lamentation; there they curse the divine power. I understood that to such torment are condemned the carnal sinners, who make reason subject to desire. And as their wings carry the starlings in the cold season, in a broad, full flock, so that blast carries the evil spirits. Here, there, down, up it drives them; no hope ever comforts them, not of rest, nor even of lesser pain. Inf. 5.46 And as the cranes go singing their lays, making a long line of themselves in the air, so I saw coming, uttering wails, shades borne along by that same strife; so I said: "Master, who are those people whom the black air so punishes?" "The first of those of whom you wish to have news," he said to me then, "was empress of many tongues. She was so abandoned to the vice of lust that she made whatever pleased lawful in her law, to remove the blame into which she had been brought. Inf. 5.58 She is Semiramis, of whom we read that she succeeded Ninus and was his wife: she held the land that the Sultan rules. The next is she who killed herself for love and broke faith with the ashes of Sychaeus; then comes lustful Cleopatra. See Helen, for

22 Minos: legendary king of Crete who in classical myth became a judge of the dead.

whom so long a time of evil revolved, and see the great Achilles, who fought with love at the end. See Paris, Tristan"; and more than a thousand shades he showed me, pointing with his finger, and named them, whom love had parted from our life.[23]

FRANCESCA

Dante calls two lovers out of the whirlwind, and Francesca tells how love led them to death.

Inf. 5.70 After I had heard my teacher name the women of old and the knights, pity came over me, and I was almost lost. I began: "Poet, I would gladly speak with those two who go together and seem so light upon the wind." And he to me: "You will see when they are closer to us; then beg them by that love which leads them, and they will come." As soon as the wind bends them toward us, I raised my voice: "O wearied souls, come and speak with us, if another does not forbid it." Inf. 5.82 As doves, called by desire, with wings raised and steady, come through the air to their sweet nest, carried by their will, so these came out of the flock where Dido is, coming toward us through the malignant air, so strong was my affectionate cry. "O living creature, gracious and kind, who go through the dark-purple air visiting us who stained the world with blood: if the King of the universe were our friend, we would pray to him for your peace, since you have pity on our perverse ill. Inf. 5.94 Of whatever you are pleased to hear and to speak, we will hear and speak with you, while the wind, as it does now, is silent for us. The city where I was born sits on the shore where the Po descends to have peace with the streams that follow it. Love, which is quick to take hold of the noble heart, seized this man for the fair body that was taken from me—and the manner of it still wounds me. Love, which pardons no one loved from loving in return, seized me so strongly with delight in him that, as you see, it still does not

23 Semiramis was a legendary queen of Assyria. The suicide is Dido, queen of Carthage, who broke her vow to her dead husband Sychaeus for love of Aeneas.

abandon me.[24] Inf. 5.106 Love led us to one death: Caina awaits him who quenched our life." These words were carried to us from them. When I had heard those wounded souls, I bowed my face and kept it lowered until the poet said to me: "What are you thinking?" When I answered, I began: "Alas, how many sweet thoughts, how much desire led these two to the woeful pass!" Then I turned back to them and spoke, and I began: "Francesca, your torments make me sad and pitying to the point of tears.[25] Inf. 5.118 But tell me: in the time of the sweet sighs, by what and how did love grant that you should know the uncertain desires?" And she to me: "There is no greater sorrow than to remember the happy time in misery; and this your teacher knows. But if you have so great a longing to know the first root of our love, I will do as one who weeps and speaks. One day, for pleasure, we were reading of Lancelot, how love held him fast; we were alone and without any suspicion.[26] Inf. 5.130 Many times that reading drew our eyes together and drained the color from our faces; but it was one point alone that overcame us. When we read of the longed-for smile being kissed by such a lover, he, who will never be parted from me, kissed my mouth, all trembling. A Galehaut was the book, and he who wrote it: that day we read no further in it." While the one spirit said this, the other wept so that, out of pity, I fainted as if I were dying; and I fell as a dead body falls.[27]

CANTO 6

Inf. 6.1 When my mind came back, which had closed before the pity of the two in-laws that wholly overwhelmed me with sad-

24 The city is Ravenna, near the mouth of the Po.
25 Caina, named after Cain, is the region of the lowest circle where traitors to their kin are punished. Francesca da Rimini and her lover Paolo, her husband's brother, were killed by her husband, Gianciotto Malatesta, around AD 1285.
26 Lancelot, a knight of King Arthur's court, was the lover of Queen Guinevere in the French prose romances.
27 In the romance, Galehaut brought Lancelot and Guinevere together for their first kiss; his name (Galeotto) came to mean "go-between" in Italian.

ness, I see new torments and new tormented souls around me, wherever I move, and wherever I turn, and wherever I gaze. I am in the third circle, the circle of the rain, eternal, accursed, cold and heavy; its measure and its nature never change. Inf. 6.10 Heavy hail, and foul water, and snow pour down through the darkened air; the ground that receives them stinks. Cerberus, a beast cruel and monstrous, barks like a dog with three throats over the people who are sunk there. His eyes are red, his beard greasy and black, his belly wide, and his hands clawed; he claws the spirits, swallows them, and tears them to pieces. The rain makes them howl like dogs; they make one side a shield for the other; the wretched unhallowed souls keep turning over.[28] Inf. 6.22 When Cerberus, the great worm, caught sight of us, he opened his mouths and showed us his fangs; there was not a limb of him he kept still. And my guide spread out his hands, took up earth, and with his fists full threw it into the ravenous gullets. Like a dog that bays in its hunger and grows quiet once it bites its food, for it strains and struggles only to devour it, so became those filthy faces of the demon Cerberus, who thunders at the souls so that they wish they were deaf.

CIACCO

The Florentine glutton Ciacco foretells the strife that will tear Florence apart.

Inf. 6.34 We were passing over the shades whom the heavy rain beats down, and we set the soles of our feet on their emptiness, which looks like a body. They were all lying on the ground, except one, which sat up as soon as it saw us passing before it. "O you who are being led through this Hell," it said to me, "recognize me, if you can: you were made before I was unmade." Inf. 6.43 And I to it: "The anguish you are in perhaps takes you out of my memory, so that it does not seem I ever saw you. But tell me who you are, who are set in so painful a place and in such a

28 In classical myth Cerberus was the three-headed dog that guarded the underworld; here he guards the gluttonous.

punishment that, if any other is greater, none is so loathsome." And he to me: "Your city, which is so full of envy that the sack is already overflowing, held me within it in the serene life. Inf. 6.52 You citizens called me Ciacco; for the ruinous fault of gluttony, as you see, I am beaten down by the rain. And I, a wretched soul, am not alone, for all these lie in like punishment for like fault." And he said no more. I answered him: "Ciacco, your distress weighs on me so that it moves me to weep. But tell me, if you know, what the citizens of the divided city will come to; whether anyone there is just; and tell me the reason why such discord has assailed it."[29] Inf. 6.64 And he to me: "After long strife they will come to bloodshed, and the rustic party will drive out the other with much injury. Then afterward this one must fall within three suns, and the other rise above it by the force of one who is now hedging his course. It will hold its head high for a long time, keeping the other under heavy burdens, however much that one weeps over it and is outraged. Two are just, but no one heeds them there. Pride, envy and avarice are the three sparks that have set hearts on fire."[30] Inf. 6.76 Here he put an end to his tearful words. And I to him: "I want you to teach me still more, and to make me a gift of further speech. Farinata and Tegghiaio, who were so worthy, Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo and Mosca, and the others who set their minds on doing good, tell me where they are, and let me know them; for a great desire presses me to know whether heaven sweetens their lot or Hell poisons it."[31] Inf. 6.85 And he: "They are among the blackest souls; different faults weigh them down toward the bottom. If you go down so far, you will be able to see them. But when you are back in the sweet world, I beg you to bring me to people's memory. I

29 Ciacco, a Florentine known only by this nickname, which may mean "hog"; nothing certain is known of him beyond what Dante says.
30 A prophecy of Florentine politics: the "rustic party," the Whites, drove out the Blacks in 1301, but within three years the Blacks prevailed with the backing of Pope Boniface VIII, the one now "hedging."
31 Prominent Florentines of the generation before Dante; he will meet Farinata in Canto 10, Tegghiaio and Rusticucci in Canto 16, and Mosca in Canto 28. Arrigo is not mentioned again.

tell you no more and answer you no more." Then he twisted his straight eyes into a squint; he looked at me a little, and then bowed his head, and fell with it level with the other blind ones. Inf. 6.94 And the guide said to me: "He wakes no more until the sound of the angelic trumpet, when the hostile Power comes. Each will find his sad tomb again, take back his flesh and his shape, and hear what resounds for all eternity." So we passed with slow steps through the foul mixture of the shades and the rain, touching a little on the life to come; at which I said: "Master, will these torments grow after the great sentence, or be less, or will they be just as burning?"[32] Inf. 6.106 And he to me: "Go back to your science, which holds that the more perfect a thing is, the more it feels the good, and likewise pain. Although these accursed people will never come to true perfection, they expect to be nearer to it then than now." We went around that road in a circle, speaking of much more than I repeat; we came to the point where it goes down; there we found Plutus, the great enemy.[33]

CANTO 7

Inf. 7.1 "*Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!*" Plutus began in his clucking voice. And that noble sage, who knew everything, said to comfort me: "Do not let your fear harm you; for whatever power he may have, he will not stop you from climbing down this rock." Then he turned to that swollen face and said: "Be silent, accursed wolf! Consume yourself inwardly with your own rage. Not without cause is this journey to the depths: it is willed on high, there where Michael took vengeance on the proud rebellion."[34] Inf. 7.13 As sails swollen by the wind fall in a tangle when

32 The hostile Power is Christ, coming as Judge at the Last Judgment.
33 "Your science" is the philosophy of Aristotle as taught in the schools: the soul reunited with its body at the Last Judgment will be more complete, and so will feel joy or pain more keenly.
34 Plutus, the classical god of wealth, guards the avaricious and the prodigal. His cry has never been convincingly explained, though it seems to call on Satan in alarm.

the mast snaps, so the cruel beast fell to the ground. So we went down into the fourth hollow, taking in more of the woeful bank that sacks up all the evil of the universe. Ah, justice of God! Who heaps up as many new toils and pains as I saw? And why does our guilt so ruin us? Inf. 7.22 As the wave does there over Charybdis, breaking against the wave it runs into, so the people here must dance their round. Here I saw people, far more than anywhere else, on one side and on the other, with great howls, rolling weights by force of chest. They crashed into each other, and then right there each one turned around, rolling back, shouting: "Why do you hoard?" and "Why do you squander?"[35] Inf. 7.31 So they went back around the gloomy circle, on either hand, to the opposite point, still shouting their insulting refrain at each other; then each one, when he had come through his half-circle to the other joust, turned around again. And I, whose heart was almost pierced, said: "My master, now show me what people these are, and whether all of these tonsured ones on our left were clerics." Inf. 7.40 And he to me: "All of them were so squint-eyed in mind in the first life that they did no spending there with measure. Their voices bark this out clearly enough when they come to the two points of the circle where their opposite faults divide them. These, who have no covering of hair on their heads, were clerics, and popes and cardinals, in whom avarice works its excess." And I: "Master, among such as these I ought surely to recognize some who were defiled by these evils." Inf. 7.52 And he to me: "You are gathering an empty thought. The undiscerning life that made them foul now makes them too dark for any discerning. Forever they will come to the two clashes; these will rise from the tomb with fists clenched, and these with their hair cropped. Ill giving and ill keeping have taken the fair world from them and set them to this brawl; what it is like, I will not dress up with words. Now, son, you can see the brief mock-

35 Charybdis: the whirlpool in the Strait of Messina, between Sicily and the Italian mainland, known from Homer and Virgil.

ery of the goods entrusted to Fortune, over which the human race wrangles.[36]

FORTUNE

Virgil explains Fortune, the minister God set over the goods of the world.

Inf. 7.64 For all the gold that is beneath the moon, or ever was, could not give rest to a single one of these weary souls." "Master," I said to him, "now tell me also: this Fortune you touch on with me, what is she, who has the goods of the world so in her clutches?" And he to me: "O foolish creatures, how great is the ignorance that harms you! Now I want you to take in my judgment of her: Inf. 7.73 He whose wisdom transcends all things made the heavens and gave them guides, so that every part shines on every part, distributing the light equally. In the same way, over worldly splendors he set a general minister and leader, to shift in due time the empty goods from people to people and from one blood to another, beyond the power of human wits to prevent it. So one people rules and another languishes, following her judgment, which is hidden like the snake in the grass.[37] Inf. 7.85 Your knowledge has no means of resisting her: she foresees, judges, and carries on her reign, as the other gods do theirs. Her changes have no truce; necessity makes her swift, so often does someone come who takes his turn. This is she who is so crucified even by those who ought to give her praise, blaming her wrongly and speaking ill of her. But she is blessed and does not hear it; joyful among the other first creatures, she turns her sphere and rejoices in her blessedness. Inf. 7.97 Now let us go down to greater woe; already every star that was rising when I set out is sinking, and staying too long is forbidden." We crossed the circle to the other bank, above a spring that boils and pours over

36 The misers rise with fists clenched on what they held; the prodigals with hair cropped, having squandered, as the saying went, everything down to their hair.
37 The guides of the heavens are the angelic Intelligences, which in medieval cosmology move each heavenly sphere.

into a ditch that runs from it. The water was dark, far darker than purple-black; and we, in company with the murky waves, went down by a strange path. This dismal stream, when it has descended to the foot of the malignant gray slopes, makes a marsh that is named Styx.[38] Inf. 7.109 And I, who stood intent on gazing, saw muddy people in that swamp, all naked and with angry looks. They struck each other not only with their hands but with their heads, their chests and their feet, tearing each other to pieces with their teeth. The good master said: "Son, now you see the souls of those whom wrath overcame. And I also want you to believe for certain that there are people beneath the water who sigh, and make this water bubble at the surface, as your eye tells you, wherever it turns. Inf. 7.121 Stuck in the slime they say: 'We were sullen in the sweet air that is gladdened by the sun, carrying within us the smoke of sloth; now we are sullen in the black mire.' This hymn they gurgle in their throats, for they cannot speak it in whole words." So, between the dry bank and the slough, we went around a great arc of the filthy pond, with our eyes turned on those who gulp down the mud. At last we came to the foot of a tower.

CANTO 8

Inf. 8.1 I say, continuing, that long before we reached the foot of the high tower, our eyes went up to its top because of two little flames we saw set there, and another giving back a signal from so far away that the eye could hardly catch it. And I turned to the sea of all wisdom and said: "What does this one say? And what does that other fire answer? And who are those who made it?" Inf. 8.10 And he to me: "Over the filthy waves you can already make out what is expected, if the fumes of the marsh do not hide it from you." Never did a bowstring shoot off an arrow that sped through the air so swiftly as the little boat I saw coming toward us through the water at that moment, steered by a single oars-

38 It is now past midnight: the stars that were rising at nightfall, when the journey began, are setting.

man, who was shouting: "So you have come, wicked soul?" "Phlegyas, Phlegyas, you are shouting in vain this time," said my lord. "You will have us no longer than it takes to cross the mire."[39]

FILIPPO ARGENTI

An angry Florentine grabs at the boat on the Styx and is torn apart by the others.

Inf. 8.22 Like one who hears of a great deception practiced on him and then resents it, so became Phlegyas in his pent-up wrath. My guide went down into the boat and then had me get in after him, and only when I was inside did it seem laden. As soon as the guide and I were in the vessel, the ancient prow moves off, cutting more of the water than it is used to with others. While we were running through the dead channel, there rose up before me one full of mud, who said: "Who are you, who come before your time?" Inf. 8.34 And I to him: "If I come, I do not stay. But who are you, who have become so foul?" He answered: "You see that I am one who weeps." And I to him: "In weeping and in grief, accursed spirit, may you remain; for I know you, even though you are all filthy." Then he stretched both hands toward the boat, at which the wary master pushed him off, saying: "Away there with the other dogs!" Then he put his arms around my neck, kissed my face, and said: "Indignant soul, blessed is she who carried you in her womb.[40] Inf. 8.46 That man was an arrogant person in the world; there is no goodness to adorn his memory, and so his shade is furious here. How many up there now think themselves great kings, who will lie here like pigs in the mire, leaving behind them horrible scorn!" And I: "Master, I would be very eager to see him dunked in this broth before we leave the lake." And he to me: "Before the shore comes into sight, you

39 Phlegyas: in myth, a king who in his rage burned Apollo's temple; here he is the ferryman of the Styx.

40 An echo of the words spoken to Christ in Luke 11:27: "Blessed is the womb that bore you."

shall be satisfied; it is right that you should have such a wish fulfilled." Inf. 8.58 A little after this I saw the muddy people make such a mangling of him that I still praise and thank God for it. They were all shouting: "Get Filippo Argenti!" And the hot-tempered Florentine spirit turned on himself with his teeth. There we left him, and I tell no more of him; but a wailing struck my ears, at which I open my eyes wide and stare intently ahead. The good master said: "Now, son, the city named Dis is drawing near, with its grave citizens and its great host."[41] Inf. 8.70 And I: "Master, I can already make out its mosques clearly there within the valley, red as if they had come out of fire." And he said to me: "The eternal fire that burns them from within makes them look red, as you see in this lower Hell." We came at last into the deep moats that fortify that disconsolate city; the walls seemed to me to be of iron. Not without first making a great circuit did we come to a place where the boatman loudly shouted to us: "Get out: here is the entrance."[42]

THE GATES OF DIS

Fallen angels shut the city gates in Virgil's face, and he returns dismayed.

Inf. 8.82 Above the gates I saw more than a thousand of those rained down from heaven, who were angrily saying: "Who is this who, without death, goes through the kingdom of the dead?" And my wise master made a sign that he wished to speak with them privately. Then they held back their great scorn a little and said: "You come alone, and let that one go away, who so boldly entered this kingdom.[43] Inf. 8.91 Let him go back alone along his mad road; let him try if he knows how; for you shall stay here, who have escorted him through so dark a country." Think, Reader, whether I lost heart at the sound of those accursed

41 Filippo Argenti, a Florentine knight of the Adimari family, notorious for his arrogance and violent temper; he was said to shoe his horse with silver (argento).
42 Dis, a Latin name for the god of the underworld, here names the walled city of lower Hell; its towers are called mosques as the buildings of an alien, hostile city.
43 The rebel angels who fell from heaven with Lucifer.

words, for I did not believe I would ever return here. "O my dear guide, who more than seven times have restored my confidence and drawn me out of deep peril that stood against me, do not leave me," I said, "so undone; and if going further is denied us, let us quickly retrace our steps together." Inf. 8.103 And that lord who had led me there said to me: "Do not fear, for no one can take our passage from us; it is granted to us by such a One. But wait for me here, and comfort your weary spirit and feed it with good hope, for I will not leave you in the low world." So he goes away, and leaves me there, the sweet father, and I remain in doubt, for yes and no contend in my head. Inf. 8.112 I could not hear what he put to them; but he had not stayed there with them long when each one raced the others back inside. Those adversaries of ours shut the gates against the chest of my lord, who remained outside, and he turned back to me with slow steps. His eyes were on the ground, his brows shorn of all boldness, and he said amid sighs: "Who has denied me the houses of sorrow?" Inf. 8.121 And to me he said: "Do not be dismayed because I am angry, for I will win this contest, whoever circles within to defend the place. This insolence of theirs is nothing new, for they once used it at a less secret gate, which still stands without a bolt. Above it you saw the dead inscription; and already, on this side of it, there is coming down the slope, passing through the circles without escort, one by whom the city will be opened to us."[44]

CANTO 9

Inf. 9.1 The color that cowardice painted on me outwardly, when I saw my guide turn back, made him all the quicker to press his own new color inward. He stopped, attentive, like a man who listens, for his eye could not lead him far through the black air and the thick fog. "Still, we must win this fight," he began, "unless ... such a one offered herself to us. Oh, how long it seems

44 The gate of Hell (Canto 3), which the devils tried to bar against Christ when he descended into Hell after the Crucifixion; it has stood unbolted ever since.

to me until someone else arrives here!"[45] Inf. 9.10 I saw clearly how he covered over his beginning with what came after, words different from the first. But his speech frightened me all the same, because I took his broken-off phrase to a worse meaning, perhaps, than the one it had. "Does anyone from the first level, whose only punishment is hope cut off, ever come down into the depth of this dismal hollow?" I put this question, and he answered me: "Seldom does it happen that any of us makes the journey on which I am going.[46] Inf. 9.22 It is true that I was down here once before, conjured by that cruel Erichtho who called shades back to their bodies. My flesh had been stripped of me only a short while when she made me enter within that wall to draw a spirit out of the circle of Judas. That is the lowest place and the darkest, and the farthest from the heaven that turns all things. I know the way well, so be reassured.[47]

THE FURIES

The three Furies appear on the tower and call for Medusa to turn Dante to stone.

Inf. 9.31 This marsh that breathes out the great stench girds the sorrowful city all around, where we cannot now enter without anger." And he said more, but I do not have it in mind, because my eye had drawn me wholly toward the high tower with the glowing summit, where in an instant three infernal Furies, stained with blood, had swiftly risen upright. They had the limbs and bearing of women, and were girded with bright green hydras; they had little serpents and horned vipers for hair, which bound their savage temples. Inf. 9.43 And he, who knew well the handmaids of the queen of eternal weeping, said to me:

45 Virgil breaks off his sentence; "such a one" is Beatrice, who sent him to Dante (Inf. 2).

46 The first level is Limbo, where Virgil and the other virtuous pagans dwell, desiring God without hope.

47 Erichtho is the Thessalian sorceress in Lucan's *Pharsalia* who raises a dead soldier to prophesy; her sending Virgil to the circle of Judas, the lowest in Hell, is Dante's invention.

"Look at the fierce Furies. This is Megaera, on the left; the one who weeps on the right is Alecto; Tisiphone is in the middle"; and with that he fell silent. Each of them was tearing her breast with her nails; they beat themselves with their palms and cried out so loudly that I pressed close to the poet in fear. "Let Medusa come, and we will turn him to stone," they all said, looking down; "we did wrong not to take vengeance on Theseus for his assault."[48] Inf. 9.55 "Turn around and keep your eyes shut; for if the Gorgon shows herself and you should see her, there would be no returning above ever again." So said the master; and he himself turned me around, and did not trust my hands so far as not to cover my eyes with his own as well. O you who have sound intellects, look at the teaching that hides itself beneath the veil of the strange verses. Inf. 9.64 And already there came across the murky waves the crash of a sound full of terror, at which both shores trembled—made no differently than a wind, violent because of opposing heats, that strikes the wood and, with nothing to check it, shatters the branches, beats them down and carries them off; dusty in front, it goes proudly on, and makes the beasts and the shepherds flee. He freed my eyes and said: "Now direct the nerve of your sight across that ancient foam, over there where that smoke is harshest."

THE MESSENGER FROM HEAVEN

An angel crosses the Styx dry-shod and opens the gate of Dis with a wand.

Inf. 9.76 As frogs before their enemy the snake all scatter through the water until each one squats huddled on the land, so I saw more than a thousand ruined souls fleeing before one who was crossing the Styx at the ford with dry soles. He was clearing that thick air from his face, often moving his left hand before him, and he seemed weary only of that vexation. I perceived clearly that he was a messenger from heaven, and I turned to the mas-

48 The queen is Proserpina, whom the hero Theseus went down to the underworld to carry off. Medusa, the Gorgon, turned to stone anyone who looked at her.

ter; and he made a sign to me that I should stand quiet and bow down to him. Inf. 9.88 Ah, how full of disdain he seemed to me! He came to the gate, and with a little wand he opened it, for it offered no resistance. "O outcasts from heaven, despised people," he began upon the horrible threshold, "where does this insolence that dwells in you come from? Why do you kick against that will whose end can never be cut short, and which has many times increased your pain? What good is it to butt against the fates? Your Cerberus, if you remember well, still bears his chin and throat stripped bare for it."[49] Inf. 9.100 Then he turned back along the filthy road and said not a word to us, but had the look of a man urged and gnawed by some other care than that of the one before him. And we moved our feet toward the city, secure after the holy words. We entered there without any battle; and I, who had a desire to look upon the condition that such a fortress locks in, as soon as I was inside, send my eye around, and I see on every side a great plain full of sorrow and cruel torment. Inf. 9.112 Just as at Arles, where the Rhone grows stagnant, just as at Pola near the Quarnaro, which shuts Italy in and bathes its borders, the tombs make all the ground uneven, so they did here on every side, except that the manner here was more bitter: for flames were scattered among the graves, and these made them glow so thoroughly that no craft asks for iron hotter. All their lids were raised, and from them came such grievous laments that they truly seemed the laments of the wretched and the tormented.[50] Inf. 9.124 And I: "Master, who are those people who, buried within those stone coffins, make themselves heard with their sorrowful sighs?" And he to me: "Here are the arch-heretics with their followers of every sect, and the tombs are laden far more than you believe. Like is buried here with like, and the monuments are more and less hot." And after

49 Hercules, in one of his labors, dragged Cerberus out of the underworld in chains, which wore away the hair of his neck.

50 Arles in Provence and Pola (Pula) in Istria, on the Gulf of Quarnaro (Kvarner), were known for their great Roman cemeteries.

he had turned to the right, we passed between the torments and the high battlements.

CANTO 10

Inf. 10.1 Now my master goes along a hidden path between the wall of the city and the torments, and I behind his shoulders. "O supreme power, who turn me through these impious circles," I began, "speak to me as it pleases you, and satisfy my desires. The people who lie in the sepulchers—might they be seen? All the lids are already raised, and no one keeps guard." And he to me: "All will be closed when they return here from Jehoshaphat with the bodies they have left up above.[51] Inf. 10.13 In this part Epicurus has his cemetery, with all his followers, who make the soul die with the body. Therefore the question you put to me will soon be satisfied in here, and so will the desire you keep silent from me." And I: "Good guide, I do not keep my heart hidden from you except so as to speak little; and you have disposed me to that not only now."[52]

FARINATA

The Ghibelline leader Farinata rises from his burning tomb and speaks with Dante about Florence.

Inf. 10.22 "O Tuscan, who go alive through the city of fire, speaking so courteously, may it please you to stop in this place. Your speech makes it plain that you are a native of that noble fatherland to which I was perhaps too harsh." This sound came suddenly from one of the stone coffins; so, fearing, I drew a little closer to my guide. And he said to me: "Turn around—what are you doing? See there Farinata, who has risen upright: you will

51 The Valley of Jehoshaphat was where the Last Judgment was expected to take place (Joel 3).
52 Epicurus (341–270 BC), the Greek philosopher, taught that the soul perishes with the body.

see all of him from the waist up."[53] Inf. 10.34 I had already fixed my gaze on his; and he was rising up with chest and brow as if he held Hell in great scorn. And the bold and ready hands of my guide pushed me among the sepulchers to him, as he said: "Let your words be well chosen." When I was at the foot of his tomb, he looked at me a little, and then, almost disdainfully, asked me: "Who were your ancestors?" Inf. 10.43 I, who was eager to obey, did not hide it from him but laid it all open to him; at which he raised his brows a little upward, then said: "They were fiercely opposed to me and to my forebears and to my party, so that twice I scattered them." "If they were driven out, they returned from every quarter," I answered him, "both the one time and the other; but your people did not learn that art well."[54]

CAVALCANTE

Guido Cavalcanti's father asks after his son and falls back, believing him dead.

Inf. 10.52 Then there rose up at the uncovered opening, beside this one, a shade visible down to the chin; I think he had risen to his knees. He looked around me, as if he had a wish to see whether someone else was with me; but when his suspicion was entirely spent, he said, weeping: "If you go through this blind prison by height of genius, where is my son? And why is he not with you?" And I to him: "I do not come by myself: he who waits there leads me through here, one whom perhaps your Guido held in disdain."[55] Inf. 10.64 His words and the manner of his punishment had already read me his name; that is why my answer was so full. Suddenly drawing himself upright, he cried: "What? Did you say 'he held'? Is he not still alive? Does the sweet light not strike his

53 Farinata degli Uberti (d. 1264) was the leader of the Ghibelline party in Florence.

54 Dante's family were Guelfs, driven out by the Ghibellines in 1248 and 1260 and returning both times, while the Ghibellines, expelled after 1266, never came back. Dante addresses Farinata with the respectful plural "voi," rendered here as plain "you."

55 The shade is Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, father of the poet Guido Cavalcanti, Dante's friend, who was married to Farinata's daughter.

eyes?" When he perceived some delay that I made before answering, he fell back face upward and did not appear outside again. But that other, great-souled one, at whose bidding I had stopped, did not change his expression, nor move his neck, nor bend his side. Inf. 10.76 "And if," he said, continuing his first words, "if they have learned that art badly, that torments me more than this bed. But the face of the lady who reigns here will not be rekindled fifty times before you will know how heavy that art weighs. And so may you ever return to the sweet world, tell me: why is that people so pitiless against my kin in every one of its laws?" Whereupon I to him: "The slaughter and the great carnage that dyed the Arbia red cause such prayers to be made in our temple."[56] Inf. 10.88 After he had shaken his head, sighing, "I was not alone in that," he said, "nor surely would I have moved with the others without cause. But I was alone, there where everyone agreed to wipe out Florence, the one who defended her openly." "Ah, so may your descendants someday find rest," I begged him, "untie for me the knot that has tangled my judgment here. It seems, if I hear rightly, that you see beforehand what time brings with it, and that with the present you hold a different way."[57] Inf. 10.100 "We see, like one who has poor light, the things," he said, "that are far from us; so much does the supreme Leader still shine on us. When they draw near, or are present, our intellect is wholly empty; and unless someone brings us word, we know nothing of your human state. So you can understand that all our knowledge will be dead from that moment when the door of the future is closed." Then, as if stung with remorse for my fault, I said: "Now, then, you will tell that fallen one that his son is still joined with the living. Inf. 10.112 And if I was silent before answering, let him know that I did it because I was already thinking within the error you have resolved for me." And my master was already calling me back; so I begged the

56 The lady is Proserpina, identified with the moon, so the prophecy points to Dante's own exile within fifty months. The Arbia flows by Montaperti, where in 1260 the Ghibellines, Farinata among them, routed the Florentine Guelfs.
57 After Montaperti, at a council at Empoli, the victorious Ghibellines proposed razing Florence; Farinata alone opposed it.

spirit more hastily to tell me who was there with him. He said to me: "Here I lie with more than a thousand: in here is the second Frederick, and the Cardinal; and of the others I am silent." Then he hid himself; and I turned my steps toward the ancient poet, thinking again on that speech which seemed hostile to me.[58] Inf. 10.124 He moved on, and then, as we went, he said to me: "Why are you so bewildered?" And I satisfied him in his question. "Let your mind keep what you have heard against yourself," that sage commanded me, "and now pay attention here"—and he raised his finger. "When you stand before the sweet ray of her whose lovely eye sees everything, from her you will learn the journey of your life." Then he turned his feet to the left: we left the wall and went toward the middle by a path that strikes into a valley, whose stench was offensive even up there.[59]

CANTO 11

Inf. 11.1 On the edge of a high bank formed by great broken rocks in a circle, we came above a crueler crowd; and there, because of the horrible excess of stench that the deep abyss throws out, we drew back behind the lid of a great tomb, where I saw an inscription that said: "I hold Pope Anastasius, whom Photinus drew from the straight way." "Our descent must be slow, so that our sense may first grow a little used to the dismal breath, and then we will not need to heed it."[60]

THE PLAN OF HELL

Virgil explains how the sins of violence and fraud are arranged in the circles below.

Inf. 11.13 So the master; and I said to him: "Find some compensation, so that the time does not pass lost"; and he: "You see that I

58 The second Frederick is the Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250); the Cardinal is Ottaviano degli Ubaldini (d. 1273), a Ghibelline.
59 "Her whose lovely eye sees everything" is Beatrice.
60 Pope Anastasius II (496–498) was believed in Dante's time to have been led by the deacon Photinus into a heresy denying Christ's divinity.

am thinking of that. My son, within these rocks," he then began to say, "are three smaller circles, from level to level, like those you are leaving. All are full of accursed spirits; but so that afterward the sight alone may suffice you, understand how and why they are confined. Of every malice that wins hatred in heaven, injury is the end, and every such end afflicts another either by force or by fraud. Inf. 11.25 But because fraud is man's own evil, it displeases God more; and so the fraudulent are below, and more pain assails them. The first circle is all of the violent; but because violence is done to three persons, it is divided and built in three rings. One can do violence to God, to oneself, to one's neighbor—I mean to them and to their things, as you will hear with clear reasoning. Inf. 11.34 Violent death and painful wounds are dealt to one's neighbor, and to his possessions ruin, burning and harmful extortions; so murderers and everyone who strikes wrongfully, wreckers and plunderers, are all tormented by the first ring in different bands. A man may lay violent hands on himself and on his own goods; and so in the second ring whoever deprives himself of your world, gambles away and squanders his wealth, and weeps there where he should be joyful, must repent in vain. Inf. 11.46 One can do violence to the Deity by denying and blaspheming it in one's heart, and by despising nature and her goodness; and so the smallest ring seals with its mark both Sodom and Cahors, and whoever speaks from the heart in contempt of God. Fraud, by which every conscience is stung, a man may use on one who trusts in him and on one who keeps no store of trust.[61] Inf. 11.55 This latter way seems to kill only the bond of love that nature makes; so in the second circle nest hypocrisy, flatteries and whoever practices sorcery, falsification, theft and simony, panders, grafters and similar filth. By the other way, both the love that nature makes is forgotten and the love that is added to it afterward, from which special trust is created; so in the smallest circle, where the center of the universe

61 Sodom stands for those guilty of sodomy, and Cahors, a town in southern France known for its moneylenders, for usurers.

is, on which Dis sits, whoever betrays is consumed forever."[62] Inf. 11.67 And I: "Master, your reasoning proceeds quite clearly, and distinguishes quite well this abyss and the people who possess it. But tell me: those of the fat marsh, those whom the wind drives and whom the rain beats, and those who clash with such bitter tongues, why are they not punished inside the red city, if God holds them in wrath? And if he does not, why are they in such a plight?" And he to me: "Why does your wit," he said, "stray so far from its usual way? Or where else is your mind looking?[63] Inf. 11.79 Do you not remember those words with which your Ethics treats fully the three dispositions that heaven does not want: incontinence, malice and mad bestiality? And how incontinence offends God less and incurs less blame? If you consider this teaching well and call to mind who those are who undergo punishment up above, outside, you will see clearly why they are separated from these wicked ones, and why divine vengeance hammers them less wrathfully." "O Sun that heals every troubled sight, you content me so when you resolve my doubts that doubting pleases me no less than knowing.[64] Inf. 11.94 Turn back again a little," I said, "to where you say that usury offends the divine goodness, and untie the knot." "Philosophy," he said to me, "for one who understands it, notes, and not in one place only, how nature takes her course from the divine intellect and from its art; and if you note your Physics well, you will find, after not many pages, that your art follows nature as far as it can, as the pupil follows the master, so that your art is, as it were, God's grandchild.[65] Inf. 11.106 From these two, if you call to mind Genesis at the beginning, people must take their living and advance. And because the usurer holds to another way, he despises nature in herself and in her follower, since he places

62 Simony is the buying and selling of church offices; graft (barratry) is trafficking in public offices.
63 Virgil is asked about the wrathful, the lustful, the gluttonous, and the avaricious and prodigal, all punished in the circles above, outside the city of Dis.
64 "Your Ethics" is Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,* whose seventh book distinguishes these three dispositions.
65 Aristotle's *Physics* (Book 2) teaches that human art imitates nature.

his hope elsewhere. But follow me now, for it pleases me to go: for the Fishes are quivering on the horizon, and the Wain lies wholly over Caurus, and the way down the cliff is farther on, over there."[66]

CANTO 12

Inf. 12.1 The place where we came to go down the bank was rugged as the Alps, and, because of what was there besides, such that every eye would shrink from it. Like that landslide which struck the Adige on its flank, on this side of Trento, whether through an earthquake or through failing support, where from the summit of the mountain, where it started, down to the plain the rock is so shattered that it might give some way down to anyone above;[67] Inf. 12.10 such was the descent of that ravine. And on the edge of the broken chasm lay stretched the infamy of Crete, which was conceived in the false cow; and when he saw us he bit himself, like one whom rage consumes within. My sage cried out toward him: "Perhaps you believe that here is the Duke of Athens, who up in the world dealt you your death? Get away, beast, for this man does not come taught by your sister, but goes to see your punishments."[68] Inf. 12.22 Like that bull which breaks loose at the moment it has already received the deathblow, and cannot walk but plunges this way and that, so I saw the Minotaur do. And my guide, quick to see it, cried: "Run to the passage; while he is in his fury, it is good that you go down." So we took our way down over that heap of fallen stones, which often shifted under my feet because of the unaccustomed weight. I went along thinking, and he said: "You are thinking,

66 Genesis 3 commands man to live by his labor on the earth. With Pisces rising and the Great Bear (the Wain) in the northwest, where the wind Caurus blows, dawn is about two hours away.

67 The landslide is probably the Slavini di Marco, a vast rockfall on the Adige river south of Trento, near Rovereto.

68 The Minotaur was born to Pasiphaë, queen of Crete, who hid inside a wooden cow to mate with a bull. Theseus, Duke of Athens, killed it with the help of its half-sister Ariadne.

perhaps, about this ruin, which is guarded by that bestial anger I have just quenched. Inf. 12.34 Now I want you to know that the other time I came down here into lower Hell, this rock had not yet fallen. But certainly, if I judge rightly, a little before He came who took from Dis the great prey of the uppermost circle, the deep, foul valley shook on every side so much that I thought the universe felt love, by which, as some believe, the world has more than once been turned back into Chaos; and at that moment this ancient rock, here and elsewhere, was thrown down like this.[69]

THE RIVER OF BLOOD

Centaurs patrol the boiling river where tyrants and murderers are punished.

Inf. 12.46 But fix your eyes below, for the river of blood is drawing near, in which boils whoever harms others by violence." O blind greed, wicked and mad, which so spurs us on in our short life, and then in the eternal one steeps us so cruelly! I saw a wide ditch bent into an arc, as one that embraces the whole plain, just as my escort had said; and between the foot of the bank and the ditch, centaurs armed with arrows were running one behind another, as they used to go hunting in the world. Inf. 12.58 Seeing us come down, every one of them stood still, and three left the troop with bows and arrows chosen beforehand; and one cried from far off: "To what torment are you coming, you who are descending the slope? Tell us from there; if not, I draw the bow." My master said: "We will make our answer to Chiron, close by, over there; your will was always so hasty, to your own harm." Inf. 12.67 Then he nudged me and said: "That is Nessus, who died for the beautiful Deianira, and himself took vengeance for himself; and the one in the middle, who gazes down at his chest, is the great Chiron, who raised Achilles; that other is Pholus, who was so

69 He who took the great prey is Christ, who at the Harrowing of Hell freed souls from Limbo. The idea that love periodically returns the world to chaos goes back to the Greek philosopher Empedocles.

full of rage. Around the ditch they go by thousands upon thousands, shooting at any soul that pulls itself out of the blood farther than its guilt has allotted it."[70] Inf. 12.76 We drew near those swift beasts. Chiron took an arrow, and with its notch pushed his beard back along his jaws. When he had uncovered his great mouth, he said to his companions: "Have you noticed that the one behind moves whatever he touches? The feet of the dead do not usually do that." And my good guide, who was now at his chest, where the two natures are joined, answered: "He is indeed alive, and all alone as he is I must show him the dark valley; necessity brings him here, and not pleasure. Inf. 12.88 One who left off singing alleluia gave me this new office; he is no robber, nor am I a thieving soul. But by that power through which I move my steps along so wild a road, give us one of yours to keep beside us, to show us where the ford is and to carry this man on his back, for he is not a spirit that can go through the air."[71] Inf. 12.97 Chiron wheeled round on his right breast and said to Nessus: "Go back and guide them as he asks, and make any other troop that runs into you give way." Now we moved on with our trusty escort along the edge of the crimson boiling, where those being boiled were raising loud shrieks. I saw people sunk in it up to the eyebrows; and the great centaur said: "These are tyrants who laid hands on blood and on others' goods. Inf. 12.106 Here they weep for the merciless harm they did; here is Alexander, and fierce Dionysius, who gave Sicily years of grief; and that brow with hair so black is Azzolino; and that other, who is blond, is Opizzo da Esti, who in truth was snuffed out by his stepson up in the world." Then I turned to the poet, and he said: "Let him be first for you now, and I second." A little farther on the centaur stopped above a people who seemed to rise out of

70 Nessus, shot by Hercules for trying to carry off his wife Deianira, gave her a shirt soaked in his poisoned blood that later killed Hercules. Chiron, the wise centaur, raised Achilles; Pholus was a centaur who ran riot at the wedding of Pirithous.

71 The one who left the singing of Heaven is Beatrice, who sent Virgil to Dante (Canto 2).

that boiling stream as far as the throat.[72] Inf. 12.118 He showed us a shade off to one side, alone, saying: "That one, in the bosom of God, cleft the heart that is still honored on the Thames." Then I saw people who held their heads, and their whole chests as well, out of the stream; and of these I recognized many. So, more and more, that blood grew shallower, until it cooked only the feet; and there was our crossing of the ditch.[73] Inf. 12.127 "Just as you see that on this side the boiling stream keeps growing shallower," said the centaur, "I want you to believe that on this other side its bed sinks lower and lower, until it comes round again to where tyranny must groan. Divine justice here goads that Attila who was a scourge on earth, and Pyrrhus, and Sextus; and forever milks the tears that it unlocks with the boiling from Rinier da Corneto and Rinier Pazzo, who made such war upon the roads." Then he turned back and crossed the ford again.[74]

CANTO 13

Inf. 13.1 Nessus had not yet reached the other side when we set off into a wood that was marked by no path. No green leaves, but dusky in color; no smooth branches, but knotted and twisted; no fruit was there, but poisoned thorns. Those wild beasts that hate the tilled lands between Cecina and Corneto do not have thickets so harsh or so dense. Here the foul Harpies make their nests, who drove the Trojans from the Strophades with a grim prophecy of harm to come.[75] Inf. 13.13 They have wide wings, and human

72 Alexander is probably the tyrant of Pherae, and Dionysius the tyrant of Syracuse; Azzolino is Ezzelino III da Romano (d. 1259), notoriously cruel lord of the March of Treviso. Opizzo is Obizzo II d'Este of Ferrara (d. 1293), said to have been smothered by his own son, whom Dante calls a stepson.

73 Guy de Montfort murdered his cousin Henry of Cornwall during Mass in a church at Viterbo in 1271; Henry's heart was said to be kept in a casket in London, by the Thames.

74 Pyrrhus is either the king of Epirus or Achilles' son, and Sextus probably Sextus Pompeius, who turned to piracy. Rinier da Corneto and Rinier Pazzo were notorious highway robbers of Dante's own time.

75 The land between the Cecina river and Corneto is the Tuscan Maremma, then a wild, marshy country. In the Aeneid (Book 3) the Harpies drive the Trojans from the Strophades islands and foretell famine for them.

necks and faces, taloned feet, and their great bellies feathered; they make laments on the strange trees. And my good master: "Before you go in farther, know that you are in the second ring," he began to say to me, "and will be, until you come to the horrible sand. So look well, and you will see things that would rob my words of belief." I heard wailing drawn out on every side, and saw no one who was making it; so I stopped, utterly bewildered.

PIER DELLE VIGNE

Dante breaks a twig from a thornbush, and the soul of a suicide speaks through the wound.

Inf. 13.25 I believe he believed that I believed that so many voices came from among those stumps, from people who were hiding from us. So the master said: "If you break off some little twig from one of these plants, the thoughts you have will all be cut short." Then I reached my hand a little forward and plucked a small branch from a great thornbush; and its trunk cried: "Why do you break me?" Inf. 13.34 After it had grown dark with blood, it began to cry again: "Why do you tear me? Have you no spirit of pity at all? We were men, and now we have been turned into stumps; your hand should surely have been more merciful, even if we had been the souls of snakes." As from a green log that is burning at one end, and drips at the other, and hisses with the air escaping, so from that broken splinter came words and blood together; at which I let the tip fall, and stood like a man who is afraid. Inf. 13.46 "If he had been able to believe before, wounded soul," my sage replied, "what he had seen only in my verse, he would not have stretched out his hand against you; but the incredible thing made me lead him to a deed that weighs on me myself. But tell him who you were, so that, by way of some amends, he may refresh your fame in the world above, where he is allowed to return." And the trunk: "You so lure me with sweet speech that I cannot keep silent; and may it not burden you if I

let myself be snared a little into talking.[76] Inf. 13.58 I am he who held both keys of Frederick's heart, and who turned them, locking and unlocking, so gently that I shut almost everyone else out of his secrets. I kept faith with my glorious office, so much that I lost my sleep and my strength for it. The prostitute who never turned her lewd eyes away from Caesar's household, the common death and the vice of courts, inflamed every mind against me; and the inflamed so inflamed Augustus that glad honors turned to dismal mourning.[77] Inf. 13.70 My mind, in a scornful mood, believing it could escape scorn by dying, made me unjust against my just self. By the new roots of this tree I swear to you that I never broke faith with my lord, who was so worthy of honor. And if either of you returns to the world, let him comfort my memory, which still lies low from the blow that envy dealt it." He waited a little, and then: "Since he is silent," the poet said to me, "do not lose the moment; but speak, and ask him whatever more you wish." Inf. 13.82 So I said to him: "You ask him further about whatever you think would satisfy me; for I could not, so much pity grips my heart." So he began again: "So may this man freely do for you what your words beg, imprisoned spirit, may it please you further to tell us how the soul is bound into these knots; and tell us, if you can, whether any soul ever frees itself from such limbs." Inf. 13.91 Then the trunk blew hard, and afterward that wind turned into this voice: "You will be answered briefly. When the fierce soul leaves the body from which it has torn itself away, Minos sends it to the seventh mouth. It falls into the wood, and no place is chosen for it; but wherever fortune flings it, there it sprouts like a grain of spelt; it rises as a shoot, and then as a wild plant; the Harpies, feeding afterward on its leaves, give it pain, and for the pain a window. Inf. 13.103 Like the others we shall come for our cast-off bodies, but not so that any of us may put them on again; for it is not just to

76 In the Aeneid (Book 3) Aeneas pulls branches from a bush that bleeds and speaks: it has grown from the body of the murdered Polydorus.

77 The speaker is Pier delle Vigne, chancellor of Emperor Frederick II; accused of treason, he was blinded and imprisoned, and killed himself in 1249. The prostitute is Envy; Caesar and Augustus here mean the emperor.

have what one has taken from oneself. Here we shall drag them, and through the mournful wood our bodies will be hung, each on the thornbush of its hostile shade." We were still attending to the trunk, believing it wanted to tell us more, when we were surprised by a noise, like one who hears the boar and the hunt coming toward his post, and hears the beasts and the branches crashing.[78] Inf. 13.115 And there were two on the left, naked and scratched, fleeing so hard that they broke through every tangle of the wood. The one in front: "Now come, come quickly, death!" And the other, who thought himself too slow, was shouting: "Lano, your legs were not so nimble at the jousts of the Toppo!" And since perhaps his breath was failing, he made one knot of himself and a bush. Behind them the wood was full of black hounds, ravenous and running, like greyhounds slipped from the chain.[79] Inf. 13.127 They set their teeth into the one who had crouched down, and tore him apart piece by piece; then they carried off those suffering limbs. Then my escort took me by the hand and led me to the bush, which was weeping, in vain, through its bleeding wounds. "Jacomo da Sant'Andrea," it was saying, "what good did it do you to make a screen of me? What blame have I for your wicked life?" When the master had stopped above it, he said: "Who were you, who through so many broken tips blow out your sorrowful speech with blood?"[80] Inf. 13.139 And he to us: "O souls who have come to see the shameful mangling that has so torn my leaves from me, gather them up at the foot of this wretched bush. I was of the city that changed its first patron for the Baptist; for which reason he, with his art, will always make it sorrowful; and were it not that at the crossing of the Arno some semblance of him still remains, those citizens

78 At the Last Judgment all souls will come to take back their bodies.
79 Lano of Siena, a notorious spendthrift, was killed in the ambush of Pieve al Toppo in 1288; Dante calls the battle "jousts" in irony.
80 Jacomo da Sant'Andrea was a Paduan who squandered a great fortune; he was put to death in 1239, probably by Ezzelino da Romano.

who afterward refounded it on the ashes Attila left would have labored in vain. I made a gibbet for myself of my own house."[81]

CANTO 14

Inf. 14.1 Because love of my native place constrained me, I gathered up the scattered leaves and gave them back to him, who was already hoarse. Then we came to the boundary where the second ring is divided from the third, and where a horrible art of justice is seen. To make these new things clear, I say that we arrived at a plain that rejects every plant from its bed. The mournful wood is a garland around it, as the dismal ditch is around the wood; there, at the very edge, we stopped our steps. Inf. 14.13 The ground was a dry, dense sand, made in no other way than that which was once trodden by the feet of Cato. O vengeance of God, how much you must be feared by everyone who reads what was made manifest to my eyes! I saw many flocks of naked souls, who were all weeping most wretchedly, and different laws seemed to be laid upon them. Some people lay on the ground face upward; some sat all huddled up; and others moved about continually. Those that went around were the most numerous, and those that lay down under the torment were fewer, but their tongues were more loosened to lament.[82] Inf. 14.28 Over all the sand, falling slowly, broad flakes of fire were raining down, like snow in the mountains when there is no wind. Like the flames which Alexander, in those hot regions of India, saw falling on his army, unbroken all the way to the ground, so that he took care to have the soil trampled by his troops, because the fire was more easily put out while it was still single: so the

81 Florence's first patron was Mars, god of war, replaced by John the Baptist; a statue held to be of Mars stood by the Ponte Vecchio until 1333. The legend that Attila destroyed Florence confuses him with the Gothic king Totila.
82 Cato the Younger led his army across the Libyan desert in 47 BC, as told in Lucan's Pharsalia.

eternal burning came down; and the sand caught fire from it, like tinder under the steel, to double the pain.[83]

CAPANEUS

On the burning sand, the giant king Capaneus still defies God.

Inf. 14.40 Never at rest was the dance of the wretched hands, now here, now there, shaking the fresh burning off themselves. I began: "Master, you who overcome all things except the hard demons who came out against us at the entrance of the gate, who is that great one who seems not to care about the fire, and lies scornful and scowling, so that the rain does not seem to ripen him?" Inf. 14.49 And that same one, who had noticed that I was asking my guide about him, cried: "What I was alive, that I am dead. Though Jove should weary his smith, from whom in anger he took the sharp thunderbolt with which I was struck on my last day; or though he should weary the others, one shift after another, in Mongibello at the black forge, crying, 'Good Vulcan, help, help,'[84] Inf. 14.58 as he did at the battle of Phlegra, and should hurl his bolts at me with all his might, he could not have a joyful revenge on me." Then my guide spoke with such force that I had never heard him so loud: "O Capaneus, in that your pride is not quenched, you are punished all the more: no torment except your own rage would be pain enough to match your fury."[85] Inf. 14.67 Then he turned to me with a kinder look, saying: "That was one of the seven kings who besieged Thebes; he held God in disdain, and seems to hold him so still, and seems to prize him little. But, as I told him, his own scorn is a fitting ornament for his breast. Now follow behind me, and take care that you do not set your feet on the burning sand yet, but always keep them close to the wood." In silence we came to where a

83 The episode comes from a letter of Alexander the Great to Aristotle about the wonders of India, well known in the Middle Ages.
84 The speaker is Capaneus, one of the seven kings who besieged Thebes, struck down by Jove's thunderbolt for defying him. Mongibello is Mount Etna, where Vulcan and his helpers, the Cyclopes, forged Jove's thunderbolts.
85 At Phlegra, Jupiter overthrew the rebel giants with his thunderbolts.

little stream gushes out of the wood, whose redness still makes me shudder. Inf. 14.79 As the brook that flows out of the Bulicame, which the sinful women then share among themselves, so this one ran down across the sand. Its bed and both its sloping banks had been turned to stone, and so had the margins on either side, so I saw that our way lay there. "Among all the other things I have shown you since we came in through the gate whose threshold is denied to no one, your eyes have seen nothing as notable as this present stream, which quenches all the little flames above it."[86]

THE OLD MAN OF CRETE

Virgil describes the great statue inside Mount Ida whose tears feed the rivers of Hell.

Inf. 14.91 These were my guide's words, so I begged him to grant me the food for which he had granted me the appetite. "In the middle of the sea there lies a ruined land," he said then, "which is called Crete, under whose king the world was once chaste. There is a mountain there, once glad with water and leaves, which was called Ida; now it is deserted, like a thing worn out with age. Rhea once chose it as a safe cradle for her son, and to hide him better, she had shouts raised there whenever he cried.[87] Inf. 14.103 Inside the mountain stands a great old man, upright, who keeps his back turned toward Damietta and looks at Rome as if into his mirror. His head is formed of fine gold, and his arms and breast are pure silver; then he is copper down to the fork. From there downward he is all choice iron, except that his right foot is baked clay, and he stands upright on that one more than on the other.[88] Inf. 14.112 Every part except the gold

86 The Bulicame is a hot sulfurous spring near Viterbo, whose waters were channeled off for baths, among them those used by prostitutes.
87 Under Saturn, king of Crete, the world lived in the Golden Age. His wife Rhea hid their infant son Jupiter on Mount Ida, where her attendants made a din to drown out his cries so that Saturn, who devoured his children, would not find him.
88 Damietta is a port in Egypt. The statue recalls the figure in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2.

is broken by a crack that drips tears, and these, gathered together, bore through that cavern. Their course falls from rock to rock into this valley: they form Acheron, Styx and Phlegethon. Then it goes down through this narrow channel to where there is no more going down; they form Cocytus, and what that pool is like you will see, so it is not described here." And I to him: "If the present stream flows down in this way from our world, why does it appear to us only at this border?" Inf. 14.124 And he to me: "You know that the place is round, and although you have come a long way, always to the left as you went down toward the bottom, you have not yet turned through the whole circle. So if something new appears to us, it should not bring wonder to your face." And I again: "Master, where are Phlegethon and Lethe to be found? For you are silent about the one, and the other, you say, is made from this rain." Inf. 14.133 "In all your questions you certainly please me," he replied, "but the boiling of the red water should well have answered one of those you ask. You will see Lethe, but outside this pit, there where souls go to wash themselves when their guilt, repented of, has been taken away." Then he said: "Now it is time to leave the wood. See that you come behind me. The margins, which are not burned, make a path, and above them every fiery vapor is quenched."[89]

CANTO 15

Inf. 15.1 Now one of the hard margins carries us along, and the steam from the stream casts a shade above, so that it shields the water and the banks from the fire. As the Flemings between Wissant and Bruges, fearing the flood tide that rushes toward them, build their bulwark so that the sea may be driven back; and as the Paduans do along the Brenta to defend their towns and their castles before Carinthia feels the heat, in such a likeness were

89 The boiling river of blood seen in Canto 12 is Phlegethon, whose Greek name means "burning."

those banks made, though the master, whoever he was, made them neither so high nor so thick.[90]

BRUNETTO LATINI

Dante meets his old teacher among the violent against nature and hears his exile foretold.

Inf. 15.13 We were already so far from the wood that I would not have seen where it was, even if I had turned back, when we met a troop of souls coming along the bank. Each of them looked at us as people look at one another in the evening under a new moon, and they puckered their brows at us as an old tailor does at the eye of his needle. Eyed in this way by such a company, I was recognized by one, who took me by the hem and cried: "What a marvel!" Inf. 15.25 And I, when he stretched out his arm to me, fixed my eyes on his baked features, so that the scorched face did not keep my intellect from knowing him; and bending my face down to his, I answered: "Are you here, Ser Brunetto?" And he: "O my son, may it not displease you if Brunetto Latini turns back with you a little way and lets the file go on."[91] Inf. 15.34 I said to him: "I beg it of you with all my heart; and if you wish me to sit with you, I will, if he is willing, for I go with him." "O son," he said, "whoever of this flock stops even for a moment must then lie a hundred years without fanning himself when the fire strikes him. So go on: I will come along at your hem, and then I will rejoin my band, who go weeping for their eternal losses." Inf. 15.43 I did not dare come down from the road to walk level with him, but I kept my head bowed, like someone walking in reverence. He began: "What fortune or destiny leads you down here before your last day? And who is this who shows you the way?" "Up there above, in the clear life," I answered him, "I lost my way in a valley, before my age was full. Only yesterday morning

90 Wissant is a port near Calais. The Brenta floods when the snows melt in the Carinthian Alps.

91 Brunetto Latini (c. 1220–1294), Florentine notary, statesman and writer, was a mentor to Dante. Dante addresses him with the respectful plural "voi," rendered here as plain "you."

I turned my back on it; this one appeared to me as I was going back into it, and he is leading me home by this path." Inf. 15.55 And he to me: "If you follow your star, you cannot fail to reach the glorious harbor, if I judged rightly in the fair life; and if I had not died so early, seeing heaven so kind to you, I would have given you comfort in your work. But that ungrateful, malicious people who came down from Fiesole in ancient times, and still smack of the mountain and the rock, will become your enemy because of your good deeds. And with reason: for among the sour sorb apples it is not fitting for the sweet fig to bear fruit.[92] Inf. 15.67 An old report in the world calls them blind; they are a people avaricious, envious and proud: see that you cleanse yourself of their ways. Your fortune holds such honor in store for you that both one party and the other will hunger for you, but the grass will be far from the goat. Let the beasts of Fiesole make fodder of themselves, and not touch the plant, if any still springs up in their dung, in which the holy seed of those Romans lives again who stayed there when it became the nest of so much malice." Inf. 15.79 "If my prayer were fully granted," I answered him, "you would not yet be banished from human nature; for fixed in my mind, and now it grieves my heart, is the dear, kind, fatherly image of you, when in the world, from time to time, you taught me how a man makes himself eternal. And how grateful I am for it must, while I live, be seen in what I say. What you tell me of my course I write down, and keep it, with another text, to be explained by a lady who will know how, if I reach her.[93] Inf. 15.91 This much I want to be plain to you: so long as my conscience does not reproach me, I am ready for Fortune, whatever she wills. Such a pledge is not new to my ears; so let Fortune turn her wheel as she pleases, and the peasant his mattock." My master then turned back over his right cheek and looked at me; then he said: "He listens well who takes note of it." Nor do I go on

92 Fiesole is the hill town above Florence; legend held that Florence was founded by Romans who settled there together with people from Fiesole.

93 The lady is Beatrice; the "other text" is Farinata's prophecy of Dante's exile in Canto 10.

speaking any less with Ser Brunetto for that, and I ask who are his most famous and most eminent companions. Inf. 15.103 And he to me: "It is good to know of some; of the others it will be praiseworthy to keep silent, for the time would be too short for so much talk. In sum, know that all were clerics and great men of letters, and of great fame, befouled in the world by one and the same sin. Priscian goes along with that wretched crowd, and Francesco d'Accorso; and you could also have seen there, if you had had any craving for such scurf, the one who was transferred by the servant of servants from the Arno to the Bacchiglione, where he left his ill-strained sinews.[94] Inf. 15.115 I would say more, but my walking and my talk cannot go on longer, for I see new smoke rising there from the sand. People are coming with whom I must not be. Let my Treasure be commended to you, in which I still live; and I ask no more." Then he turned back, and seemed like one of those who run for the green cloth at Verona across the open field; and of them he seemed the one who wins, not the one who loses.[95]

CANTO 16

Inf. 16.1 I was already at a place where the roar of the water falling into the next circle could be heard, like the hum that beehives make, when three shades broke away together, running, from a troop that was passing under the rain of the harsh torment. They came toward us, and each was crying: "Stop, you who by your dress seem to us to be someone from our wicked city." Alas, what wounds I saw on their limbs, new and old, burned in by the flames! It still grieves me only to remember it. Inf. 16.13 At their cries my teacher stopped to listen; he turned his face toward me and said: "Now wait; to these one ought to be courteous. And if it

94 Priscian was a sixth-century Latin grammarian, and Francesco d'Accorso a thirteenth-century teacher of law at Bologna. The last is Andrea de' Mozzi, bishop of Florence, moved by the pope ("servant of the servants of God") to Vicenza on the Bacchiglione.

95 The Treasure (Tresor) is Brunetto's encyclopedia, written in French. At Verona a footrace was run each year with a length of green cloth as the prize.

were not for the fire that the nature of the place shoots down, I would say that haste befitted you more than them." As we stopped, they began their old lament again, and when they had reached us, all three made a wheel of themselves. Inf. 16.22 As champions, naked and oiled, used to do, watching for their hold and their advantage before they come to blows and thrusts, so, wheeling, each kept his face turned toward me, so that his neck traveled continually in the opposite direction to his feet. "And if the misery of this soft, sandy place brings us and our prayers into contempt," one began, "and our darkened and scorched appearance, let our fame move your mind to tell us who you are, who so securely rub your living feet through Hell. Inf. 16.34 This one, whose footprints you see me tread, though he goes naked and stripped of hair, was of higher rank than you believe. He was the grandson of the good Gualdrada; his name was Guido Guerra, and in his life he did much with his counsel and with his sword. The other who tramples the sand behind me is Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, whose voice should have been welcomed in the world above. And I, who am set on this cross with them, was Jacopo Rusticucci; and certainly my fierce wife harms me more than anything else."[96] Inf. 16.46 If I had been sheltered from the fire, I would have thrown myself down among them, and I believe my teacher would have allowed it. But since I would have been burned and baked, fear overcame the good will that made me eager to embrace them. Then I began: "Not contempt, but sorrow, did your condition fix within me, so deep that it will be long before it leaves me entirely, as soon as this lord of mine said words to me by which I understood that people such as you were coming. Inf. 16.58 I am from your city, and always I have retold and heard with affection your deeds and your honored names. I am leaving the gall behind, and going for the sweet fruits promised me by the truthful guide; but first I must plunge

96 Guido Guerra, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi and Jacopo Rusticucci were leading thirteenth-century Florentine Guelfs; Dante asked after Tegghiaio and Rusticucci in Canto 6. Tegghiaio had advised against the campaign that ended in the Guelf defeat at Montaperti (1260).

down to the center." "So may your soul long guide your limbs," that one answered again, "and so may your fame shine after you, tell us: do courtesy and valor dwell in our city as they used to, or have they gone clean out of it? Inf. 16.70 For Guglielmo Borsiere, who has been grieving with us only a short while and goes there with our companions, torments us greatly with his words." "The newcomers and the sudden gains have bred pride and excess in you, Florence, so that already you weep for it." So I cried with my face raised; and the three, who took this as my answer, looked at one another as men look when they hear the truth. "If at other times it costs you so little," they all replied, "to satisfy others, happy are you, who can speak like this at will![97] Inf. 16.82 So, if you escape from these dark places and return to see the beautiful stars again, when it will please you to say, 'I was there,' see that you speak of us to people." Then they broke their wheel, and as they fled, their swift legs seemed like wings. An *ammen* [amen] could not have been said as quickly as they vanished; so my master thought it time to go. I followed him, and we had gone only a little way when the sound of the water was so near us that, had we spoken, we would scarcely have been heard. Inf. 16.94 Like that river which is the first to keep its own course from Monte Viso eastward, on the left slope of the Apennines—which is called Acquacheta up above, before it comes down into its low bed, and at Forlì no longer bears that name—and roars there above San Benedetto dell'Alpe as it falls in a single cascade, where there ought to have been shelter for a thousand; so, down a steep bank, we found that dark-stained water resounding, so loud that in a short while it would have hurt our ears.[98]

97 Guglielmo Borsiere was a Florentine of the thirteenth century, famed for his courtesy.

98 The river is the Montone, which Dante takes to be the first, from Monte Viso, to flow straight to the Adriatic rather than into the Po; its upper stretch is called the Acquacheta. San Benedetto dell'Alpe is a monastery in the Apennines.

THE CORD

Virgil throws Dante's cord into the abyss as a signal, and a monster rises.

Inf. 16.106 I had a cord girded around me, and with it I had once thought to catch the leopard with the painted hide. After I had loosed it all from me, as my guide had commanded, I held it out to him knotted and coiled. Then he turned toward his right side, and somewhat away from the edge he threw it down into that deep abyss. "Surely something new must answer," I said to myself, "this new signal that my master follows so with his eye." Inf. 16.118 Ah, how cautious people should be near those who do not see the deed alone, but with their wisdom look within our thoughts! He said to me: "Soon there will come up what I await, and what your thought is dreaming must soon be revealed to your sight." To that truth which has the face of a lie a man should always close his lips as long as he can, because it brings him shame through no fault of his own; Inf. 16.127 but here I cannot keep silent; and by the notes of this comedy, Reader, I swear to you—so may they not be empty of lasting favor—that I saw, through that thick, dark air, a figure come swimming upward, marvelous to even the steadiest heart, just as one returns who sometimes goes down to free the anchor that grips a reef or something else hidden in the sea, who stretches upward and draws in his feet.[99]

CANTO 17

Inf. 17.1 "Here is the beast with the pointed tail, that crosses mountains and breaks through walls and weapons; here is the one that makes the whole world stink." So my guide began to speak to me, and he signaled to it to come to shore near the end of the stone we had walked along. And that filthy image of fraud came forward and brought its head and chest onto the bank, but it did

99 Here Dante gives his poem its name: the Comedy.

not draw its tail up onto the shore. Its face was the face of a just man, so kindly did its outward skin appear, and all the rest of its trunk was a serpent's.[100] Inf. 17.13 It had two paws, hairy up to the armpits; its back and chest and both its flanks were painted with knots and little circles. Tartars and Turks never made cloth with more colors in ground and pattern, nor were such webs ever set on the loom by Arachne. As boats sometimes lie at the shore, partly in the water and partly on land, and as there, among the gluttonous Germans, the beaver settles itself to wage its war, so that worst of beasts lay on the rim of stone that encloses the sand.[101] Inf. 17.25 Its whole tail quivered in the void, twisting upward the venomous fork that armed its tip like a scorpion's. The guide said: "Now our way must turn aside a little, as far as that wicked beast that lies there." So we went down on the right-hand side and took ten steps along the edge, to keep well clear of the sand and the flames; and when we had come to it, I saw, a little farther on, people sitting on the sand near the edge of the void.

THE USURERS

Dante visits the usurers, who sit under the fire with purses hung from their necks.

Inf. 17.37 There the master said to me: "So that you may carry away full experience of this ring, go and see how they fare. Let your talk there be brief; until you return I will speak with this beast, so that it may lend us its strong shoulders." So, still along the outermost edge of that seventh circle, I went all alone to where the sorrowful people sat. Their grief was bursting out through their eyes; this way and that they defended themselves with their hands, now against the flames, now against the burning ground. Inf. 17.49 Not otherwise do dogs in summer, now with their

100 The beast is Geryon, named at line 97. In classical myth he was a three-bodied giant killed by Hercules; Dante makes him the image of fraud.

101 Arachne, in Ovid, was a weaver who challenged Minerva and was turned into a spider. The beaver was believed to catch fish by dangling its tail in the water.

muzzles, now with their paws, when they are bitten by fleas or flies or gadflies. When I had set my eyes on the faces of some of them, on whom the painful fire falls, I recognized none of them; but I noticed that from the neck of each hung a pouch, which had a certain color and a certain emblem, and on this their eyes seem to feast.[102] Inf. 17.58 And as I came among them, looking, I saw on a yellow purse a blue figure that had the face and bearing of a lion. Then, as the course of my gaze moved on, I saw another purse, red as blood, showing a goose whiter than butter. And one who had his small white bag marked with a fat blue sow said to me: "What are you doing in this pit? Now go away; and since you are still alive, know that my neighbor Vitaliano will sit here at my left side.[103] Inf. 17.70 Among these Florentines I am a Paduan; many times they deafen my ears, shouting: 'Let the sovereign knight come, who will bring the pouch with three beaks!'" Here he twisted his mouth and stuck out his tongue, like an ox licking its nose. And I, fearing that staying longer might anger him who had warned me to stay only a little, turned back from those weary souls. I found my guide, who had already climbed onto the rump of the fierce animal, and he said to me: "Now be strong and bold.[104] Inf. 17.82 From now on we go down by stairs like these. Climb on in front, for I want to be in the middle, so that the tail can do no harm." Like one so near the shivering fit of the quartan fever that his nails are already pale, and who trembles all over just at the sight of shade, so I became at the words he spoke to me; but shame made its threats to me, the shame that makes a servant strong in the presence of a good lord. I settled myself on those huge ugly shoulders. "Yes"—I wanted to say, but my voice did not come out as I expected —"make sure you hold me."

102 These are the usurers; each pouch bears his family's coat of arms.
103 The arms identify the Florentine families of the Gianfigliazzi (lion) and the Obriachi (goose), and the Scrovegni of Padua (sow). Vitaliano is probably Vitaliano del Dente, also of Padua.
104 The "sovereign knight" is probably the Florentine usurer Gianni Buiamonte, whose arms bore three beaks (or goats: "becchi" can mean either).

RIDING GERYON

Geryon carries the two poets down through the air into the eighth circle.

Inf. 17.94 But he, who at another time had helped me in another peril, as soon as I had mounted clasped me in his arms and held me up; and he said: "Geryon, move now: make your circles wide and your descent slow; think of the new burden you carry." As a small boat leaves its berth, backing, backing, so the beast moved away from there; and when it felt itself entirely free, it turned its tail to where its chest had been, and, stretching it out, moved it like an eel, and with its paws gathered the air toward itself. Inf. 17.106 I do not believe there was greater fear when Phaethon let go of the reins, so that the sky was scorched, as it still appears, nor when wretched Icarus felt his back losing its feathers as the wax grew hot, while his father cried to him, "You are taking a bad course!"—than was mine, when I saw that I was in the air on every side, and saw every sight extinguished except the beast. It goes on swimming, slowly, slowly; it wheels and descends, but I do not perceive it, except that the wind blows on my face and from below.[105] Inf. 17.118 I could already hear, on my right hand, the whirlpool making a horrible roar beneath us, so I thrust my head out, with my eyes looking down. Then I was more afraid of the drop, for I saw fires and heard laments; so that, trembling all over, I clenched my legs tight. And then I saw —for I had not seen it before—our descending and our circling, by the great torments that drew near on different sides. Inf. 17.127 As the falcon that has been long on the wing, and, without seeing lure or bird, makes the falconer say, "Alas, you are coming down!"—descends weary to the place it left so swiftly, through a hundred circles, and settles far from its master, disdainful and sullen: so Geryon set us down at the bottom, right at the foot of

105 Phaethon, son of the Sun, lost control of his father's chariot and scorched the sky, leaving the Milky Way. Icarus flew too close to the sun on the wax-bound wings made by his father Daedalus.

the sheer rock, and, once unburdened of our persons, vanished like the arrow's notch from the string.

CANTO 18

Inf. 18.1 There is a place in Hell called Malebolge, all of stone the color of iron, like the wall that circles round it. Right in the middle of this malign field yawns a well, very wide and deep, whose structure I will describe *suo loco* [in its place]. The belt that remains, then, between the well and the foot of the high, hard bank, is round, and its floor is divided into ten valleys.[106] Inf. 18.10 As, where moat after moat encircles castles to guard their walls, the ground where they lie forms a pattern, such was the image those ditches formed here; and as from the thresholds of such fortresses little bridges run to the outer bank, so from the base of the cliff ran ridges of rock that cut across the embankments and ditches as far as the well, which cuts them off and gathers them in. In this place, shaken off Geryon's back, we found ourselves; and the poet kept to the left, and I moved behind him. Inf. 18.22 On my right hand I saw new things to pity, new torments and new scourgers, with which the first ditch was filled. At the bottom the sinners were naked: those on our side of the middle came toward us, facing us; those on the other side went in our direction, but with longer strides; just as the Romans, because of the great throng in the year of the Jubilee, have found a way to get the people across the bridge, so that on one side all have their faces toward the castle and go to Saint Peter's, while on the other side they go toward the hill.[107] Inf. 18.34 Here and there, along the dark rock, I saw horned demons with great whips, who beat them cruelly from behind. Ah, how they made them lift their heels at the first strokes! Not one waited for the second or the third. As I went on, my eyes met one of them,

106 Malebolge means roughly "evil pouches": the eighth circle, made of ten concentric ditches in which the fraudulent are punished.

107 Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed the Jubilee of 1300, which drew vast crowds of pilgrims to Rome. The bridge is the Ponte Sant'Angelo, with the Castel Sant'Angelo at one end and the small hill of Monte Giordano facing it across the Tiber.

and at once I said: "My eyes have not gone without the sight of this man before." Inf. 18.43 So I stopped my feet to make him out; and my sweet guide stopped with me and allowed me to go back a little. And that whipped soul thought he could hide himself by lowering his face, but it did him little good, for I said: "You who cast your eyes on the ground, if the features you bear are not false, you are Venedico Caccianimico. But what brings you to such stinging Salse?" And he said to me: "I say it unwillingly; but I am compelled by your plain speech, which makes me remember the world of old.[108] Inf. 18.55 I was the one who brought Ghisolabella to do the Marquis's will, however the vile story may be told. And I am not the only Bolognese who weeps here; in fact this place is so full of them that not so many tongues are now taught to say *sipa* between the Savena and the Reno; and if you want proof or testimony of this, call to mind our greedy hearts." As he was speaking, a demon struck him with his lash and said: "Off with you, pimp! There are no women here to sell for coin."[109] Inf. 18.67 I rejoined my escort; then with a few steps we came to where a ridge of rock jutted from the bank. We climbed it quite easily, and, turning right along its jagged crest, we left those eternal circling walls. When we were at the place where it opens out beneath to let the scourged pass through, my guide said: "Stop, and let the faces of these other ill-born souls strike your sight, for you have not yet seen them, since they have been going in the same direction as we."

JASON

Among the seducers whipped by demons, Virgil points out the hero Jason.

Inf. 18.79 From the old bridge we watched the line that came toward us from the other side, which the whip likewise drives on. The

108 Venedico Caccianimico was a Guelf leader of Bologna. The Salse was a ravine outside Bologna where the bodies of executed criminals were thrown; the word also means "sauces."

good master, without my asking, said to me: "Look at that great one who is coming, who for all his pain seems not to shed a tear: what a regal bearing he still keeps! That is Jason, who by courage and cunning deprived the Colchians of the ram. He passed by the island of Lemnos after its bold and pitiless women had put all their males to death.[110] Inf. 18.91 There, with cunning and with ornate words, he deceived Hypsipyle, the young girl who had earlier deceived all the others. He left her there, pregnant and alone; such guilt condemns him to such torment; and vengeance is also taken here for Medea. With him go all who deceive in that way; and let this be enough to know of the first valley and of those it holds in its jaws." We were already where the narrow path crosses the second embankment and makes of it a buttress for another arch.[111]

THE FLATTERERS

The flatterers lie plunged in excrement in the second ditch.

Inf. 18.103 From there we heard people whimpering in the next ditch, snorting through their snouts, and beating themselves with their palms. The banks were crusted with a mold from the breath below that cakes on them, which made war on the eyes and nose. The bottom is so deep that no spot gives enough of a view without climbing to the crown of the arch, where the rock rises highest. Inf. 18.112 There we came, and from there, down in the ditch, I saw people plunged in excrement that seemed to have come from human privies. And while I was searching down there with my eyes, I saw one with his head so smeared with dung that one could not tell whether he was layman or cleric. He shouted at me: "Why are you so greedy to look at me

109 Ghisolabella was Venedico's sister, and the Marquis was a lord of the house of Este. *Sipa* is Bolognese dialect for "yes," and the Savena and the Reno are the rivers on either side of Bologna.

110 Jason led the Argonauts to Colchis and carried off the Golden Fleece. The women of Lemnos had killed all the men of the island.

111 Hypsipyle had deceived the other Lemnian women by secretly sparing her father. Jason later abandoned Medea, who had helped him win the Fleece.

more than at the other filthy ones?" And I said to him: "Because, if I remember right, I have seen you before with your hair dry, and you are Alessio Interminei of Lucca: that is why I eye you more than all the others."[112] Inf. 18.124 And then he, beating his head: "Down here I have been sunk by the flatteries of which my tongue never had its fill." After that my guide said to me: "See that you push your sight a little farther forward, so that your eyes can properly reach the face of that filthy, disheveled woman who is scratching herself there with her dung-fouled nails, and now crouches down, and now stands on her feet. That is Thaïs, the prostitute who answered her lover when he said, 'Do I stand in great favor with you?'—'No: in marvelous favor!' And with this let our eyes be satisfied."[113]

CANTO 19

Inf. 19.1 O Simon Magus, O wretched followers, since you in your greed, for gold and silver, make adulteresses of the things of God, which ought to be the brides of goodness, now the trumpet must sound for you, for you are in the third ditch. We had already climbed onto the next tomb, to that part of the ridge which hangs right over the middle of the ditch. O highest Wisdom, how great is the art you show in heaven, on earth and in the evil world, and how justly your power apportions![114] Inf. 19.13 I saw, along the sides and across the bottom, the livid stone full of holes, all of one width, and each one round. They seemed to me neither smaller nor larger than those in my beautiful San Giovanni, made as places for those who baptize; one of which, not many years ago, I broke for the sake of someone who was

112 This ditch holds the flatterers. Alessio Interminei, of a leading family of Lucca, is otherwise little known.

113 Thaïs is the courtesan in the Roman comedy *The Eunuch* by Terence; Dante knew the exchange from Cicero.

114 Simon Magus tried to buy from the apostles the power to confer the Holy Spirit (Acts 8), giving his name to simony, the buying and selling of sacred things and Church offices.

drowning in it: and let this be a seal to undeceive everyone.[115] Inf. 19.22 Out of the mouth of each hole there stuck a sinner's feet, and his legs up to the thick of the calf, and the rest of him stayed inside. The soles of all of them were on fire, both soles; so that their joints twitched so violently that they would have snapped ropes of willow and of grass. As the flame on oily things usually moves only along the outer surface, so it was there from the heels to the toes. "Who is that one, master, who torments himself, twitching more than his other companions," I said, "and whom a fiercer flame is sucking?" Inf. 19.34 And he said to me: "If you want me to carry you down there by that bank which lies lower, you will learn from him about himself and his wrongs." And I: "Whatever pleases you is good to me: you are my lord, and you know that I do not depart from your will, and you know what is left unsaid." Then we came onto the fourth embankment; we turned and went down on the left hand into the narrow, perforated bottom.

POPE NICHOLAS III

A pope planted upside down mistakes Dante for Boniface, and Dante denounces simony.

Inf. 19.43 The good master did not set me down from his hip until he had brought me to the hole of the one who was lamenting so with his shanks. "Whoever you are, who keep your upper part below, sad soul, planted like a stake," I began to say, "if you can, speak." I stood like the friar who hears the confession of the treacherous assassin, who, once he is planted, calls him back, and so puts off his death. And he cried: "Are you already standing there, are you already standing there, Boniface? The writing lied to me by several years.[116] Inf. 19.55 Are you so soon sated with

115 San Giovanni is the Baptistery of Florence, where Dante was baptized; its font had round basins in which the priests stood to baptize.

116 Assassins were executed by being planted head down in a pit and buried alive. The speaker mistakes Dante for Pope Boniface VIII, still alive in 1300, the poem's date; the damned can see the future, and he expected Boniface only at his death in 1303.

that wealth for which you did not fear to take the beautiful Lady by deceit, and then to ravage her?" I became like those who stand as if mocked, because they do not understand what has been answered to them, and do not know how to reply. Then Virgil said: "Tell him quickly: 'I am not the one, I am not the one you think.'" And I answered as I was told. At this the spirit twisted both his feet; then, sighing, and with a tearful voice, he said to me: "Then what do you want of me?[117] Inf. 19.67 If it matters so much to you to know who I am that you have come all the way down the bank for that, know that I was clothed in the great mantle; and truly I was a son of the she-bear, so eager to advance the cubs that up there I put wealth in my purse, and here I have put myself. Beneath my head are dragged the others who came before me in simony, flattened in the fissures of the stone. I too will fall down there, when the one comes whom I believed you were when I asked my sudden question.[118] Inf. 19.79 But the time I have already spent with my feet burning, standing upside down like this, is longer than he will stay planted here with red feet: for after him will come, guilty of uglier deeds, from the west, a lawless shepherd, such that he must cover both him and me. He will be a new Jason, of whom we read in Maccabees; and as his king was pliant to that one, so to this one will be he who rules France."[119] Inf. 19.88 I do not know whether I was too rash here, for I answered him in this strain: "Ah, now tell me: how much treasure did our Lord ask of Saint Peter before he placed the keys in his keeping? Surely he asked nothing but 'Follow me.' Nor did Peter or the others take gold or silver from Matthias when he was chosen by lot for the place that the guilty soul had lost. So stay there, for you are justly punished; and guard

117 The Lady is the Church. Boniface was accused of tricking his predecessor Celestine V into resigning the papacy.
118 The speaker is Pope Nicholas III (Giovanni Gaetano Orsini, pope 1277–1280); the Orsini name suggests "bear," hence the she-bear and her cubs, his relatives.
119 The lawless shepherd is Clement V (pope 1305–1314), a Gascon who moved the papacy to Avignon, compliant with Philip IV of France. Jason, in 2 Maccabees, bought the high priesthood from King Antiochus.

well the ill-gotten money that made you bold against Charles.[120] Inf. 19.100 And were it not that I am still forbidden by reverence for the supreme keys, which you held in the happy life, I would use still harsher words; for your avarice afflicts the world, trampling the good and raising up the wicked. It was you shepherds the Evangelist had in view when he saw her who sits upon the waters prostituting herself with kings: she who was born with the seven heads and drew strength from the ten horns, as long as virtue pleased her husband.[121] Inf. 19.112 You have made yourselves a god of gold and silver; and what difference is there between you and the idolater, except that he worships one, and you a hundred? Ah, Constantine, how much evil was mothered, not by your conversion, but by that dowry which the first rich father took from you!" And while I was singing him such notes, whether anger or conscience was biting him, he kicked hard with both his soles. I truly believe it pleased my guide, so contented was his look as he listened all the while to the sound of the true words I spoke.[122] Inf. 19.124 So he took me in both his arms, and, when he had me wholly up against his chest, he climbed back by the way he had come down; nor did he tire of holding me clasped to him until he had carried me to the top of the arch that is the crossing from the fourth to the fifth embankment. There he gently set down his burden—gently, because of the rough, steep ridge, which would be a hard passage for goats. From there another valley was revealed to me.

CANTO 20

Inf. 20.1 Of a new punishment I must make verses, and give matter to the twentieth canto of the first canzone, which is of the sub-

120 Matthias was chosen by lot to replace Judas among the apostles (Acts 1). Nicholas was believed to have taken bribes to oppose Charles of Anjou, King of Sicily.
121 The Evangelist is Saint John, author of Revelation, where a woman seated on many waters, with seven heads and ten horns, commits fornication with the kings of the earth (Revelation 17).

merged. I was already wholly ready to look into the uncovered depth, which was bathed with anguished weeping; and I saw people coming through the round valley, silent and weeping, at the pace that litanies keep in this world. As my sight went lower down on them, each one appeared, marvelously, to be twisted between the chin and the beginning of the chest: for the face was turned round toward the loins, and they had to come backward, because seeing ahead was taken from them.[123] Inf. 20.16 Perhaps someone was once twisted so completely by the force of palsy; but I have never seen it, nor do I believe it can be. Reader, so may God let you gather fruit from your reading, now think for yourself how I could keep my face dry, when close at hand I saw our image so contorted that the tears from the eyes bathed the buttocks along the cleft. Truly I wept, leaning on one of the rocks of the hard ridge, so that my escort said to me: "Are you still one of the other fools? Inf. 20.28 Here pity lives when it is truly dead. Who is more wicked than one who feels anguish at divine judgment? Raise your head, raise it, and see the one for whom the earth opened before the eyes of the Thebans, so that they all shouted: 'Where are you rushing, Amphiaraus? Why are you leaving the war?' And he did not stop plunging downward until he reached Minos, who seizes every one. See how he has made a chest of his shoulders: because he wanted to see too far ahead, he looks behind and goes a backward path.[124] Inf. 20.40 See Tiresias, who changed his appearance when from male he became female, all his limbs being transformed; and afterward he had to strike the two entwined serpents with his rod once more before he could regain his manly plumes. Aruns is the one who backs up against that one's belly, who in the mountains of Luni, where the man of Carrara who lives below them works the land, had

122 The emperor Constantine was believed to have given temporal power over the West to Pope Sylvester I, the "first rich father"; the document recording this "Donation" was later shown to be a forgery.

123 The "first canzone" is the *Inferno*, the first of the poem's three canticles. This fourth ditch of Malebolge holds the soothsayers and diviners.

124 Amphiaraus, a seer and one of the Seven against Thebes, was swallowed by the earth during the siege. In the first sentence *pietà* means both "pity" and "piety."

his cave among white marbles for his dwelling; from there his view was not cut off from watching the stars and the sea.[125]

MANTO AND MANTUA

Virgil tells how the sorceress Manto settled the marsh where his city was founded.

Inf. 20.52 And she who covers her breasts, which you cannot see, with her loosened tresses, and has all her hairy skin on the other side, was Manto, who searched through many lands, and afterward settled where I was born; so I would like you to listen to me a little. After her father departed from life, and the city of Bacchus became enslaved, she wandered the world for a long time. Up in beautiful Italy, at the foot of the Alps that shut in Germany above Tyrol, lies a lake that is called Benaco.[126] Inf. 20.64 By a thousand springs, I think, and more, the Apennine is bathed between Garda and Val Camonica with the water that settles in that lake. There is a place in the middle where the shepherd of Trent, and the one of Brescia, and the one of Verona could each give his blessing, if he traveled that way. Peschiera sits there, a fine and strong fortress for facing the Brescians and the Bergamasques, where the shore round about runs lowest. There everything that cannot stay in the lap of Benaco must fall, and becomes a river down through green pastures.[127] Inf. 20.76 As soon as the water starts to run, it is no longer called Benaco but Mincio, as far as Governolo, where it falls into the Po. It has not run far before it finds a low plain, over which it spreads and turns it to marsh, and in summer it is sometimes unhealthy. Passing that way, the cruel virgin saw land in the middle of the swamp, untilled and bare of inhabitants. There, to flee all

125 Tiresias, the seer of Thebes, was turned into a woman after striking two mating snakes, and back into a man seven years later (Ovid). Aruns is an Etruscan diviner in Lucan's *Pharsalia*; Luni was an ancient town near Carrara.

126 Manto was the daughter of Tiresias; Virgil was born near Mantua. The city of Bacchus is Thebes; Benaco (Latin Benacus) is Lake Garda.

127 The "shepherds" are bishops: the boundaries of the three dioceses meet at that spot, so each could bless there.

human company, she stayed with her servants to practice her arts, and lived, and left there her empty body. Inf. 20.88 Then the men who were scattered round about gathered at that place, which was strong because of the swamp it had on every side. They built the city over those dead bones; and after her who first chose the place they called it Mantua, without casting any other lot. Its people within were once more numerous, before the folly of Casalodi was deceived by Pinamonte. Therefore I charge you, that if you ever hear the origin of my city told otherwise, let no lie defraud the truth."[128] Inf. 20.100 And I: "Master, your accounts are so certain to me, and so take hold of my faith, that any others would be spent coals to me. But tell me about the people who are passing, if you see any of them worthy of note; for to that alone my mind keeps returning." Then he said to me: "That one who spreads his beard from his cheeks over his dark shoulders was, when Greece was so empty of males that they hardly remained even in the cradles, an augur, and with Calchas he gave the moment in Aulis for cutting the first cable.[129] Inf. 20.112 Eurypylus was his name, and so my lofty Tragedy sings of him in a certain passage: you know it well, who know the whole of it. That other one, who is so thin in the flanks, was Michael Scot, who truly knew the game of magic frauds. See Guido Bonatti, see Asdente, who now would wish he had attended to his leather and his thread, but repents too late.[130] Inf. 20.121 See the wretched women who left the needle, the shuttle and the spindle, and made themselves fortune-tellers; they worked spells with herbs and with images. But come now, for already Cain and his thorns hold the boundary of both hemispheres and touch the wave below Seville; and already last night the moon was full: you

128 Around 1272 Alberto da Casalodi, lord of Mantua, was tricked by Pinamonte dei Bonacolsi into exiling the nobles, after which Pinamonte seized power and killed or drove out many families.

129 Calchas was the Greek seer who fixed the moment for the fleet to sail from Aulis against Troy.

130 Eurypylus appears in Virgil's *Aeneid*, his "Tragedy." Michael Scot was a Scottish scholar and astrologer at Emperor Frederick II's court; Guido Bonatti was an astrologer of Forlì; Asdente was a shoemaker of Parma turned soothsayer.

must remember it well, for it did you no harm at times in the deep wood." So he spoke to me, and meanwhile we went on.[131]

CANTO 21

Inf. 21.1 So from bridge to bridge, speaking of other things that my comedy does not care to sing, we came on, and we were holding the summit when we stopped to see the next cleft of Malebolge and the next vain laments; and I saw it marvelously dark. As in the Arsenal of the Venetians the sticky pitch boils in winter to recaulk their unsound ships, which they cannot sail, and instead one builds his ship new, and another plugs the ribs of the one that has made many voyages;[132] Inf. 21.13 one hammers at the prow and another at the stern; another makes oars, and another twists ropes; another patches the jib and the mainsail: so, not by fire but by divine art, a thick pitch was boiling down there, which smeared the bank on every side. I saw it, but saw nothing in it except the bubbles that the boiling raised, and all of it swelling and settling again, compressed. While I was gazing fixedly down there, my guide, saying, "Look out, look out," drew me to him from the place where I was standing. Inf. 21.25 Then I turned, like the man who is eager to see what he ought to flee, and whom sudden fear unnerves, so that he does not delay his departure in order to look: and I saw behind us a black devil coming, running up along the ridge. Ah, how fierce he was in his look! And how cruel he seemed to me in his bearing, with his wings open and light upon his feet! His shoulder, which was sharp and high, was loaded with a sinner by both his haunches, and he held him clutched by the sinews of his feet.

131 "Cain and his thorns" is the man in the moon. The moon is setting over the sea west of Seville, so it is about dawn.

132 The Arsenal was Venice's great state shipyard. This fifth ditch punishes grafters, who sold public offices and favors for money.

A MAGISTRATE OF LUCCA

A devil brings a grafter from Lucca and flings him into the boiling pitch.

Inf. 21.37 From our bridge he said, "O Malebranche, here is one of the elders of Saint Zita: put him under, while I go back for more to that city, which I have well supplied with them: everyone there is a grafter, except Bonturo; there, for money, *no* is turned into *ita* [yes]." He hurled him down there and turned back along the hard ridge; and never was a mastiff let loose with such haste to chase a thief.[133] Inf. 21.46 That one plunged in and came back up doubled over; but the demons who had cover under the bridge shouted: "Here the Holy Face has no place; here one swims differently than in the Serchio; so if you do not want our hooks, do not stick out above the pitch." Then they bit into him with more than a hundred hooks, and said: "Here you must dance under cover, so that, if you can, you may grab in secret."[134] Inf. 21.55 Not otherwise do cooks have their scullions push the meat down into the middle of the cauldron with hooks, so that it does not float. The good master said to me: "So that it may not appear that you are here, crouch down behind a jagged rock that may give you some screen; and whatever offense is done to me, do not be afraid, for I know these things, because I was in such a fray once before." Inf. 21.64 Then he passed beyond the head of the bridge, and as he reached the sixth bank, he needed to show a steady brow. With the fury and the storm with which dogs rush out at the poor beggar, who stops short and begs where he stands, those came out from under the little bridge and turned all their hooks against him; but he shouted: "Let none of you be savage. Inf. 21.73 Before your hook takes hold of me, let one of you come forward to hear me, and then take counsel about hooking me."

133 The Malebranche ("Evil Claws") are the devils of this ditch. The elders were magistrates of Lucca, whose patron saint is Zita; Bonturo Dati was its most notorious grafter, so the exception is ironic.

134 The Holy Face is a venerated crucifix in Lucca; the Serchio is the river near the city, where people swam.

All of them shouted: "Let Malacoda go"; so one moved, and the others stood still; and he came to him, saying: "What good will it do him?" "Do you think, Malacoda, that you see me come here," said my master, "safe already from all your obstacles, without divine will and favorable fate? Let us go, for it is willed in heaven that I show another this wild way." Inf. 21.85 Then his pride so fell that he let his hook drop at his feet and said to the others: "Now let him not be struck." And my guide said to me: "O you who sit crouching low among the jagged rocks of the bridge, now you may come back to me safely." So I moved and came to him quickly; and the devils all pressed forward, so that I feared they would not keep the pact. Inf. 21.94 And so I once saw the foot soldiers afraid who came out of Caprona under treaty, seeing themselves among so many enemies. I drew up close, with my whole body, alongside my guide, and did not turn my eyes from their looks, which were not good. They lowered their hooks, and "Do you want me to touch him," one kept saying to another, "on the rump?" And they answered: "Yes, see that you let him have it." But that demon who was holding talk with my guide turned round very quickly and said: "Down, down, Scarmiglione."[135] Inf. 21.106 Then he said to us: "One cannot go farther along this ridge, because the sixth arch lies all shattered at the bottom; and if you still wish to go forward, go along this bank; nearby is another ridge that makes a way. Yesterday, five hours later than this hour, one thousand two hundred and sixty-six years were completed since the way here was broken. I am sending some of mine over there to see whether anyone is airing himself; go with them, for they will do you no harm."[136] Inf. 21.118 "Step forward, Alichino and Calcabrina," he began to say, "and you, Cagnazzo; and let Barbariccia lead the ten. Let Libicocco come too, and Draghignazzo, tusked Ciriatto, and Graffiacane, and Farfarello, and mad Rubicante. Search all around the boiling birdlime; let

135 Caprona, a Pisan castle, surrendered to the Tuscan Guelfs in 1289; Dante seems to have been among the besiegers.

136 The bridges were broken by the earthquake at Christ's death; the reckoning places the journey in AD 1300, on the morning of Holy Saturday.

these two be safe as far as the next ridge, which runs all unbroken over the dens." "Oh me, master, what is it that I see?" I said. "Ah, let us go alone, without an escort, if you know the way, for I for my part do not ask for one.[137] Inf. 21.130 If you are as alert as you usually are, do you not see that they gnash their teeth and threaten us with harm with their brows?" And he to me: "I do not want you to be afraid: let them gnash as much as they please, for they do it for the boiled wretches." They wheeled round along the left-hand bank; but first each had pressed his tongue between his teeth toward their leader as a signal, and he had made a trumpet of his backside.

CANTO 22

Inf. 22.1 I have seen horsemen before now breaking camp, and beginning an assault, and holding their muster, and at times retreating to save themselves; I have seen scouts riding through your land, O Aretines, and seen raiding parties go, tournaments fought and jousts run, now with trumpets and now with bells, with drums and with signals from castles, and with things of our own and of foreign lands; but never yet to so strange a pipe did I see horsemen move, or foot soldiers, or a ship by a sign from land or star.[138] Inf. 22.13 We went along with the ten demons: ah, savage company! But in church with the saints, and in the tavern with the gluttons. Still my attention was on the pitch, to see every feature of the ditch and of the people who were burning in it. Like dolphins, when they signal to sailors with the arch of their backs that they should take steps to save their ship, so now and then, to ease his pain, one of the sinners would show his back, and hide it again in less time than lightning flashes. Inf. 22.25 And as at the edge of the water of a ditch the frogs stand with only their snouts out, so that they hide their feet and the rest of their bulk, so the sinners stood on every side; but as Bar-

137 The devils' names are comic inventions, such as Malacoda "Evil-tail," Barbariccia "Curly-beard," and Graffiacane "Dog-scratcher."
138 Dante fought for Florence against Arezzo at the battle of Campaldino in 1289.

bariccia drew near, so they drew back beneath the boiling. I saw, and my heart still shudders at it, one waiting just so, as it happens that one frog stays and another darts away. Inf. 22.34 And Graffiacane, who was most directly opposite him, hooked him by his pitch-smeared hair and hauled him up, so that he looked to me like an otter. I already knew the names of all of them, so well had I noted them when they were chosen, and when they called one another I listened for how. "O Rubicante, see that you set your claws on him and flay him," the cursed ones all shouted together. And I: "My master, if you can, find out who the wretch is who has fallen into the hands of his enemies."

THE NAVARRESE

A grafter from Navarre tricks the devils and escapes, and two of them fall into the pitch.

Inf. 22.46 My guide went up beside him and asked him where he came from, and he answered: "I was born in the kingdom of Navarre. My mother put me in the service of a lord, for she had borne me to a scoundrel, a destroyer of himself and of his possessions. Then I was a member of the household of good King Thibaut; there I set myself to practicing graft, for which I render account in this heat."[139] Inf. 22.55 And Ciriatto, from whose mouth a tusk came out on either side, like a hog's, made him feel how one of them could rip. The mouse had come among wicked cats; but Barbariccia locked him in his arms and said: "Stand off there, while I hold him pinned." And he turned his face to my master: "Ask," he said, "if you want to learn more from him, before someone else tears him apart." Inf. 22.64 My guide: "Then tell us now about the other guilty ones: do you know anyone under the pitch who is Italian?" And he: "I parted a little while ago from one who was from near there; I wish I were still covered with him, for I would fear neither claw nor hook." And Libicocco said, "We have put up with too much," and caught his arm with

139 Thibaut II was king of Navarre from 1253 to 1270; the speaker is traditionally called Ciampolo.

his grapple, so that, tearing, he carried off a piece of muscle. Draghignazzo too wanted to grab him down by the legs; at which their captain of ten turned round and round with an evil look. Inf. 22.76 When they had calmed down a little, my guide, without delay, asked the one who was still gazing at his wound: "Who was that one from whom you say you made an unlucky parting to come ashore?" And he answered: "It was Friar Gomita, the one from Gallura, vessel of every fraud, who had his lord's enemies in his hands and treated them so that each of them praises him for it: he took their money and let them off quietly, as he says; and in his other offices too he was no petty grafter, but a sovereign one.[140] Inf. 22.88 Lord Michel Zanche of Logudoro keeps company with him; and their tongues never grow tired of talking about Sardinia. Oh me! See that other one gnashing his teeth: I would say more, but I fear he is getting ready to scratch my scabby head." And the great commander, turning to Farfarello, who was rolling his eyes, ready to strike, said: "Get away there, wicked bird." "If you want to see or hear," the frightened one began again then, "Tuscans or Lombards, I will make them come.[141] Inf. 22.100 But let the Malebranche keep back a little, so that the others need not fear their vengeance; and I, sitting in this very spot, for me alone will make seven come, when I whistle, as is our custom whenever one of us gets out." At these words Cagnazzo raised his snout, shaking his head, and said: "Listen to the trick he has thought up to throw himself back down!" Inf. 22.109 At this he, who had snares in great abundance, replied: "I am too cunning indeed, when I bring greater misery on my own companions." Alichino could not hold back and, against the others, said to him: "If you dive, I won't come after you at a gallop, but I'll beat my wings above the pitch. Let the top of the ridge be left, and let the bank be our screen, to see whether you alone are a match for all of us." Inf. 22.118 O you who read, you will hear of a new sport! Each of

140 Gomita, a friar, served as deputy to Nino Visconti, judge of Gallura in Sardinia, and was hanged for freeing prisoners for bribes.
141 Michel Zanche was an official of Logudoro, another district of Sardinia.

them turned his eyes toward the other slope, and first of all the one who had been most set against doing it. The Navarrese chose his moment well: he planted his feet on the ground, and in an instant he leapt and broke free of their leader. At this each of them was stung with guilt, but most of all the one who had caused the blunder; so he sprang forward and shouted: "You're caught!" Inf. 22.127 But it did him little good, for wings could not outrun fear: the one went under, and the other, flying, turned his breast upward. Not otherwise does the duck plunge down all at once when the falcon draws near, and the falcon returns aloft, angry and beaten. Calcabrina, furious at the trick, flew after him, eager for the sinner to escape so that he could have a fight. And as soon as the grafter had disappeared, he turned his claws on his companion and grappled with him above the ditch. Inf. 22.139 But the other was a true sparrowhawk, full-grown and fierce, to claw him well in return, and both fell into the middle of the boiling pond. The heat parted them at once; but there was no rising out of it, so gummed up were their wings. Barbariccia, grieving with the rest of his crew, sent four of them flying to the other bank with all their hooks, and very swiftly, on this side and that, they came down to their posts. They stretched their hooks out toward the two stuck in the lime, who were already cooked inside their crust. And we left them, entangled like that,

CANTO 23

Inf. 23.1 Silent, alone and without company, we went on, one in front and the other behind, as Friars Minor walk along the road. Because of the brawl just past, my thoughts had turned to Aesop's fable in which he told of the frog and the mouse; for "now" and "right now" are no more alike than the one case is to the other, if you carefully match beginning and end with a steady mind. And as one thought bursts out of another, so from

that one another was born, which made my first fear double.[142] Inf. 23.13 This is what I was thinking: "These devils have been made fools of because of us, with harm and with such mockery that I believe it galls them greatly. If anger is wound on top of their ill will, they will come after us more cruelly than the dog after the hare it snaps in its jaws." Already I felt all my hair standing on end with fear, and I was looking back intently, when I said: "Master, if you do not hide yourself and me quickly, I am afraid of the Malebranche: we already have them behind us; I imagine them so vividly that I can already hear them." Inf. 23.25 And he: "If I were a mirror of leaded glass, I would not catch your outward image more quickly than I take in the image within you. Just now your thoughts came among mine, with the same bearing and the same face, so that out of both I have made a single plan. If the right-hand bank slopes enough for us to get down into the next ditch, we shall escape the chase you imagine." He had not finished laying out this plan when I saw them coming with wings spread, not far off, intent on seizing us. Inf. 23.37 My guide took hold of me at once, like a mother who is woken by the noise and sees the flames blazing close to her, who takes her son and flees and does not stop, caring more for him than for herself, not even long enough to put on more than a shift. And down from the brink of the hard bank he let himself go, on his back, along the sloping rock that walls in one side of the next ditch. Inf. 23.46 Never did water run so fast through a sluice to turn the wheel of a mill on land, when it draws closest to the paddles, as my master went down that bank, carrying me on his chest like his son, not like a companion. Hardly had his feet reached the bed of the bottom below when they were up on the ridge right above us; but there was nothing to fear from them, for the high Providence that chose to make them ministers of the fifth ditch takes from all of them the power to leave it.

142 In the medieval Aesop, a frog offers to carry a mouse across water, ties it to its leg and tries to drown it, but a kite carries both off. The Friars Minor are the Franciscans.

THE HYPOCRITES

The hypocrites walk slowly in gilded cloaks of lead, and Caiaphas lies crucified on the path.

Inf. 23.58 Down there we found a painted people, who were going round with very slow steps, weeping, and in their looks weary and defeated. They wore cloaks with hoods pulled low in front of their eyes, made in the cut that is made for the monks in Cologne. Outside they are gilded, so that they dazzle; but inside they are all lead, and so heavy that the ones Frederick used to put on men were straw by comparison.[143] Inf. 23.67 O mantle wearisome for all eternity! We turned once more, still to the left, along with them, intent on their sad weeping; but because of the weight those weary people came on so slowly that we found ourselves in new company at every swing of the hip. So I said to my guide: "See if you can find someone known by deed or by name, and as we walk, turn your eyes around." Inf. 23.76 And one who recognized the Tuscan speech cried out behind us: "Hold back your feet, you who run like this through the murky air: perhaps you will have from me what you are asking." At this my guide turned and said: "Wait, and then go on at his pace." I stopped, and saw two whose faces showed a great eagerness of mind to be with me; but their load and the narrow way held them back. When they had come up, they looked me over for a long while, with sidelong eyes, without saying a word; then they turned to each other and said between themselves: Inf. 23.88 "This one seems alive, by the movement of his throat; and if they are dead, by what privilege do they go uncovered by the heavy robe?" Then they said to me: "O Tuscan, who have come to the college of the sad hypocrites, do not scorn to tell us who you are." And I to them: "I was born and grew up beside the fair river Arno, in the great city, and I am in the body I have always had. Inf. 23.97 But who are you, down whose cheeks, as I see, such grief

143 The Emperor Frederick II was said to punish traitors by encasing them in lead and melting it on them over a fire.

trickles, and what punishment is this upon you that glitters so?" And one of them answered me: "These orange cloaks are of lead so thick that the weight makes its scales creak like this. We were Jovial Friars, and Bolognese; I was named Catalano, and he Loderingo, and we were chosen together by your city, as one man alone is usually chosen, to keep its peace; and what we were can still be seen around the Gardingo."[144] Inf. 23.109 I began: "O friars, your miseries..." But I said no more, for one caught my eye who was crucified on the ground with three stakes. When he saw me, he writhed all over, blowing sighs into his beard; and Friar Catalano, who noticed this, said to me: "That one pinned there, whom you are looking at, advised the Pharisees that it was fitting to put one man to torment for the sake of the people.[145] Inf. 23.118 He lies naked across the path, as you see, and he must feel how much each one who passes weighs before they pass; and in the same way his father-in-law is racked in this ditch, along with the others of the council that was an evil seed for the Jews." Then I saw Virgil marvel over the one who was stretched out on a cross so basely in the eternal exile.[146] Inf. 23.127 Then he addressed these words to the friar: "May it not displease you, if you are permitted, to tell us whether there is any opening on the right by which we two can get out of here without forcing some of the black angels to come and take us from this bottom." He answered then: "Nearer than you hope there is a ridge of rock that starts from the great circle and crosses all the cruel valleys, except that at this one it is broken and does not span it: you will be able to climb up over the rubble, which lies along the slope and piles up at the bottom." Inf. 23.139 My guide stood a little while with his head bowed, then said: "He gave a false account of the matter, the one who hooks the sinners over there." And the friar: "I once heard many of the Devil's vices

144 The Jovial Friars were a lay order of knights. In 1266 Catalano and Loderingo jointly held the office of podestà in Florence, and under them the Ghibelline houses near the Gardingo were destroyed.

145 This is Caiaphas, the high priest who said that it was expedient for one man to die for the people (John 11:50).

146 The father-in-law is Annas, before whom Jesus was first brought (John 18:13).

spoken of at Bologna, and among them I heard that he is a liar and the father of lies." Then my guide went off with great strides, his face somewhat troubled with anger; and so I left those burdened souls, following in the prints of the dear feet.[147]

CANTO 24

Inf. 24.1 In that part of the young year when the sun tempers its locks beneath Aquarius, and the nights are already drawing toward half the day; when the hoarfrost copies on the ground the image of her white sister, but the sharpness of her pen lasts only a little while; the peasant, whose fodder is running out, gets up and looks, and sees the countryside all white, at which he slaps his thigh;[148] Inf. 24.10 he goes back into the house and grumbles here and there, like a poor wretch who does not know what to do; then he comes out again and gathers up his hope once more, seeing that the world has changed its face in a little while, and he takes his crook and drives his lambs out to graze. Just so my master dismayed me when I saw his brow so troubled, and just as quickly the salve came to the sore; for when we came to the broken bridge, my guide turned to me with that sweet look I had first seen at the foot of the mountain. Inf. 24.22 He opened his arms, after taking some counsel with himself, having first looked carefully at the rubble, and took hold of me. And like one who works and calculates as he goes, always seeming to plan ahead, so, while lifting me up toward the top of one great boulder, he would pick out another crag, saying: "Next grip on to that one; but test it first to see whether it will hold you." It was no road for anyone wearing a cloak, for we could barely climb from ledge to ledge, he weightless and I pushed up from below. Inf. 24.34 And were it not that on that embankment the slope was shorter than on the other, I do not know about him,

147 Malacoda, the devils' leader, had told them (Inf. 21) that another bridge nearby was intact.

148 The season is late January to February, when the sun is in Aquarius and the nights shorten toward the equinox. The frost's "white sister" is snow.

but I would certainly have been beaten. But because Malebolge slopes all the way down toward the mouth of the lowest pit, the lay of each valley means that one bank rises high and the other runs lower. We came at last, all the same, onto the point from which the last stone breaks away. The breath had been so milked from my lungs by the time I was up that I could go no farther; instead I sat down as soon as I arrived. Inf. 24.46 "Now you must shake off sloth like this," said the master, "for no one comes to fame sitting on cushions of down or lying under the covers; and whoever spends his life without fame leaves no more trace of himself on earth than smoke in the air or foam on the water. So get up; conquer your breathlessness with the spirit that wins every battle, if it does not sink under the weight of its heavy body. Inf. 24.55 A longer stair must yet be climbed; it is not enough to have left these behind. If you understand me, now act so that it does you good." Then I got up, showing myself better supplied with breath than I felt, and said: "Go on, for I am strong and bold." We took our way up along the ridge of rock, which was rugged, narrow and hard going, and far steeper than the one before. I talked as I went so as not to seem weak; and then a voice came out of the next ditch, ill-suited to forming words. Inf. 24.67 I do not know what it said, though I was already on the crown of the arch that crosses there; but whoever was speaking seemed stirred to anger. I had turned to look down; but my living eyes could not reach the bottom for the darkness. So I said: "Master, make for the next bank, and let us climb down the wall; for as I hear from here and do not understand, so I look down and make out nothing." "I give you no other answer," he said, "than the doing of it; for a fair request should be followed by the deed, in silence."

THE THIEVES

In a ditch full of serpents, a thief is burned to ash and formed again.

Inf. 24.79 We went down the bridge from its head, where it joins the eighth bank, and then the ditch lay open to me; and I saw within

it a terrible mass of serpents, of such strange kinds that the memory still drains the blood from me. Let Libya boast no more of her sands; for though she breeds chelydri, jaculi and phareae, and cenchri with the amphisbaena, she never showed so many plagues or such deadly ones, not with all Ethiopia, nor with the land that lies along the Red Sea.[149] Inf. 24.91 Among this cruel and most dismal swarm ran people naked and terrified, with no hope of a hiding place or a heliotrope. They had their hands tied behind them with snakes, which thrust tail and head through their loins and were knotted together in front. And look: at one who was near our bank a serpent darted, and pierced him through at the spot where the neck is knotted to the shoulders.[150] Inf. 24.100 Never was an O or an I written as quickly as he caught fire and burned, and as he fell he had to turn entirely to ash; and when he lay destroyed like this on the ground, the dust gathered itself together of its own accord and at once returned into that same man. In the same way the great sages affirm that the Phoenix dies and then is reborn as it approaches its five-hundredth year. In its life it feeds on neither grass nor grain, but only on tears of incense and on amomum; and nard and myrrh are its last swaddling bands. Inf. 24.112 And like a man who falls and does not know how, whether by force of a demon that drags him to the ground or of some other blockage that binds a man, and who, when he rises, gazes around him, utterly bewildered by the great anguish he has suffered, and sighs as he looks; such was the sinner when he had risen. O power of God, how severe it is, raining down such blows in vengeance!

VANNI FUCCI

The thief Vanni Fucci confesses his sacrilege and foretells the defeat of Dante's party.

Inf. 24.121 My guide then asked him who he was; to which he answered: "I rained down from Tuscany, not long ago, into this

149 The serpents' names come from Lucan's account of the snakes of the Libyan desert in his poem on the Roman civil war (Book 9).

savage gullet. A beast's life pleased me, and not a man's, mule that I was: I am Vanni Fucci, a beast, and Pistoia was a fitting den for me." And I to my guide: "Tell him not to slip away, and ask what sin thrust him down here; for I knew him as a man of blood and rage."[151] Inf. 24.130 And the sinner, who heard, did not pretend, but turned his mind and his face toward me, and colored with a dismal shame. Then he said: "It grieves me more that you have caught me in the misery where you see me than when I was taken from the other life. I cannot refuse what you ask: I am put down this far because I was the thief who robbed the sacristy of its fine ornaments, Inf. 24.139 and the blame was once falsely laid on another. But so that you may take no pleasure in this sight, if ever you get out of these dark places, open your ears to my announcement, and hear: Pistoia first thins herself of the Blacks; then Florence renews her people and her ways. Mars draws a vapor out of Val di Magra, wrapped in turbid clouds, and with an impetuous and bitter storm there will be fighting over Campo Piceno; then the vapor will suddenly tear through the mist, so that every White will be struck by it. And I have told you this so that it will grieve you."[152]

CANTO 25

Inf. 25.1 At the end of his words the thief raised his hands, making the fig with both of them, and shouted, "Take that, God, for I aim them at you!" From that moment on the serpents have been my friends, for one of them then coiled itself around his neck, as if to say, "I will not have you say any more," and another wound around his arms and bound him up again, riveting itself so

150 The heliotrope was a stone believed to make whoever carried it invisible.

151 Vanni Fucci, the illegitimate son (hence "mule") of a Pistoian noble, was a violent partisan of the Blacks; in 1293 he took part in robbing the treasury of Pistoia's cathedral.

152 In 1301 the Whites drove the Blacks from Pistoia; the Blacks then seized Florence and exiled the Whites, Dante among them. The "vapor" is Moroello Malaspina of Val di Magra, who led the Blacks against the Whites of Pistoia in the following years.

tightly in front that he could not make the slightest movement with them. Ah, Pistoia, Pistoia, why do you not resolve to burn yourself to ashes, so that you last no longer, since you outdo your forebears in doing evil?[153] Inf. 25.13 Through all the dark circles of Hell I saw no spirit so proud against God, not even the one who fell from the walls at Thebes. He fled without speaking another word, and I saw a centaur full of rage come calling, "Where is he, where is the bitter one?" I do not think the Maremma has as many snakes as he had on his back, up to where our human form begins.[154] Inf. 25.22 On his shoulders, behind the nape of his neck, lay a dragon with its wings spread, and it sets on fire whoever it comes across. My master said, "That is Cacus, who beneath the rock of Mount Aventine many times made a lake of blood. He does not travel the same road as his brothers, because of the fraudulent theft he made of the great herd that was near him. For this his crooked deeds came to an end under the club of Hercules, who perhaps gave him a hundred blows, and he did not feel ten of them."[155] Inf. 25.34 While he was speaking, the centaur ran on, and three spirits came below us, whom neither I nor my guide noticed until they shouted, "Who are you?" At this our talk stopped, and from then on we attended only to them. I did not know them; but it happened, as it often happens by some chance, that one of them had occasion to name another, saying, "Where can Cianfa have stayed behind?" So I, to make my guide stay alert, put my finger up from my chin to my nose.[156]

153 "Making the fig" is an obscene gesture, the thumb thrust between the first two fingers. Pistoia was said to have been founded by survivors of the rebel Catiline's army.

154 The one who fell at Thebes is Capaneus, struck down by Jupiter's thunderbolt as he scaled the walls; Dante met him in Inf. 14. The Maremma is a marshy coastal region of Tuscany, notorious for snakes.

155 In Virgil, Cacus is a fire-breathing monster who lived in a cave on the Aventine in Rome, stole Hercules' cattle and was killed by him; Dante makes him a centaur. His "brothers" are the centaurs who guard the violent in Inf. 12.

156 Cianfa Donati, a Florentine noble reputed to be a thief, who died around 1289.

THIEVES TRANSFORMED

Florentine thieves and serpents merge and exchange shapes before Dante's eyes.

Inf. 25.46 If you are now slow, Reader, to believe what I shall tell, it will be no wonder, for I who saw it can scarcely allow it to myself. As I kept my eyes raised on them, a serpent with six feet darts up in front of one of them and fastens itself to him all over. With its middle feet it clasped his belly, and with its front feet it seized his arms; then it sank its teeth into both his cheeks. Inf. 25.55 It stretched its hind feet along his thighs and put its tail between them both, and bent it up behind along his loins. Ivy never clung to a tree as tightly as the horrible beast entwined its own limbs around the other's. Then they stuck together, as if they had been made of hot wax, and mixed their colors, and neither one nor the other now seemed what it had been: as, ahead of the flame, a brownish color moves up across paper, which is not yet black, and the white dies away. Inf. 25.67 The other two were watching, and each of them cried, "Oh, Agnello, how you change! See, already you are neither two nor one." Already the two heads had become one, when two shapes appeared to us mingled in one face, in which two were lost. The arms became two out of four strips; the thighs with the legs, the belly and the chest became limbs such as were never seen.[157] Inf. 25.76 Every former aspect was canceled there; the perverse image seemed both two and none, and such as it was it went off with slow steps. As the green lizard, under the great lash of the dog days, darting from hedge to hedge, seems a flash of lightning if it crosses the road, so, coming toward the bellies of the other two, appeared a little fiery serpent, livid and black as a peppercorn. And in that part through which we first take our nourishment it pierced one of them; then it fell down, stretched out before him. Inf. 25.88 The pierced one gazed at it but said nothing; rather, with his feet planted, he yawned, just as if sleep or fever were attacking him.

157 Agnello, said to be of the Brunelleschi, a Florentine noble family.

He looked at the serpent, and the serpent at him; one through the wound and the other through the mouth smoked hard, and the smoke met. Let Lucan now be silent, where he tells of wretched Sabellus and of Nasidius, and wait to hear what is now let fly.[158] Inf. 25.97 Let Ovid be silent about Cadmus and Arethusa; for if in his poetry he turns him into a serpent and her into a fountain, I do not envy him, since he never transformed two natures face to face so that both forms were ready to exchange their matter. They answered each other by such rules that the serpent split its tail into a fork, and the wounded one drew his feet together. The legs, together with the thighs, stuck to each other so that in a short while the join left no mark that could be seen.[159] Inf. 25.109 The split tail took on the shape that was being lost on the other side, and its skin was growing soft, and the other's hard. I saw the arms withdraw in through the armpits, and the beast's two feet, which were short, lengthen as much as the arms were shortening. Then the hind feet, twisted together, became the member that a man conceals, and the wretch had put forth two feet from his own. Inf. 25.118 While the smoke veils the one and the other with a new color, and makes hair grow on the one and strips it from the other, the one rose up and the other fell down, yet neither turned aside his wicked lamps, beneath which each was changing his snout. The one who was upright drew his snout back toward the temples, and from the excess matter that went there, ears came out of the smooth cheeks; what did not run back but was retained made, out of that surplus, a nose for the face, and thickened the lips as much as was fitting. Inf. 25.130 The one who lay down thrusts his snout forward and draws his ears back into his head, as the snail does its horns; and his tongue, which before was whole and ready for speech, splits, and the forked tongue of the other closes up, and the smoke stops. The soul that had become a beast fled hissing

158 In Lucan's *Pharsalia*, the soldiers Sabellus and Nasidius are bitten by African serpents; one dissolves into a puddle, the other swells until he bursts.
159 In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Cadmus, founder of Thebes, is changed into a serpent, and the nymph Arethusa into a spring.

along the valley, and the other spits behind it as he speaks. Then he turned his new shoulders on it and said to the other one, "I want Buoso to run on all fours along this path, as I have done."[160] Inf. 25.142 So I saw the seventh ballast change and exchange; and here let the strangeness be my excuse if my pen goes at all astray. And although my eyes were somewhat confused and my mind bewildered, those spirits could not flee so secretly that I did not clearly make out Puccio Sciancato; and he was the only one of the three companions who had come first who was not changed. The other was the one whom you, Gaville, mourn.[161]

CANTO 26

Inf. 26.1 Rejoice, Florence, since you are so great that you beat your wings over sea and land, and your name spreads through Hell! Among the thieves I found five such citizens of yours that shame comes over me, and you do not rise to great honor by it. But if dreams near morning are true, you will feel before long what Prato, not to speak of others, craves for you. And if it had already come, it would not be too soon. I wish it were here already, since it must come; for the older I grow, the more it will weigh on me.[162] Inf. 26.13 We left, and up along the stairs that the jutting stones had made for us to come down before, my master climbed back and drew me up. And as we went on along the solitary way among the splinters and boulders of the ridge, the foot could make no progress without the hand. Then I grieved, and now I grieve again when I turn my mind to what I saw; and I rein in my genius more than I usually do, so that it may not run where virtue does not guide it, so that, if a good star or something better has given me this good, I may not deprive myself of

160 Buoso, a Florentine, probably of the Donati or the Abati family.
161 The "ballast" is the load of souls in the seventh ditch; Puccio Sciancato ("the Lame") was a Florentine of the Galigai family. The one Gaville mourns is Francesco de' Cavalcanti, whose kinsmen avenged his murder on that village in the upper Arno valley.
162 Dreams just before dawn were popularly believed to be true. Prato is a small town near Florence, then under its rule.

it. Inf. 26.25 As many fireflies as the peasant resting on the hillside sees down along the valley, perhaps where he gathers his grapes and plows—in the season when he who lights the world keeps his face least hidden from us, at the hour when the fly gives way to the mosquito—with so many flames the whole eighth ditch was shining, as I saw as soon as I came where its bottom could be seen.[163] Inf. 26.34 And as he who was avenged by the bears saw Elijah's chariot at its departure, when the horses rose straight up to heaven—for he could not follow it with his eyes so as to see anything but the flame alone, rising up like a little cloud—so each flame moved along the gullet of the ditch, for none shows its theft, and every flame steals away a sinner. I was standing on the bridge, risen up to see, so that if I had not caught hold of a rock, I would have fallen down without being pushed.[164]

ULYSSES

In a flame divided at the top, Virgil finds Ulysses and Diomedes.

Inf. 26.46 And the guide, who saw me so intent, said, "Within the fires are the spirits; each is wrapped in that which burns him." "My master," I answered, "hearing you, I am more certain; but I had already thought it was so, and already I meant to say to you: Who is in that fire which comes so divided at the top that it seems to rise from the pyre where Eteocles was laid with his brother?"[165] Inf. 26.55 He answered me, "There within are tormented Ulysses and Diomedes, and so they go together to vengeance as they once went to wrath; and within their flame they groan for the ambush of the horse that made the gate through which the noble seed of the Romans went forth. Within it they weep for the trickery for which Deidamia, though dead, still grieves for

163 That is, on a summer evening, when the days are longest and dusk is falling.
164 The prophet Elisha cursed the boys who mocked him, and bears mauled them; he had watched his master Elijah carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2).
165 Eteocles and Polynices, sons of Oedipus, killed each other in single combat; when they were burned on one pyre, the flame split in two (Statius, *Thebaid*).

Achilles, and there they pay the penalty for the Palladium."[166] Inf. 26.64 "If they can speak within those sparks," I said, "master, I earnestly beg you, and beg again, so that my prayer may be worth a thousand, not to refuse to let me wait until the horned flame comes here: you see how with desire I lean toward it." And he to me: "Your prayer is worthy of much praise, and so I accept it; but see that your tongue restrains itself. Leave the speaking to me, for I have understood what you want; for they, since they were Greeks, might perhaps be disdainful of your words." Inf. 26.76 When the flame had come to where it seemed to my guide the right time and place, I heard him speak in this manner: "O you who are two within one fire, if I deserved well of you while I lived, if I deserved of you much or little when in the world I wrote the lofty verses, do not move on; but let one of you tell where, lost through his own doing, he went to die." The greater horn of the ancient flame began to shake, murmuring, just like a flame that the wind wearies. Inf. 26.88 Then, moving its tip this way and that, as if it were the tongue that spoke, it cast forth a voice and said, "When I departed from Circe, who held me hidden away for more than a year there near Gaeta, before Aeneas gave it that name, neither tenderness for my son, nor reverence for my old father, nor the love I owed, which should have made Penelope glad, could conquer within me the ardor I had to gain experience of the world, and of human vices and worth;[167] Inf. 26.100 but I set out on the deep open sea with one ship only and with that small company by which I had not been deserted. I saw one shore and the other as far as Spain, as far as Morocco, and the island of the Sardinians, and the others that sea bathes all around. My companions and I were old and slow when we came to that narrow strait where Hercules set up his markers so that men should venture no farther. On my right hand I left

166 The two Greeks devised the wooden horse that took Troy, from which Aeneas fled to found the Roman line; they lured Achilles away from Deidamia, who loved him, and stole the Palladium, Troy's sacred image of Athena.

167 Circe, the enchantress who kept Ulysses with her; Aeneas named Gaeta, on the coast south of Rome, after his nurse Caieta, who was buried there.

Seville; on the other I had already left Ceuta.[168] Inf. 26.112 'Brothers,' I said, 'who through a hundred thousand perils have reached the west, to this so brief vigil of our senses that remains to us do not deny the experience, following the sun, of the world without people. Consider the seed from which you sprang: you were not made to live like brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge.' With this little speech I made my companions so eager for the voyage that afterward I could hardly have held them back. Inf. 26.124 And turning our stern toward the morning, we made wings of our oars for the mad flight, always gaining on the left-hand side. Night already saw all the stars of the other pole, and ours so low that it did not rise above the floor of the sea. Five times the light beneath the moon had been rekindled and as many times quenched since we had entered upon the deep passage, when there appeared to us a mountain, dark with distance, and it seemed to me higher than any I had ever seen.[169] Inf. 26.136 We rejoiced, and soon it turned to weeping; for from the new land a whirlwind arose and struck the forepart of the ship. Three times it whirled it round with all the waters; at the fourth it lifted the stern up and sent the prow down, as pleased another, until the sea had closed over us."

CANTO 27

Inf. 27.1 The flame was already upright and still, saying no more, and was already going away from us with the leave of the sweet poet, when another, which was coming behind it, made us turn our eyes to its tip because of a confused sound that came out of it. As the Sicilian bull, which first bellowed with the cries of the man (and that was just) who had shaped it with his file, used to bellow with the voice of the one tormented inside, so that, though it was made of copper, it still seemed pierced with

168 The Strait of Gibraltar, whose two headlands were the Pillars of Hercules, the traditional limit of the known world; Ceuta lies on the African side.
169 The light beneath the moon is the moon's face as seen from earth: five months had passed.

pain,[170] Inf. 27.13 so, having at first no path or opening out of the fire, the wretched words were turned into the fire's language. But after they had found their way up through the tip, giving it the quiver that the tongue had given them as they passed, we heard it say, "O you to whom I direct my voice, and who were just now speaking Lombard, saying, 'Now go your way, I urge you no more,' though I have come perhaps somewhat late, may it not trouble you to stay and speak with me: you see that it does not trouble me, and I am burning.[171] Inf. 27.25 If you have only now fallen into this blind world from that sweet Latin land from which I bring all my guilt, tell me whether the people of Romagna have peace or war; for I was from the mountains there between Urbino and the ridge from which the Tiber springs." I was still bent down and intent when my guide touched me on the side, saying, "You speak; this one is Latin."[172] Inf. 27.34 And I, who already had my answer ready, began to speak without delay: "O soul who are hidden down there, your Romagna is not, and never was, without war in the hearts of its tyrants; but I left no open war there now. Ravenna stands as it has stood for many years: the eagle of Polenta broods over it, so that it covers Cervia too with its wings. The city that once stood the long trial and made a bloody heap of the French finds itself under the green paws.[173] Inf. 27.46 The old Mastiff and the young one of Verrucchio, who made such evil havoc of Montagna, go on sinking their teeth where they always have. The cities on the Lamone and the Santerno are led by the little lion of the white lair, who changes sides from summer to winter; and the city whose flank the Savio

170 Perillus made for Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigento in Sicily, a hollow bull in which victims were roasted so that their cries sounded like bellowing; Perillus was its first victim.

171 Virgil was from Mantua in Lombardy, and the word he used for "now" (*issa*) is northern Italian dialect.

172 "Latin" here means Italian. The speaker, not yet named, is Guido da Montefeltro, Ghibelline warlord of the hill country of Montefeltro in Romagna.

173 The Polenta family, whose arms bore an eagle, ruled Ravenna and Cervia. The city is Forlì, which under Guido withstood a long siege and slaughtered a French army in 1282, and was now ruled by the Ordelaffi, whose arms bore a green lion.

bathes, just as it lies between the plain and the mountain, lives between tyranny and freedom.[174]

GUIDO DA MONTEFELTRO

A warlord turned friar tells how Pope Boniface's false absolution damned him.

Inf. 27.55 Now I beg you to tell us who you are: do not be harder than another has been, so may your name hold its ground in the world." After the fire had roared for a while in its own way, it moved its sharp point this way and that, and then gave out this breath: "If I believed that my answer were given to a person who would ever return to the world, this flame would stand without another quiver; but since no one has ever returned alive from this depth, if what I hear is true, I answer you without fear of infamy. Inf. 27.67 I was a man of arms, and then I was a friar of the cord, believing that, girded so, I would make amends; and certainly my belief would have come true in full, had it not been for the great Priest—may evil take him!—who put me back into my first sins; and I want you to understand how and *quare* [why]. While I was the form of bones and flesh that my mother gave me, my deeds were not those of the lion, but of the fox.[175] Inf. 27.76 The tricks and the covert ways, I knew them all, and I plied their art so well that the sound of it went out to the ends of the earth. When I saw that I had reached that part of my life where everyone ought to lower the sails and gather in the ropes, what had pleased me before then grieved me, and repentant and confessed I gave myself up; ah, wretched me! And it would have helped. Inf. 27.85 The Prince of the new Pharisees, having a war near the Lateran—and not with Saracens, nor with Jews, for

174 The Malatesta, lords of Rimini from their castle at Verrucchio, killed Montagna de' Parcitati, Rimini's Ghibelline leader. Faenza and Imola, on the Lamone and Santerno, were ruled by Maghinardo Pagani, whose arms showed a lion on a white field; the Savio flows past Cesena.

175 The speaker is Guido da Montefeltro (1223–1298), a Ghibelline commander famous for his stratagems, who became a Franciscan, a friar "of the cord," in 1296. The "great Priest" is Pope Boniface VIII.

every enemy of his was a Christian, and not one had been at the conquest of Acre, nor a merchant in the Sultan's land—had regard neither for the supreme office and holy orders in himself, nor, in me, for that cord which used to make those it girded leaner. But as Constantine sought out Silvester within Soracte to cure his leprosy, so this man sought me out as a master to cure the fever of his pride: he asked me for counsel, and I kept silent, because his words seemed drunken.[176] Inf. 27.100 And then he said to me: 'Let your heart not be suspicious: I absolve you here and now, and you teach me how to act so that I may throw Palestrina to the ground. I can lock and unlock Heaven, as you know; for the keys are two, which my predecessor did not hold dear.' Then the weighty arguments pushed me to the point where silence seemed to me the worst course, and I said: 'Father, since you wash me of that sin into which I now must fall, long promise with short keeping will make you triumph on the high throne.'[177] Inf. 27.112 Then Francis came for me, as soon as I was dead; but one of the black Cherubim said to him: 'Do not carry him off; do not wrong me. He must come down among my wretches, because he gave the fraudulent counsel, and ever since then I have been at his hair; for one who does not repent cannot be absolved, nor can one repent and will a thing at the same time, because of the contradiction, which does not allow it.' Oh, wretched me! How I started when he seized me, saying to me: 'Perhaps you did not think that I was a logician!'[178] Inf. 27.124 He carried me to Minos; and Minos twisted his tail eight times around his hard back and, after he had bitten it in his great rage, said: 'This one is for the sinners of the thieving fire'; and so I am lost where you see, and going clothed like this, I grieve." When he had finished his speech in this way, the flame went off in sorrow, twisting and

176 Boniface's war near the Lateran was his feud with the Colonna family of Rome, and Acre, the last Crusader stronghold, fell in 1291. Legend held that Pope Silvester, hiding on Mount Soracte, cured the emperor Constantine of leprosy.
177 Palestrina was the Colonna stronghold, which surrendered on a promise of pardon and was razed in 1298. The predecessor is Celestine V, who abdicated the papacy in 1294.
178 Saint Francis of Assisi, founder of Guido's order.

tossing its sharp horn. We passed on, I and my guide, up along the ridge as far as the next arch, which covers the ditch where the fee is paid by those who take on their burden by splitting apart.

CANTO 28

Inf. 28.1 Who could ever, even in words unbound by verse, tell in full of the blood and the wounds that I now saw, though he told it over many times? Every tongue would surely fall short, because of our speech and our mind, which have little room to comprehend so much. If all the people were gathered again who once, in the fateful land of Apulia, grieved for their blood, because of the Trojans and because of the long war that made such high spoils of rings, as Livy writes, who does not err:[179] Inf. 28.13 with those who felt the pain of blows in resisting Robert Guiscard, and the others whose bones are still being gathered at Ceperano, where every Apulian proved false, and there by Tagliacozzo, where old Alardo conquered without arms; and if one showed his limb pierced and another his cut off, it would be nothing to equal the foul fashion of the ninth ditch. Even a cask that loses its middle-board or a side-piece is not so split open as one I saw, ripped from the chin down to where one farts:[180]

THE SOWERS OF DISCORD

Those who caused schism and division are split open by a devil's sword.

Inf. 28.25 between his legs his guts hung down; his vital organs showed, and the miserable sack that turns whatever is swal-

179 The "Trojans" are the Romans, descendants of Aeneas' followers. The long war is the Second Punic War, in which Hannibal took bushels of gold rings from the Roman dead at Cannae (216 BC).

180 Robert Guiscard conquered southern Italy in the eleventh century. At Ceperano (1266) the Apulian barons deserted King Manfred, and at Tagliacozzo (1268) Charles of Anjou won through the cunning advice of the veteran Érard de Valéry (Alardo).

lowed into shit. While I was wholly intent on looking at him, he looked at me, and with his hands he pulled open his chest, saying: "Now see how I rip myself apart: see how mangled Muhammad is. In front of me Ali goes weeping, his face split from chin to forelock; and all the others you see here were sowers of scandal and of schism while they lived, and that is why they are split like this.[181] Inf. 28.37 A devil is back here who trims us up so cruelly, putting each of this crew to the edge of the sword again when we have gone round the sorrowful road; for the wounds have closed before anyone passes before him again. But who are you, gaping on the ridge, perhaps to put off going to the punishment that was adjudged on your own accusations?" Inf. 28.46 "Neither has death yet reached him, nor does guilt lead him here to be tormented," my master replied; "but to give him full experience, it falls to me, who am dead, to lead him through Hell down here from circle to circle; and this is as true as that I am speaking to you." There were more than a hundred who, when they heard him, stopped in the ditch to look at me, forgetting their torment in wonder. Inf. 28.55 "Now then, you who perhaps will see the sun before long, tell Fra Dolcino, if he does not want to follow me here soon, to arm himself so well with provisions that the grip of the snow may not bring victory to the Novarese, which otherwise would not be easy to win." After he had lifted one foot to go on, Muhammad said these words to me; then he set it down on the ground to depart.[182] Inf. 28.64 Another, who had his throat pierced and his nose cut off right up to beneath the brows, and had no more than a single ear, having stopped to stare in wonder with the others, opened his windpipe before the others, and it was crimson all over on the outside; and he said: "You whom guilt does not condemn, and whom I saw up above in the land of Italy, unless too great a likeness deceives me, remember Pier da Medicina, if ever you return to

181 Muhammad, the founder of Islam, and his cousin and son-in-law Ali. Dante, following medieval Christian belief, places them among the makers of schism.
182 Fra Dolcino led a sect condemned as heretical; besieged in the hills near Novara and starved by snow, he was captured and burned in 1307.

see the sweet plain that slopes down from Vercelli to Marcabò.[183] Inf. 28.76 And let the two best men of Fano know, Messer Guido and Angiolello too, that, if our foresight here is not vain, they will be thrown out of their vessel and drowned, weighted down, near La Cattolica, through the treachery of a wicked tyrant. Between the island of Cyprus and Majorca, Neptune never saw so great a crime, not by pirates, not by the Argive people.[184] Inf. 28.85 That traitor who sees with only one eye, and holds the city that someone here with me would wish he had never set eyes on, will have them come to parley with him; then he will act so that they will need no vow or prayer against the wind of Focara." And I to him: "Show me and make clear, if you want me to carry news of you up there, who is the one for whom the sight was bitter." Then he put his hand on the jaw of one of his companions and opened his mouth, crying: "This is he, and he does not speak:[185] Inf. 28.97 this man, an exile, drowned the doubt in Caesar, declaring that one who is ready always suffers harm from delay." Oh, how dismayed he seemed to me, with his tongue cut off in his throat, Curio, who had been so bold to speak! And one who had both hands cut off, raising the stumps through the murky air so that the blood fouled his face, cried: "You will remember Mosca too, who said, alas, 'A thing done has an end,' which was the evil seed for the Tuscan people."[186]

BERTRAN DE BORN

A headless troubadour carries his own head like a lantern.

Inf. 28.109 And I added: "And the death of your clan"; at which, piling sorrow upon sorrow, he went off like a person grieving and

183 Pier da Medicina, from near Bologna, is otherwise little known. The plain from Vercelli to Marcabò is the valley of the Po.
184 Guido del Cassero and Angiolello da Carignano, leading men of Fano, were reportedly drowned by Malatestino Malatesta, lord of Rimini. Cyprus and Majorca mark the two ends of the Mediterranean, and the Argives are the ancient Greeks.
185 The one-eyed traitor is Malatestino, and the city is Rimini, near the Rubicon. Focara is a headland whose squalls sailors prayed to escape.

crazed. But I stayed to look at the throng, and I saw a thing that I would be afraid even to tell without further proof, were it not that conscience reassures me, the good companion that makes a man bold beneath the armor of feeling itself pure. I saw for certain, and it still seems I see it, a trunk without a head walking, just as the others of the wretched flock were walking. Inf. 28.121 And it held its severed head by the hair, dangling from its hand like a lantern, and the head gazed at us and said: "Oh me!" It made of itself a lamp for itself, and they were two in one and one in two; how this can be, He knows who so ordains. When it was right at the foot of the bridge, it raised its arm high with the whole head, to bring its words close to us, and they were: "Now see the grievous punishment, you who, breathing, go looking at the dead: see if any is as great as this; Inf. 28.133 and so that you may carry news of me, know that I am Bertran de Born, the one who gave the young king the evil encouragement. I made the father and the son rebels against each other: Ahithophel did no more with Absalom and David by his wicked goadings. Because I parted persons so joined, I carry my brain parted, alas, from its source, which is in this trunk. Thus retribution is observed in me."[187]

CANTO 29

Inf. 29.1 The many people and the various wounds had so inebriated my eyes that they longed to stay and weep; but Virgil said to me: "What are you still staring at? Why does your sight still linger down there among the wretched mutilated shades? You did not do so at the other ditches. Consider, if you think to count them, that the valley runs around for twenty-two miles; and already the moon is beneath our feet. The time now granted us

186 Curio, a tribune exiled from Rome, urged Caesar to cross the Rubicon (Lucan, *Pharsalia* 1). Mosca dei Lamberti counseled the murder of Buondelmonte (1216), which by tradition began the feud of Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence.

187 Bertran de Born (c. 1140–c. 1215), a troubadour, was said to have incited Henry the "Young King" against his father Henry II of England, as Ahithophel urged Absalom against David (2 Samuel 15–17). "Retribution" renders *contrapasso*, the scholastic term for a punishment that answers the sin in kind.

is short, and there is more to see than you are seeing."[188] Inf. 29.13 "If you had paid attention," I answered then, "to the reason why I was looking, perhaps you would have allowed me to stay longer." Meanwhile my guide was going on, and I went behind him, already making my reply and adding: "Within that hollow where I was just now keeping my eyes so fixed, I believe a spirit of my own blood weeps for the guilt that costs so much down there." Then the master said: "From now on, do not let your thought break itself on him: attend to other things, and let him stay there; Inf. 29.25 for I saw him at the foot of the little bridge pointing at you and threatening fiercely with his finger, and I heard him called Geri del Bello. You were then so wholly absorbed in the one who once held Hautefort that you did not look over that way, and so he went off." "O my guide, the violent death that has not yet been avenged for him," I said, "by anyone who is a partner in the shame, made him indignant; and so he went away without speaking to me, as I judge; and by this he has made me pity him the more."[189] Inf. 29.37 So we talked as far as the first point on the ridge that would show the next valley all the way to the bottom, if there were more light there. When we were above the last cloister of Malebolge, so that its lay brothers could come into our sight, various laments shot at me, whose arrows were tipped with pity, and at this I covered my ears with my hands.

THE FALSIFIERS

In the last ditch, alchemists and other falsifiers lie diseased and scratching.

Inf. 29.46 Such pain as there would be if the sick from the hospitals of Valdichiana between July and September, and of the Maremma and of Sardinia, were all together in one trench, such

188 The moon, full the night before, is now on the far side of the earth beneath them, which puts the hour at about one in the afternoon of Holy Saturday.
189 Geri del Bello, a cousin of Dante's father, was killed in a feud. Hautefort (Altaforte) was Bertran de Born's castle.

was there here; and such a stench came out of it as usually comes from rotting limbs. We went down onto the last bank of the long ridge, still to the left, and then my sight was keener down toward the bottom, where the minister of the high Lord, infallible Justice, punishes the falsifiers whom she records here.[190] Inf. 29.58 I do not believe it was a greater sorrow to see the whole people sick in Aegina, when the air was so full of pestilence that the animals, down to the little worm, all fell dead, and afterward the ancient peoples, as the poets hold for certain, were restored from the seed of ants, than it was to see, through that dark valley, the spirits languishing in various heaps. One lay on his belly, and another on the shoulders of another, and another, on all fours, was dragging himself along the wretched path.[191] Inf. 29.70 Step by step we went without speaking, looking at and listening to the sick, who could not lift up their bodies. I saw two sitting propped against each other, as pan is propped against pan to warm, spotted from head to foot with scabs; and I never saw a currycomb plied by a stable boy whose master is waiting for him, nor by one who stays awake unwillingly, the way each of them kept plying the bite of his nails upon himself, for the great fury of the itching, which has no other relief. Inf. 29.82 And their nails dragged the scabs down as a knife does the scales of a bream, or of another fish that has larger ones. "O you who strip off your mail with your fingers," my guide began to one of them, "and who sometimes make pincers of them, tell us if any Italian is among those who are in here, so may your nails suffice you eternally for that work." "We are Italians, both of us whom you see so ruined here," one replied, weeping; "but who are you, who have asked about us?" Inf. 29.94 And my guide said: "I am one who goes down with this living man from ledge to ledge, and I mean to show him Hell." Then their mutual support broke apart, and each turned trembling to me, with others who heard

190 Valdichiana, the Maremma and Sardinia were notorious for malaria in summer. The tenth and last ditch holds the falsifiers.

191 Ovid tells (*Metamorphoses* 7) how Juno sent a plague on the island of Aegina and Jupiter repeopled it by turning ants into men, the Myrmidons.

it as it echoed. The good master drew close to me, saying: "Say to them what you will." And I began, since he so wished: Inf. 29.103 "So may your memory not steal away from human minds in the first world, but live on under many suns, tell me who you are and of what people: do not let your foul and loathsome punishment frighten you from revealing yourselves to me." "I was from Arezzo, and Albero of Siena," one replied, "had me put to the fire; but what I died for is not what brings me here. Inf. 29.112 It is true that I told him, speaking in jest, that I would know how to raise myself through the air in flight; and he, who had eagerness and little sense, wanted me to show him the art; and only because I did not make him a Daedalus, he had me burned by one who held him as a son. But Minos, who is not permitted to err, condemned me to the last ditch of the ten for the alchemy I practiced in the world."[192] Inf. 29.121 And I said to the poet: "Now was there ever a people as vain as the Sienese? Certainly not the French, not by a long way." At this the other leper, who heard me, answered my words: "Leave out Stricca, who knew how to spend in moderation; and Niccolò, who first discovered the costly custom of the clove in the garden where such seed takes root; and leave out the company in which Caccia d'Asciano squandered his vineyard and his great woods, and Abbagliato showed off his wit.[193] Inf. 29.133 But so that you may know who seconds you like this against the Sienese, sharpen your eye toward me, so that my face may answer you well; then you will see that I am the shade of Capocchio, who falsified metals with alchemy; and you must remember, if I eye you rightly, how good an ape of nature I was."[194]

192 The speaker, by early accounts Griffolino of Arezzo, was burned as a heretic at the instigation of the foolish Albero, whose protector, the Bishop of Siena, loved him like a son. Daedalus flew from Crete on wings he had made.

193 The list is ironic: Stricca, Niccolò (who introduced costly cloves into Sienese cooking), Caccia d'Asciano and Abbagliato belonged to Siena's notorious "Spendthrift Brigade."

194 Capocchio, burned at Siena in 1293 for alchemy, was said by early commentators to have known Dante in their student days.

CANTO 30

Inf. 30.1 In the time when Juno was enraged because of Semele against the Theban blood, as she showed more than once, Athamas went so mad that, seeing his wife go by carrying their two sons, one on each arm, he cried: "Let us spread the nets, so that I may catch the lioness and her cubs at the pass"; and then he stretched out his pitiless claws, seizing the one whose name was Learchus, and whirled him round and dashed him against a rock; and she drowned herself with her other burden.[195] Inf. 30.13 And when fortune brought low the loftiness of the Trojans, who dared everything, so that the king was wiped out together with his kingdom, Hecuba, sad, wretched and captive, after she had seen Polyxena dead, and in her sorrow had found her Polydorus on the seashore, went out of her mind and barked like a dog, so far had grief twisted her mind.[196] Inf. 30.22 But neither Theban furies nor Trojan were ever seen so cruel in anyone, in goading beasts, let alone human limbs, as I saw in two pale and naked shades who ran biting, the way a pig does when it is let out of the sty. One of them came at Capocchio, and sank its tusks into the nape of his neck, so that, dragging him, it made his belly scrape along the hard bottom. And the Aretine, who was left trembling, said to me: "That goblin is Gianni Schicchi, and in his rage he goes about treating others like this."[197] Inf. 30.34 "Oh," I said to him, "so may the other not fasten its teeth on you, do not find it a burden to tell me who it is, before it darts away from here." And he to me: "That is the ancient soul of wicked Myrrha, who became her father's lover, beyond rightful love. She came to sin with him in this way, by counterfeiting herself in another's

195 Juno, jealous of Jupiter's love for the Theban princess Semele, drove mad Athamas, husband of Semele's sister Ino. The story is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book 4.
196 Hecuba, queen of Troy, saw her daughter Polyxena sacrificed on Achilles' tomb and found the body of her son Polydorus, murdered by the king of Thrace (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 13).
197 The Aretine is Griffolino of Arezzo, who spoke in the previous canto. Gianni Schicchi (died c. 1280) was a Florentine famous for his gift of mimicry.

form, just as the other, who is going off over there, dared, in order to win the lady of the herd, to counterfeit Buoso Donati in himself, making a will and giving the will its proper legal form."[198]

MASTER ADAM

A counterfeiter swollen with dropsy quarrels with Sinon the Greek.

Inf. 30.46 And when the two raging ones, on whom I had kept my eye, had passed, I turned it to look at the other ill-born souls. I saw one shaped like a lute, if only his groin had been cut off at the place where a man is forked. The heavy dropsy, which so mismatches the limbs with the humor it badly converts that the face does not answer to the belly, made him hold his lips apart, as the consumptive does, who for thirst turns one lip toward his chin and the other upward. Inf. 30.58 "O you who are without any punishment (and I do not know why) in this grim world," he said to us, "look and attend to the misery of Master Adam. Alive, I had plenty of what I wanted, and now, alas, I crave one drop of water. The little streams that run down from the green hills of the Casentino into the Arno, making their channels cool and soft, are always before me, and not in vain; for their image dries me up far more than the disease that strips the flesh from my face.[199] Inf. 30.70 The rigid justice that searches me takes its occasion from the place where I sinned, to put my sighs to flight all the more. There is Romena, where I counterfeited the alloy sealed with the Baptist, for which I left my body burned up above. But if I could see here the wretched soul of Guido, or of Alessandro, or of their brother, I would not give up the sight for Fonte Branda. One of them is already inside, if the raging shades who go around tell the truth; but what use is it to me, when my

198 In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book 10), Myrrha disguised herself to sleep with her father Cinyras. Schicchi impersonated the dead Buoso Donati to dictate a false will, and left himself the finest mare of the stud.

199 Master Adam was burned in 1281 for counterfeiting the Florentine gold florin. The Casentino is the upper valley of the Arno, east of Florence.

limbs are bound?[200] Inf. 30.82 If I were still just light enough to go one inch in a hundred years, I would already have set out along the path, looking for him among these disfigured people, even though the ditch runs eleven miles around and is no less than half a mile across. Because of them I am among such a household: they induced me to strike the florins that had three carats of dross." Inf. 30.91 And I to him: "Who are the two wretches who steam like wet hands in winter, lying close against your boundaries on the right?" "I found them here, and they have not turned over since," he answered, "when I rained down into this trough, and I do not believe they will turn for all eternity. One is the false woman who accused Joseph; the other is the false Sinon, the Greek from Troy: because of acute fever they give off such a stench."[201] Inf. 30.100 And one of them, who perhaps took offense at being named so infamously, struck him with his fist on his rigid belly: it sounded as if it were a drum; and Master Adam struck him in the face with his arm, which seemed no less hard, saying to him: "Although I am deprived of movement by my limbs, which are heavy, I have an arm free for such work." To which he answered: "When you were going to the fire you did not have it so ready; but you had it as ready, and more, when you were coining." Inf. 30.112 And the dropsical one: "You speak the truth in this; but you were not so true a witness there at Troy, when you were asked for the truth." "If I spoke falsely, you falsified the coin," said Sinon, "and I am here for one fault, and you for more than any other demon." "Remember the horse, perjurer," replied the one with the swollen belly, "and may it torment you that the whole world knows it." "And may the thirst that cracks your tongue torment you," said the Greek, "and the putrid water that hedges your belly up so before your eyes." Inf. 30.124 Then the coiner: "So your mouth gapes open to its own

200 The florin bore the image of John the Baptist, patron of Florence. Guido, Alessandro and their brother were the Conti Guidi of Romena, who had Adam forge the coins; Fonte Branda was a spring (near Romena, or the famous fountain in Siena).
201 Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of trying to seduce her (Genesis 39). Sinon talked the Trojans into bringing the wooden horse into their city (Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 2).

harm, as it always does; for if I have thirst and humor stuffs me full, you have the burning and the head that aches, and to lick the mirror of Narcissus you would not need many words of invitation." I was wholly fixed on listening to them, when the master said to me: "Go on, keep staring, for it would take little for me to quarrel with you." When I heard him speak to me in anger, I turned toward him with such shame that it still circles through my memory.[202] Inf. 30.136 And like one who dreams of something harmful to him, and, dreaming, wishes he were dreaming, so that he longs for what is as if it were not, so I became, unable to speak, for I wished to excuse myself, and was excusing myself all the while, and did not think I was doing so. "Less shame washes away a greater fault than yours has been," said the master; "so unburden yourself of all sadness; and reckon that I am always at your side, if it happens again that fortune brings you where people are in a similar dispute; for to want to hear that is a base desire."

CANTO 31

Inf. 31.1 One and the same tongue first stung me, so that it colored both my cheeks, and then it supplied the remedy. So I hear that the lance of Achilles and of his father used to be the cause first of a sad and then of a good gift. We turned our backs on the wretched valley, up over the bank that girds it round, crossing without any speech.[203]

THE GIANTS

What Dante takes for towers are giants standing in the pit around the bottom of Hell.

Inf. 31.10 Here it was less than night and less than day, so that my sight went only a little way ahead; but I heard a high horn

202 The mirror of Narcissus is water, in which Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection.
203 The lance Achilles inherited from his father Peleus was said to heal the wounds it caused.

sound, so loud that it would have made any thunder faint, and, as my eyes followed its path back toward it, it directed them wholly to one place. After the woeful rout, when Charlemagne lost his holy band, Roland did not sound his horn so terribly. I had kept my head turned that way only a little while when I seemed to see many high towers; so I said: "Master, tell me, what city is this?"[204] Inf. 31.22 And he to me: "Because you pierce the darkness from too far away, it happens that you then go astray in your imagining. You will see clearly, if you get there, how much the senses are deceived by distance; so spur yourself on a little more." Then he took me lovingly by the hand and said: "Before we go farther, so that the fact may seem less strange to you, know that they are not towers but giants, and they are in the pit, around its bank, from the navel downward, every one of them." Inf. 31.34 As, when the mist disperses, the gaze little by little makes out what the vapor that thickens the air conceals, so, as I pierced the thick, dark air, coming nearer and nearer to the edge, my error fled from me and my fear grew. For as Montereggioni crowns itself with towers on its round circle of walls, so the rim that surrounds the pit was towered over, with half their bodies, by the horrible giants, whom Jove still threatens from heaven when he thunders.[205] Inf. 31.46 And already I could make out the face of one of them, his shoulders and chest and a great part of his belly, and both his arms down along his sides. Nature certainly did very well when she gave up the art of making such creatures, to take such agents away from Mars; and if she does not repent of elephants and whales, whoever looks closely holds her the more just and the more prudent for it: for where the reasoning of the mind is joined to ill will and to power, people can make no defense against it. Inf. 31.58 His face seemed to me as long and as large as the pine cone of Saint Peter's at Rome, and his other bones were in proportion; so that the bank, which was

204 In the *Song of Roland*, the rear guard of Charlemagne's army, with its paladins, was destroyed at Roncesvalles (AD 778), and Roland blew his horn too late for help.
205 Montereggioni is a castle near Siena whose circular wall was ringed with fourteen towers. In classical myth the giants rebelled against Jove and were struck down by his thunderbolts.

an apron from his middle down, showed so much of him above that three Frisians would have made a vain boast of reaching his hair; for I saw thirty great spans of him downward from the place where a man buckles his cloak. "*Rafel mai amech zabi almi*," the savage mouth began to cry, to which no sweeter psalms were fitting.[206] Inf. 31.70 And my guide toward him: "Foolish soul, keep to your horn, and vent yourself with that when anger or some other passion touches you! Search at your neck, and you will find the strap that holds it tied, O confused soul, and see it banding your great chest." Then he said to me: "He accuses himself; this is Nimrod, through whose evil thought one single language is no longer used in the world.[207] Inf. 31.79 Let us leave him alone, and not speak in vain; for every language is to him as his is to others, which is known to no one." So we made a longer journey, turned to the left, and at the distance of a crossbow shot we found the next, far fiercer and larger. Who the master was who bound him I cannot say, but he had his left arm pinned in front and his right arm behind by a chain that held him fastened from the neck down, so that on the uncovered part it wound round him as many as five times. Inf. 31.91 "This proud one wished to test his power against highest Jove," said my guide, "and so he has such a reward. Ephialtes is his name; and he made the great assaults when the giants made the gods afraid: the arms he plied then he never moves now." And I to him: "If it can be, I would like my eyes to have experience of the immeasurable Briareus." To which he answered: "You will see Antaeus near here, who speaks and is unbound, who will set us down at the bottom of all evil.[208]

206 The great bronze pine cone, about four meters high, stood in the forecourt of Old Saint Peter's and is now in the Vatican. The giant's words are deliberately meaningless, as Virgil goes on to explain.

207 Nimrod, the "mighty hunter" of Genesis 10, was traditionally held to have built the Tower of Babel, which brought about the confusion of tongues.

208 Briareus was a giant with a hundred hands. Antaeus, son of the Earth, did not fight in the war against the gods, and so is not chained.

ANTAEUS

The giant Antaeus lifts the poets and sets them down on the ice of Cocytus.

Inf. 31.103 The one you wish to see is much farther on, and he is bound and made like this one, except that he looks fiercer in the face." Never was there an earthquake so violent that it shook a tower as hard as Ephialtes was quick to shake himself. Then I feared death more than ever, and the fear alone would have been enough to kill me, if I had not seen the chains. Then we went farther on, and came to Antaeus, who rose a good five ells out of the hollow, not counting the head. Inf. 31.115 "O you who, in the fortunate valley that made Scipio heir to glory when Hannibal and his men turned their backs, once took a thousand lions as prey, and who, had you been at the high war of your brothers, some still seem to believe would have made the sons of the earth victorious: set us down below (and do not scorn to do it) where the cold locks up Cocytus. Do not make us go to Tityus or to Typhon: this man can give what is longed for here; so bend down, and do not curl your snout.[209] Inf. 31.127 He can still give you fame in the world, for he is alive, and still expects a long life, if grace does not call him to itself before his time." So spoke the master; and the giant in haste stretched out the hands whose great grip Hercules once felt, and took my guide. Virgil, when he felt himself taken, said to me: "Come here, so that I can take hold of you"; then he managed it so that he and I were one bundle.[210] Inf. 31.136 As the Carisenda looks when one gazes up at it from beneath its leaning side, when a cloud passes over it so that the tower leans against its course, so Antaeus looked to me as I stood watching to see him stoop; and that was such a moment that I would have wished to go by another road. But

209 Antaeus was said to have lived in the valley of the Bagradas in North Africa, near Zama, where Scipio defeated Hannibal in 202 BC. Tityus and Typhon were other giants who rebelled against the gods.

210 Hercules killed Antaeus by lifting him off the Earth, his mother, from whom he drew his strength.

lightly he set us down in the depth that swallows Lucifer with Judas; nor did he linger there, stooped like that, but rose up like the mast of a ship.[211]

CANTO 32

Inf. 32.1 If I had rhymes harsh and grating enough to suit the dismal hole on which all the other rocks bear down, I would press out the juice of my conception more fully; but since I do not have them, not without fear do I bring myself to speak. For it is no enterprise to be taken up in jest, to describe the bottom of the whole universe, nor one for a tongue that cries "mama" and "papa." Inf. 32.10 But may those Ladies aid my verse who aided Amphion to wall in Thebes, so that my telling may not differ from the fact. O rabble, ill-created beyond all others, who are in the place of which it is hard to speak, it would have been better for you to have been sheep or goats here! When we were down in the dark pit, beneath the giant's feet, much lower, and I was still gazing up at the high wall, I heard someone say to me: "Watch how you step: go so that you do not tread with your soles on the heads of your wretched, weary brothers."[212]

THE FROZEN LAKE

Traitors to their kin lie frozen in the ice of Caina.

Inf. 32.22 At this I turned, and saw before me and under my feet a lake that, through frost, had the look of glass and not of water. The Danube in Austria never made so thick a veil over its course in winter, nor the Don, there under the cold sky, as there was here; for if Tambernic had fallen onto it, or Pietrapana, it would not have given so much as a creak, even at the edge.[213] Inf. 32.31 And as the frog sits croaking with its muzzle out of the water, in the

211 The Carisenda (Garisenda) is one of the two leaning towers of Bologna.
212 The Ladies are the Muses, with whose help Amphion's lyre moved the stones to build the walls of Thebes.
213 Tambernic is an unidentified mountain; Pietrapana is the Pania della Croce, a peak in the Apuan Alps of northwest Tuscany.

season when the peasant woman often dreams of gleaning, so, livid up to where shame shows, the grieving shades were in the ice, setting their teeth to the note of the stork. Each one held its face turned downward: among them the mouth bears witness to the cold, and the eyes to the sad heart. When I had looked around for a while, I turned to my feet, and saw two pressed so close together that the hair of their heads was mingled. Inf. 32.43 "Tell me, you who press your breasts so tightly together," I said, "who you are." And they bent their necks back; and when they had raised their faces to me, their eyes, which before were moist only within, dripped down onto their lips, and the frost froze the tears between them and locked them shut again. Never did a clamp bind wood to wood so tightly; at which they, like two billy goats, butted each other, such anger overcame them. And one who had lost both his ears to the cold, still with his face downward, said: "Why do you stare at us so, as if into a mirror? Inf. 32.55 If you want to know who these two are, the valley down which the Bisenzio flows belonged to their father Alberto and to them. They came out of one body: and you may search all Caina, and you will not find a shade more worthy to be fixed in this jelly: not the one whose breast and shadow were broken with one and the same blow by the hand of Arthur; not Focaccia; not this one who blocks me with his head so that I cannot see any farther, and who was named Sassol Mascheroni: if you are Tuscan, you know well by now who he was.[214] Inf. 32.67 And so that you do not put me to any further speech, know that I was Camicion de' Pazzi, and I am waiting for Carlino to make me look innocent." After that I saw a thousand faces turned purple, like a dog's, by the cold; and so a shudder comes over me, and always will, at frozen pools. And while we were going toward the center, where all weight gathers, and I was trembling in the eternal chill—whether it was will, or destiny, or fortune, I do not know; but

214 The brothers Alessandro and Napoleone degli Alberti killed each other over their inheritance; Caina, named for Cain, holds those who betrayed their kin. Arthur's lance pierced Mordred so that light passed through the wound; Focaccia of Pistoia and Sassol Mascheroni of Florence murdered relatives.

walking among the heads, I struck my foot hard against the face of one.[215] Inf. 32.79 Weeping, he cried out at me: "Why are you trampling on me? If you have not come to add to the vengeance for Montaperti, why do you torment me?" And I: "My master, wait for me here now, so that I may rid myself of a doubt about this one; then you can hurry me as much as you like." My guide stopped; and I said to the one who was still cursing bitterly: "Who are you, that you rail at others so?" "Now who are you, who go through Antenora," he answered, "striking other people's cheeks so hard that, if you were alive, it would be too much?"[216] Inf. 32.91 "I am alive, and it may be dear to you," was my answer, "if you seek fame, that I should put your name among my other notes." And he to me: "What I crave is the opposite. Take yourself off from here and pester me no more, for you know poorly how to flatter in this hollow." Then I took him by the scruff of the neck and said: "You will have to name yourself, or not a hair will be left on you up here." Inf. 32.100 At this he said to me: "Though you strip me of my hair, I will not tell you who I am, nor show it to you, if you fall upon my head a thousand times." I already had his hair twisted around my hand and had pulled out more than one tuft of it, while he barked with his eyes held down, when another cried out: "What is the matter with you, Bocca? Isn't it enough for you to make noise with your jaws, without barking too? What devil is at you?"[217] Inf. 32.109 "Now," I said, "I do not want you to speak, wicked traitor, for to your shame I will carry true news of you." "Go away," he answered, "and tell whatever you like; but if you get out of here, do not keep silent about the one who just now had his tongue so ready. He weeps here for the sil-

215 Camicione de' Pazzi murdered a kinsman. His relative Carlino de' Pazzi betrayed a castle held by the Whites in 1302, a worse treachery that will make Camicione's seem small.

216 Montaperti was the battle of 1260 in which the Florentine Guelfs were routed by Siena and the exiled Ghibellines. Antenora, the second zone of Cocytus, holds traitors to their country or party and is named after the Trojan Antenor, believed to have betrayed his city.

217 Bocca degli Abati, a Florentine who at Montaperti is said to have cut off the hand of his own side's standard-bearer, causing the rout.

ver of the French. 'I saw,' you can say, 'the one from Duera, there where the sinners are kept cool.'[218]

UGOLINO

Dante sees one sinner frozen in a hole with another, gnawing his head.

Inf. 32.118 If you should be asked who else was there, you have beside you the one from Beccheria, whose throat Florence cut. Gianni de' Soldanier, I believe, is farther on, with Ganelon and Tribaldello, who opened Faenza while it slept." We had already left him when I saw two frozen in one hole, so that one head was a cap for the other; and as bread is devoured in hunger, so the one on top set his teeth into the other where the brain joins the nape.[219] Inf. 32.130 Tydeus gnawed the temples of Menalippus in his scorn no differently than this one was gnawing the skull and the other parts. "O you who show by so bestial a sign your hatred for the one you are devouring, tell me the reason," I said, "on this condition: that if you have just cause to complain of him, once I know who you both are and what his sin was, I may yet repay you for it in the world above, if the tongue I speak with does not dry up."[220]

CANTO 33

Inf. 33.1 That sinner lifted his mouth from the savage meal, wiping it on the hair of the head he had ravaged from behind. Then he began: "You want me to renew a desperate grief that already weighs on my heart merely at the thought, before I speak of it. But if my words are to be a seed that bears fruit of infamy for the

218 Buoso da Duera, a Ghibelline leader of Cremona, was said to have taken French money to let the army of Charles of Anjou pass into Italy in 1265.
219 Tesauro dei Beccheria was beheaded by Florence in 1258 for plotting with the Ghibellines, and Gianni de' Soldanier turned against his own Ghibelline party in 1266. Ganelon betrayed Roland in the French epic, and Tribaldello opened the gates of Faenza to its enemies by night in 1280.
220 In Statius' *Thebaid*, Tydeus, one of the Seven against Thebes, was mortally wounded by Menalippus, killed him in turn, and gnawed his severed head.

traitor I am gnawing, you will see me speak and weep together. I do not know who you are, nor by what means you have come down here; but you truly seem to me a Florentine when I hear you. Inf. 33.13 You must know that I was Count Ugolino, and this is Archbishop Ruggieri: now I will tell you why I am such a neighbor to him. That by the working of his evil schemes, after I had trusted him, I was taken and then put to death, there is no need to say. But what you cannot have heard—that is, how cruel my death was—you shall hear, and you will know whether he has wronged me.[221] Inf. 33.22 A narrow slit within the mew, which because of me bears the name of Hunger, and in which others must yet be locked away, had already shown me through its opening several moons, when I dreamed the evil dream that tore away for me the veil of the future. This man appeared to me as master and lord, hunting the wolf and its cubs on the mountain that keeps the Pisans from seeing Lucca. With lean hounds, eager and well trained, he had put Gualandi, with Sismondi and with Lanfranchi, out in front of him.[222] Inf. 33.34 After a short run the father and the sons seemed weary to me, and I seemed to see their flanks torn open by sharp fangs. When I woke before the dawn, I heard my sons, who were with me, crying in their sleep and asking for bread. You are cruel indeed if you do not grieve already, thinking of what my heart was foreboding; and if you do not weep, what then do you usually weep for? Inf. 33.43 They were awake now, and the hour was drawing near when our food used to be brought to us, and each of them was anxious because of his dream; and I heard the door below being nailed up in the horrible tower; at which I looked into the faces of my sons without saying a word. I did not weep, so turned to stone was I within; they wept; and my little Anselm said: 'You stare so,

221 Count Ugolino della Gherardesca, a ruler of Pisa, was betrayed by Archbishop Ruggieri degli Ubaldini and in 1288 imprisoned in a tower with two sons and two grandsons, where they starved to death in 1289.

222 A mew is a cage where hawks were kept while molting; the tower became known as the Tower of Hunger. Gualandi, Sismondi and Lanfranchi were Pisan Ghibelline families allied with Ruggieri, and the mountain is Monte San Giuliano, between Pisa and Lucca.

father: what is wrong?' Still I shed no tears, nor did I answer all that day, nor the night after, until the next sun came out over the world. Inf. 33.55 As soon as a little ray had found its way into the sorrowful prison, and I saw in four faces my own appearance, I bit both my hands for grief. And they, thinking I did it from a longing to eat, rose up at once and said: 'Father, it will be much less pain for us if you eat of us: you clothed us in this wretched flesh, and you strip it off.' Then I calmed myself so as not to make them sadder; that day and the next we all stayed silent. Ah, hard earth, why did you not open? Inf. 33.67 When we had come to the fourth day, Gaddo threw himself down stretched out at my feet, saying: 'My father, why don't you help me?' There he died; and as you see me, so I saw the three fall one by one between the fifth day and the sixth; at which, already blind, I took to groping over each of them, and for two days I called them after they were dead. Then fasting had more power than grief." Inf. 33.76 When he had said this, with eyes askew he seized the wretched skull again in his teeth, which were strong on the bone, like a dog's. Ah, Pisa, disgrace of the peoples of the fair land where *sì* [yes] is heard, since your neighbors are slow to punish you, let Capraia and Gorgona move and make a hedge across the mouth of the Arno, so that it drowns every person in you![223]

PTOLOMEA

Traitors to their guests lie on their backs, their tears frozen in their eyes.

Inf. 33.85 For if Count Ugolino had the name of having betrayed you in the matter of your castles, you should not have put his sons on such a cross. Their young age, you new Thebes, made Uguccione and Brigata innocent, and the other two whom my song names above. We passed on, to where the ice roughly swathes another people, not bent downward but turned all the way over

223 The land where *sì* is heard is Italy, named by its word for "yes." Capraia and Gorgona are small islands in the sea off the mouth of the Arno.

on their backs.[224] Inf. 33.94 There the very weeping keeps them from weeping, and the grief that finds a barrier upon the eyes turns inward to increase the anguish; for the first tears form a knot and, like visors of crystal, fill the whole cup beneath the brow. And although, as in a callus, every feeling had left its dwelling in my face because of the cold, it now seemed to me that I felt some wind; so I said: "My master, who moves this? Is not every vapor quenched down here?"[225] Inf. 33.106 At which he said to me: "Soon you will be where your eye will give you the answer to this, when you see the cause that rains down this blast." And one of the wretches of the frozen crust cried out to us: "O souls so cruel that the last station has been given to you, lift the hard veils from my face, so that I may vent a little the grief that swells my heart, before my weeping freezes again." Inf. 33.115 So I said to him: "If you want me to relieve you, tell me who you are; and if I do not free you, may I have to go to the bottom of the ice." He answered, then: "I am Friar Alberigo; I am the one of the fruit from the evil garden, who here receive a date for a fig." "Oh," I said to him, "are you already dead, then?" And he to me: "How my body fares up in the world, I have no knowledge.[226] Inf. 33.124 This Ptolomea has such an advantage, that the soul often falls here before Atropos has sent it on its way. And so that you may more willingly scrape the glassy tears from my face, know that as soon as the soul betrays, as I did, its body is taken from it by a demon, who afterward governs it until its time has wholly run its course. The soul plunges down into such a cistern as this; and perhaps the body of the shade who winters here behind me still

224 Ugolino was accused of handing over Pisan castles to Florence and Lucca in 1285. Thebes was the city of ancient legend most notorious for atrocious crimes within families.

225 Medieval science explained wind as vapors raised by the sun's heat, which cannot reach this place.

226 Friar Alberigo de' Manfredi of Faenza had kinsmen murdered at a banquet in 1285, the signal being his call for the fruit; a date was costlier than a fig, so he is repaid more than in kind.

appears up above.[227] Inf. 33.136 You must know him, if you have only just come down: he is Ser Branca d'Oria, and many years have passed since he was shut up like this." "I believe," I said to him, "that you are deceiving me; for Branca d'Oria has never yet died, and he eats and drinks and sleeps and puts on clothes." "In the ditch of the Malebranche up above," he said, "there where the sticky pitch boils, Michel Zanche had not yet arrived when this man left a devil in his place in his own body, as did one of his kinsmen who carried out the treachery together with him.[228] Inf. 33.148 But now stretch out your hand here; open my eyes." And I did not open them for him; and to be rude to him was courtesy. Ah, Genoese, men estranged from all good ways and full of every corruption, why are you not scattered from the world? For alongside the worst spirit of Romagna I found one of you such that, for his deeds, in soul he is already bathing in Cocytus, and in body he still seems alive up above.

CANTO 34

Inf. 34.1 "*Vexilla Regis prodeunt inferni* [The banners of the King of Hell advance] toward us; so look ahead," said my master, "to see if you can make him out." As, when a thick fog breathes, or when night is falling on our hemisphere, a mill that the wind turns appears from far off, such a structure I seemed to see then; then, because of the wind, I shrank back behind my guide, for there was no other shelter. I was now (and with fear I set it down in verse) where the shades were wholly covered, and showed through like straw in glass.[229]

227 Ptolomea, the third zone of Cocytus, holds traitors to their guests, probably named after the Ptolemy who murdered Simon Maccabeus at a banquet (1 Maccabees 16). Atropos is the Fate who cuts the thread of each life.

228 Branca d'Oria, a Genoese nobleman still alive in 1300, murdered his father-in-law Michel Zanche (seen among the grafters in Inf. 22) at a banquet, with the help of a relative.

229 The opening line of a Latin hymn to the Cross by Venantius Fortunatus, sung in Holy Week, with the word "inferni" (of Hell) added.

LUCIFER

At the center of the earth, three-faced Lucifer chews Judas, Brutus and Cassius.

Inf. 34.13 Some are lying down, others stand upright, one with its head and another with its soles uppermost; another, like a bow, bends its face back toward its feet. When we had gone so far forward that it pleased my master to show me the creature who once had the beautiful countenance, he moved from in front of me and made me stop, saying: "Here is Dis, and here is the place where you must arm yourself with courage." How frozen and faint I then became, do not ask, Reader, for I do not write it, since all speech would fall short. Inf. 34.25 I did not die, and I did not remain alive: think now for yourself, if you have a grain of wit, what I became, deprived of both the one and the other. The emperor of the sorrowful kingdom rose out of the ice from midbreast; and I come closer in size to a giant than the giants do to his arms: see now how great that whole must be that is in proportion to such a part. If he was once as beautiful as he is now ugly, and raised his brows against his Maker, well may all grief proceed from him. Inf. 34.37 Oh, how great a marvel it seemed to me when I saw three faces on his head! One in front, and that one was red; the other two, which joined this one just above the middle of each shoulder, met at the place of the crest; and the right one seemed between white and yellow; the left one was, to look at, like those who come from where the Nile descends into its valley. Beneath each face came out two great wings, of a size befitting so great a bird: I never saw sails at sea like these. Inf. 34.49 They had no feathers, but their fashion was a bat's; and he was flapping them, so that three winds went out from him. From these all Cocytus froze: with six eyes he wept, and down three chins dripped tears and bloody slaver. In each mouth he was crushing a sinner with his teeth, like a flax brake, so that he made three of them suffer in this way. To the one in front the biting was nothing compared with the clawing, for at times his

back was left all stripped of skin. Inf. 34.61 "That soul up there who has the greatest punishment," said my master, "is Judas Iscariot, who has his head inside and kicks his legs outside. Of the other two, who have their heads below, the one who hangs from the black snout is Brutus: see how he writhes and says not a word; and the other is Cassius, who seems so heavy-limbed. But night is rising again; and now it is time to depart, for we have seen everything."[230]

OUT OF HELL

The poets climb down Lucifer's body, pass the center of the earth, and climb toward the stars.

Inf. 34.70 As he wished, I clasped him around the neck; and he seized the right moment and place, and when the wings were opened wide enough, he caught hold of the shaggy flanks; then from tuft to tuft he climbed down between the thick hair and the frozen crusts. When we had come to the point where the thigh turns, just at the thick of the haunch, my guide, with effort and with strain, turned his head to where his shanks had been and gripped the hair like a man who is climbing, so that I thought I was going back into Hell again. Inf. 34.82 "Hold on tight, for by such stairs as these," said my master, panting like a man worn out, "we must take our leave of so much evil." Then he came out through the opening in a rock and set me down to sit upon its rim; then he moved his wary step over toward me. I raised my eyes and thought I would see Lucifer as I had left him, and I saw him holding his legs upward. Inf. 34.91 And if I then became perplexed, let the dull-witted judge, who do not see what point it was that I had passed. "Get up," said my master, "on your feet: the way is long and the road is hard, and already the sun returns to mid-terce." It was no palace gallery where we were, but a nat-

230 Brutus and Cassius led the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, whom Dante regarded as founder of the Roman Empire.

ural dungeon that had a rough floor and a lack of light.[231] Inf. 34.100 "Before I tear myself away from the abyss, my master," I said when I was standing, "talk to me a little, to draw me out of error. Where is the ice? And how is this one fixed so upside down? And how, in so short a time, has the sun made its passage from evening to morning?" And he to me: "You imagine you are still on the other side of the center, where I took hold of the hair of the evil worm that pierces the world. Inf. 34.109 You were on that side as long as I was descending; when I turned around, you passed the point toward which weights are drawn from every side; and you have now come beneath the hemisphere opposite to the one that the great dry land covers, and beneath whose highest point was put to death the man who was born and lived without sin; you have your feet upon a little sphere that forms the other face of Judecca.[232] Inf. 34.118 Here it is morning when there it is evening; and this one, whose hair made a ladder for us, is still fixed just as he was before. On this side he fell down from heaven; and the land that once stood out on this side, for fear of him made a veil of the sea and came to our hemisphere; and perhaps to flee from him, the land that appears on this side left the empty space here and rushed upward."[233] Inf. 34.127 There is a place down there, as far from Beelzebub as the tomb extends, which is known not by sight but by the sound of a little stream that comes down there through the hollow of a rock, which it has worn away with its winding course, and it slopes but little. My guide and I entered by that hidden road to return into the bright world; and without caring to take any rest, we climbed up, he first and I second, until I saw some of the beautiful things that heaven bears, through a round opening; and from there we came out to see once more the stars.

231 Terce is the first quarter of the daylight hours; mid-terce is about half past seven in the morning, now reckoned by the time of the southern hemisphere.
232 The "great dry land" is the inhabited hemisphere, centered on Jerusalem, where Christ was crucified. Judecca, the last zone of Cocytus, holds traitors to their lords and benefactors.
233 The land that rushed upward is the mountain of Purgatory, the only land in the southern hemisphere.

Purgatorio

Purgatory
Virgil guides Dante up the mountain where souls are cleansed of sin, to the Earthly Paradise and Beatrice.

CANTO 1

Purg. 1.1 To run over better waters the little ship of my talent now hoists its sails, leaving behind it so cruel a sea. And I will sing of that second kingdom where the human spirit purges itself and becomes worthy to rise to heaven. But here let dead poetry rise again, O holy Muses, since I am yours; and here let Calliope rise up a little, accompanying my song with that sound whose blow the wretched Magpies felt so sharply that they despaired of pardon.[1] Purg. 1.13 The sweet color of eastern sapphire, which was gathering in the serene face of the sky, from the pure middle air as far as the first circle, began again to delight my eyes as soon as I came out of the dead air that had saddened my eyes and my breast. The lovely planet that encourages us to love was making the whole east smile, veiling the Fishes that were in her escort. I turned to the right and set my mind on the other pole, and saw four stars never seen except by the first people.[2]

1 Calliope is the Muse of epic poetry. The nine daughters of Pierus challenged the Muses to a singing contest, lost to Calliope, and were turned into magpies (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5).
2 The planet is Venus, then in the constellation Pisces (the Fishes). The "first people" are Adam and Eve, who lived in the Earthly Paradise on the summit of this mountain.

CATO, GUARDIAN OF THE SHORE

A venerable old man asks how they escaped Hell; Virgil explains their journey and wins his consent.

Purg. 1.25 The sky seemed to rejoice in their flames. O widowed northern region, since you are deprived of the sight of them! When I had withdrawn my gaze from them, turning a little toward the other pole, where the Wagon had already disappeared, I saw near me an old man alone, so worthy of reverence in his looks that no son owes more to any father. He wore his beard long and streaked with white, and his hair the same, which fell in two strands upon his breast.[3] Purg. 1.37 The rays of the four holy lights so adorned his face with brightness that I saw him as if the sun were before him. "Who are you, who have fled the eternal prison against the course of the blind river?" he said, moving those dignified plumes. "Who has guided you? Or who was a lamp to you as you came out of the deep night that keeps the valley of Hell forever black? Are the laws of the abyss broken like this? Or has some new decision been made in heaven, that you, damned, come to my crags?" Purg. 1.49 Then my guide took hold of me, and with words and hands and signs made me reverent in my knees and my brow. Then he answered him: "I did not come of myself. A lady came down from heaven, at whose prayers I helped this man with my company. But since it is your will that more be unfolded about our condition, how it truly stands, it cannot be my will to deny it to you. Purg. 1.58 This man has never seen his last evening, but through his folly he came so near to it that there was very little time left to run. As I said, I was sent to him to rescue him, and there was no other way than this one on which I have set out. I have shown him all the wicked people, and now I intend to show him those spirits who purge themselves under your charge. Purg. 1.67 How I have brought him would take long to tell you: a power comes down from on high that

3 The Wagon is the Great Bear (the Big Dipper), which cannot be seen from the southern hemisphere where Dante now stands.

helps me lead him to see you and to hear you. Now may it please you to welcome his coming. He goes seeking freedom, which is so dear, as he knows who gives up life for it. You know it, for death for its sake was not bitter to you in Utica, where you left the garment that will be so bright on the great day.[4] Purg. 1.76 The eternal edicts are not broken by us, for this man is alive, and Minos does not bind me; but I am from the circle where the chaste eyes of your Marcia are, who in her look still begs you, O holy breast, to hold her as your own. For love of her, then, incline to us. Let us go through your seven kingdoms; I will tell her of your kindness, if you deign to be mentioned down there." "Marcia so pleased my eyes while I was over there," he said then, "that every favor she wanted from me, I granted.[5] Purg. 1.88 Now that she dwells beyond the evil river, she can move me no longer, by that law which was made when I came out from there. But if a lady of heaven moves and directs you, as you say, there is no need for flattery: let it be enough for you that you ask me in her name. Go, then, and see that you gird this man with a smooth rush, and that you wash his face, so as to wipe away all filth from it; for it would not be fitting to go, with an eye clouded by any mist, before the first minister, who is one of those of Paradise. Purg. 1.100 This little island, all around its lowest edge, down there where the waves beat on it, bears rushes on the soft mud. No other plant that puts forth leaves or grows hard could live there, because it does not yield to the blows. Afterward, do not return this way; the sun, which is now rising, will show you how to take the mountain by an easier ascent." With that he vanished; and I rose up without speaking, and drew close to my guide, and turned my eyes to him. Purg. 1.112 He began: "Follow my steps. Let us turn back, for in this direction the plain slopes down to its low edges." The dawn was overcoming the morning breeze, which fled before it, so that from far off I recognized the

4 The old man is Cato the Younger (95–46 BC), who killed himself at Utica in North Africa rather than live under Julius Caesar. The "garment" is his body; the "great day" is the Last Judgment.

5 Marcia, Cato's wife, is in Limbo with Virgil (Inf. 4.128). Minos judges the damned at the entrance to the second circle of Hell, below Limbo.

trembling of the sea. We went over the lonely plain like a man who returns to the road he has lost, and who, until he reaches it, seems to walk in vain. When we came to where the dew struggles with the sun and, being in a cool, shaded spot, evaporates only a little Purg. 1.124 my master gently laid both his hands, spread out, on the young grass; and I, who understood his purpose, held up my tear-stained cheeks toward him. There he made wholly visible again that color of mine which Hell had hidden. Then we came onto the deserted shore, which never saw any man sail its waters who afterward knew how to return. There he girded me, as pleased another. O marvel! For just as he picked the humble plant, so another sprang up again at once in the place where he had pulled it.

CANTO 2

Purg. 2.1 The sun had already reached the horizon whose meridian circle covers Jerusalem with its highest point; and night, which circles opposite the sun, was coming forth from the Ganges with the Scales, which fall from her hand when she grows longer than day; so that, where I was, the white and rose cheeks of lovely Aurora were turning orange with too much age.[6] Purg. 2.10 We were still beside the sea, like people who are thinking about their road, who go in heart and stay in body. And look: just as, near the approach of morning, Mars glows red through the thick vapors low in the west above the level of the sea, so there appeared to me—may I see it again!—a light coming over the sea so swiftly that no flight could equal its motion. When I had taken my eyes off it for a moment to question my guide, I saw it again, grown brighter and larger. Purg. 2.22 Then on each side of it there appeared to me a something white, I did not know what, and beneath it, little by little, another white came out. My master

6 In Dante's world Jerusalem and Purgatory are antipodes sharing one horizon, so the sun setting at Jerusalem is rising in Purgatory. Night, opposite the sun (which is in Aries), rises from the east carrying Libra, the Scales, which she loses once nights outgrow days after the autumn equinox.

still said not a word, while the first white shapes showed themselves to be wings; then, when he clearly recognized the boatman, he cried: "Down, down on your knees! Here is the Angel of God: fold your hands. From now on you will see officers like this. See how he scorns human devices, so that he wants no oar, nor any sail but his own wings, between shores so distant. Purg. 2.34 See how he holds them straight up toward heaven, stirring the air with his eternal feathers, which do not change like mortal hair." Then, as the divine bird came nearer and nearer to us, he appeared brighter, so that my eyes could not bear him close up; and I lowered them. And he came to shore with a vessel so slender and light that the water drew none of it under. Purg. 2.43 At the stern stood the heavenly pilot, so that he seemed to have blessedness written on him; and more than a hundred spirits sat within. *In exitu Israel de Aegypto* [When Israel went out of Egypt] they all sang together with one voice, with all the rest of that psalm that is written after. Then he made the sign of the holy cross over them, at which they all threw themselves onto the shore, and he went off as swiftly as he had come. The crowd that remained there seemed strangers to the place, gazing around like someone sampling new things.[7] Purg. 2.55 On every side the sun, which with its bright arrows had chased Capricorn from the middle of the sky, was shooting forth the day, when the new people raised their faces toward us, saying to us: "If you know, show us the way to go up the mountain." And Virgil answered: "You believe, perhaps, that we know this place well; but we are pilgrims, just as you are. We came just now, a little before you, by another road, which was so rough and hard that the climbing will now seem like play to us."

7 Psalm 114 (113 in the Vulgate), on the Exodus from Egypt, which medieval readers also took as the soul's release from sin.

CASELLA'S SONG

Dante meets his friend Casella, who sings a love song until Cato drives the listening souls on.

Purg. 2.67 The souls, who had noticed from my breathing that I was still alive, grew pale with wonder; and as people crowd around a messenger who carries an olive branch, to hear the news, and no one is shy of jostling, so those fortunate souls, every one of them, fixed their eyes on my face, almost forgetting to go and make themselves beautiful. I saw one of them come forward to embrace me with such great affection that it moved me to do the same. Purg. 2.79 O shades, empty except in appearance! Three times I clasped my hands behind it, and as often I came back with them to my own breast. My face, I think, was painted with wonder, at which the shade smiled and drew back, and I, following it, pressed forward. Gently it told me to stop. Then I knew who it was, and I begged him to stay a little and speak to me. He answered me: "Just as I loved you in my mortal body, so I love you now that I am freed from it; so I will stay. But why are you traveling?" Purg. 2.91 "My Casella, I am making this journey so as to come back again to where I am," I said; "but how has so much time been taken from you?" And he to me: "No wrong has been done me if he who takes up whom he pleases, and when, has several times denied me this passage; for his will is formed by a just will. Indeed, for three months he has taken, in all peace, whoever has wished to board.[8] Purg. 2.100 So I, who was then turned toward the shore where the water of the Tiber turns salt, was kindly taken on by him. Toward that river mouth he has now set his wings, because whoever does not sink down toward Acheron is always gathered there." And I: "If a new law does not take from you the memory or the practice of the songs of love that used to quiet all my longings, may it please you to console with

8 Casella, a musician and friend of Dante's, apparently died some time before 1300. The "three months" refer to the Jubilee proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII for 1300, whose indulgences began at Christmas 1299.

them a little my soul, which, coming here with its body, is so weary."[9] Purg. 2.112 *Amor che nella mente mi ragiona* [Love that speaks to me in my mind], he began then, so sweetly that the sweetness still sounds within me. My master and I and those people who were with him seemed as content as if nothing else touched anyone's mind. We were all fixed and intent on his notes, when look —the dignified old man, crying: "What is this, you sluggish spirits? What negligence, what standing about is this? Run to the mountain to strip off the slough that does not let God be seen by you."[10] Purg. 2.124 As when doves, gathered at their feeding, picking up wheat or weeds, quiet, without their usual strutting, suddenly leave the food lying if something appears that frightens them, because they are assailed by a greater care, so I saw that newly arrived company leave the song and go toward the slope, like a man who walks on but does not know where he will come out; nor was our own departure any less quick.

CANTO 3

Purg. 3.1 Although the sudden flight had scattered them over the plain, turned toward the mountain where reason searches us, I drew close to my faithful companion. And how would I have run without him? Who would have brought me up the mountain? He seemed to me gnawed by his own reproach. O dignified and clean conscience, how bitter a bite a small fault is to you! Purg. 3.10 When his feet had left off the haste that takes the dignity from every act, my mind, which before had been narrowed, widened its attention, as if eager, and I set my face toward the hill that rises highest from the sea toward heaven. The sun, which was flaming red behind us, was broken in front of me in the shape of my body, on which its rays came to rest. Purg. 3.19 I turned to my side, afraid of being abandoned, when I saw the ground

9 The mouth of the Tiber is at Ostia, Rome's port; souls bound for Purgatory gather there.

10 The opening line of one of Dante's own canzoni, which he comments on in the third book of his *Convivio*.

darkened only in front of me; and my comfort, turning fully toward me, began to say: "Why are you still distrustful? Do you not believe that I am with you, and that I am guiding you? It is already evening there where the body is buried within which I cast a shadow: Naples has it, and it was taken from Brindisi. Now, if no shadow falls in front of me, do not marvel at it any more than at the heavens, which do not block one another's rays.[11] Purg. 3.31 The Power disposes bodies like these to suffer torments of heat and cold, and does not wish how it does so to be unveiled to us. Mad is he who hopes that our reason can travel the infinite way that holds one substance in three persons. Be content, human race, with the *quia* [the fact that it is so]; for if you had been able to see everything, there would have been no need for Mary to give birth; and you have seen men longing without fruit, men such that their longing would have been satisfied, which is now given them eternally as their grief.[12] Purg. 3.43 I am speaking of Aristotle and Plato, and of many others." And here he bowed his head, and said no more, and remained troubled. Meanwhile we came to the foot of the mountain. There we found the rock so steep that the nimblest legs would be useless there. Between Lerici and Turbia the most deserted, the most remote path is, compared with that, an easy and open stairway. "Now who knows on which side the slope comes down," said my master, halting his steps, "so that one who goes without wings can climb?"[13] Purg. 3.55 And while he held his face lowered and examined the way in his mind, and I was gazing up around the rock, on the left there appeared to me a company of souls, who were moving their feet toward us and yet did not seem to, so slowly were they coming. "Raise your eyes, master," I said; "here are some who will give us counsel, if you cannot find it in yourself." He looked at them, and with a frank expres-

11 Virgil died at Brindisi in 19 BC; his remains were moved to Naples by order of the emperor Augustus.

12 Scholastic philosophers distinguished knowing *quia* (that a thing is so) from knowing *propter quid* (why it is so).

13 Lerici and La Turbie mark the two ends of the Ligurian coast, whose steep cliffs made travel notoriously hard.

sion answered: "Let us go over there, for they are coming slowly; and you, make your hope firm, sweet son." Purg. 3.67 That people was still as far off—I mean after our thousand paces—as a good thrower could cast with his hand, when they all pressed against the hard rocks of the high cliff, and stood still and close together, as someone who walks in doubt stands still to look. "O you who ended well, O spirits already chosen," Virgil began, "by that peace which I believe awaits you all, tell us where the mountain slopes so that it is possible to go up; for losing time most displeases him who knows most." Purg. 3.79 As sheep come out of the fold by one, by twos, by threes, and the others stand timidly, lowering eyes and muzzles to the ground; and what the first does, the others do too, huddling against her if she stops, simple and quiet, and not knowing why: so I saw the leaders of that fortunate flock begin to come forward then, modest in their faces and dignified in their gait. Purg. 3.88 When those in front saw the light broken on the ground on my right side, so that my shadow stretched from me to the rock wall, they stopped and drew back a little, and all the others who were coming behind, not knowing why, did the same. "Without your asking, I confess to you that this is a human body that you see, by which the sunlight on the ground is split. Do not marvel, but believe that it is not without power that comes from heaven that he seeks to surmount this wall."

MANFRED

A wounded soul names himself Manfred and tells how he repented at the moment of death.

Purg. 3.100 So said my master; and those worthy people said, "Turn around, then, and go on ahead of us," making a sign with the backs of their hands. And one of them began: "Whoever you are, turn your face as you walk on like this; think whether you ever saw me over there." I turned toward him and looked at him intently: he was blond and handsome and of noble appearance, but a blow had split one of his eyebrows. When I had humbly

denied ever having seen him, he said, "Now look," and showed me a wound high on his breast. Purg. 3.112 Then, smiling, he said: "I am Manfred, grandson of the Empress Constance; so I beg you, when you return, to go to my lovely daughter, mother of the honor of Sicily and of Aragon, and tell her the truth, if anything else is being said. After my body had been broken by two mortal wounds, I gave myself up, weeping, to him who gladly pardons. Horrible were my sins; but infinite goodness has arms so wide that it takes whatever turns to it.[14] Purg. 3.124 If the shepherd of Cosenza, who was sent by Clement to hunt me down, had then rightly read this page in God, the bones of my body would still be at the head of the bridge near Benevento, under the guard of the heavy cairn. Now the rain bathes them and the wind stirs them outside the kingdom, almost along the Verde, where he moved them with candles quenched. By their curse no one is so lost that eternal love cannot return, as long as hope has a flower of green.[15] Purg. 3.136 It is true that whoever dies in defiance of Holy Church, even if he repents at the end, must stay outside this bank thirty times as long as the whole time he spent in his presumption, unless that decree is shortened by good prayers. See now whether you can make me happy by revealing to my good Constance how you have seen me, and also this ban; for here much is gained through those over there."

CANTO 4

Purg. 4.1 When, through delights or through pains that some faculty of ours takes in, the soul gathers itself wholly into that faculty, it seems to attend to no other power; and this is against that error which believes that one soul above another is kindled in us. And therefore, when something is heard or seen that holds the soul

14 Manfred (1232–1266), king of Sicily and son of Emperor Frederick II, died excommunicated fighting Charles of Anjou at Benevento. His daughter Constance married Peter III of Aragon and bore kings of Aragon and Sicily.

15 The archbishop of Cosenza, on Pope Clement IV's orders, dug up Manfred's body from its cairn of stones and cast it outside the Kingdom of Naples by the river Verde, with candles extinguished as for the excommunicated.

strongly turned toward it, time passes and one does not notice it: for one power is the one that listens to it, and another the one that holds the soul entire; this one is as if bound, and that one is free.[16] Purg. 4.13 Of this I had true experience as I listened to that spirit and marveled: for the sun had climbed a full fifty degrees, and I had not noticed it, when we came to where those souls cried out to us with one voice: "Here is what you asked for." The farmer often hedges up a wider gap with a little forkful of his thorns, when the grape darkens, than was the opening by which my guide climbed, and I after him, alone, as the troop parted from us.[17] Purg. 4.25 One can go up to San Leo and down to Noli; one can climb Bismantova to its summit on one's feet; but here one must fly: I mean with the swift wings and the feathers of great desire, behind that leader who gave me hope and made light for me. We climbed within the cleft rock, and on every side its edges pressed in on us, and the ground beneath demanded both feet and hands.[18] Purg. 4.34 When we were on the upper rim of the high bank, on the open slope, "My master," I said, "which way shall we take?" And he to me: "Let no step of yours fall back; keep gaining ground up the mountain behind me, until some wise escort appears to us." The summit was so high that it defeated my sight, and the slope was far steeper than a line from mid-quadrant to the center.[19] Purg. 4.43 I was weary when I began: "O sweet father, turn and look how I am left alone if you do not stop." "My son," he said, "drag yourself up as far as there," pointing out to me a ledge a little above, which on that side circles the whole hill. His words so spurred me that I forced myself on, clambering after him, until the ledge was beneath my feet. There we both sat down, facing east, the way we had climbed, for looking back usually does one good. Purg. 4.55 I first turned my

16 "That error": the view, attributed to Plato, that each person has several souls.
17 Fifty degrees of the sun's climb means about three hours and twenty minutes after sunrise.
18 San Leo, Noli and Bismantova are places in Italy reached only by steep, difficult paths.
19 A line from the middle of a quadrant to its center makes a 45-degree angle, so the slope was steeper than that.

eyes to the shores below; then I raised them to the sun, and I marveled that we were struck by it from the left. The poet saw clearly that I stood utterly amazed at the chariot of light, where it was passing between us and the North. So he said to me: "If Castor and Pollux were in company with that mirror which leads its light up and down, you would see the ruddy zodiac wheel still closer to the Bears, unless it left its ancient path.[20] Purg. 4.67 How that may be, if you wish to be able to think it out, gather yourself within and imagine Sion and this mountain standing on the earth so that both have a single horizon and different hemispheres; and so the road that Phaëthon, to his cost, did not know how to drive, you will see how it must pass this mountain on one side when it passes that one on the other, if your intellect attends clearly." "Certainly, my master," I said, "never yet have I seen so clearly as I now discern, there where my wit seemed to fall short[21] Purg. 4.79 that the middle circle of the highest motion, which in a certain science is called the Equator, and which always remains between the sun and winter, for the reason you give, lies as far from here toward the north as the Hebrews used to see it toward the hot regions. But if it pleases you, I would gladly know how far we have to go, for the hill rises higher than my eyes can rise." Purg. 4.88 And he to me: "This mountain is such that it is always hard at the start, down below, and the higher one goes, the less it hurts. Therefore, when it seems so gentle to you that going up will be as easy for you as going downstream in a boat, then you will be at the end of this path: there expect to rest from your weariness. I answer no more, and this I know for true." And when he had spoken his word, a voice close by sounded: "Perhaps you will need to sit down before then."

20 In the southern hemisphere the midday sun appears to the north, on the left of someone facing east. Castor and Pollux are the constellation Gemini; were the sun in Gemini rather than Aries, it would stand still farther north, nearer the Bears.
21 Sion is Jerusalem, which in Dante's geography lies directly opposite Mount Purgatory on the globe. Phaëthon, son of the Sun, lost control of his father's chariot and scorched the sky.

BELACQUA AND THE LATE REPENTANT

Behind a boulder Dante finds his lazy friend Belacqua, waiting out the delay his late repentance earned.

Purg. 4.100 At its sound each of us turned, and we saw on the left a great boulder, which neither he nor I had noticed before. We made our way there; and there were people lingering in the shade behind the rock, as a man settles down out of negligence. And one of them, who seemed weary to me, was sitting and clasping his knees, holding his face low down between them. "O my sweet lord," I said, "look at that one, who shows himself more negligent than if laziness were his sister." Purg. 4.112 Then he turned to us and paid heed, moving his face only up along his thigh, and said: "Now you go on up, you who are so vigorous." I knew then who he was; and that breathlessness which still quickened my breath a little did not keep me from going to him; and after I had reached him, he barely raised his head, saying: "Have you seen clearly how the sun drives its chariot over your left shoulder?" Purg. 4.121 His lazy movements and his curt words moved my lips a little toward a smile; then I began: "Belacqua, I no longer grieve for you; but tell me, why are you sitting right here? Are you waiting for an escort, or have you simply taken up your old ways again?" And he: "Brother, what is the use of going up? For God's bird who sits at the gate would not let me go to the torments.[22] Purg. 4.130 First the heavens must circle around me outside it as long as they did in my life, because I put off the good sighs until the end—unless a prayer helps me first, one that rises from a heart that lives in grace: what good is any other, which is not heard in heaven?" And already the poet was climbing ahead of me, and saying: "Come on now; see, the meridian is touched

22 Belacqua was a Florentine maker of musical instruments, known for his laziness. "God's bird" is the angel who guards the gate of Purgatory proper.

by the sun, and from the shore night already covers Morocco with her foot."[23]

CANTO 5

Purg. 5.1 I had already parted from those shades and was following in my guide's footsteps, when behind me, pointing a finger, one cried out: "Look, the ray does not seem to shine on the left of the one below, and he seems to carry himself like someone alive." I turned my eyes at the sound of these words, and I saw them gazing in wonder at me, only at me, and at the light that was broken. Purg. 5.10 "Why is your mind so entangled," said the master, "that you slacken your pace? What does it matter to you what is whispered here? Come behind me, and let the people talk; stand like a firm tower that never shakes its top for all the blowing of the winds. For the man in whom thought sprouts upon thought always sets his mark farther from himself, because the force of the one weakens the other."

THOSE SLAIN BY VIOLENCE

Souls who repented at a violent death crowd around Dante and ask him to carry news home.

Purg. 5.19 What could I say in reply but "I am coming"? I said it, somewhat suffused with the color that sometimes makes a man worthy of pardon. And meanwhile, across the slope, people were coming a little ahead of us, singing *Miserere* [Have mercy] verse by verse. When they noticed that I gave the rays no passage through my body, they changed their song into a long, hoarse *O!*; and two of them, as messengers, ran to meet us and asked us: "Tell us about your condition."[24] Purg. 5.31 And my master: "You may go back and report to those who sent you that this man's body is true flesh. If they stopped to see his shadow, as I

23 It is noon on the mountain; by Dante's geography, night is then beginning at the western edge of the known world, in Morocco.

24 The *Miserere* is Psalm 51 (50 in the Vulgate), the great penitential psalm.

suppose, they have been answered enough: let them do him honor, and it may be of value to them." Never did I see kindled vapors cleave the clear sky at nightfall, nor August clouds at sunset, so swiftly that those two did not return up there in less time; and having arrived there, they wheeled back toward us with the others, like a troop that runs without rein. Purg. 5.43 "These people who are pressing toward us are many, and they come to beg something of you," said the poet; "so keep on going, and listen as you go." "O soul who are going to your joy with the same limbs you were born with," they came crying, "check your step a little. Look whether you have ever seen any of us, so that you may carry news of him back there: ah, why do you go on? Ah, why do you not stop? Purg. 5.52 We were all once killed by violence, and sinners up to the last hour: then light from heaven made us aware, so that, repenting and forgiving, we passed out of life at peace with God, who pierces our hearts with longing to see him." And I: "However closely I gaze into your faces, I recognize no one; but if there is anything I can do that pleases you, spirits born for good, speak, and I will do it, by that peace which, following the feet of such a guide, I am made to seek from world to world." Purg. 5.64 And one began: "Each of us trusts in your kindness without your swearing to it, so long as lack of power does not cut short your will. So I, who speak alone before the others, beg you, if you ever see that country which lies between Romagna and the land of Charles, to be gracious to me with your prayers in Fano, so that good prayers are offered for me, that I may purge away my grave offenses.[25] Purg. 5.73 I was from there; but the deep wounds from which flowed the blood in which I had my seat were dealt me in the bosom of the Antenori, there where I believed I was safest: he of Este had it done, who held me in wrath far beyond what justice would allow. But if I had fled toward La Mira when I was overtaken at Oriago, I would

25 The speaker is Jacopo del Cassero of Fano, murdered in 1298. His country is the March of Ancona, between Romagna and the Kingdom of Naples ruled by Charles II of Anjou.

still be over there where men breathe.[26] Purg. 5.82 I ran to the marsh, and the reeds and the mire so entangled me that I fell; and there I saw a pool form on the ground from my veins." Then another said: "Ah, so may that desire be fulfilled that draws you to the high mountain, help mine with kind compassion. I was of Montefeltro; I am Buonconte: neither Giovanna nor anyone else cares for me; so I go among these with my head bowed low.[27] Purg. 5.91 And I to him: "What force or what chance led you so far astray from Campaldino that your burial place was never known?" "Oh," he answered, "at the foot of the Casentino a stream flows across called the Archiano, which rises in the Apennines above the Hermitage. To where its name is lost I came, pierced in the throat, fleeing on foot and bloodying the plain. There I lost my sight, and I ended my speech on the name of Mary, and there I fell, and my flesh remained alone.[28] Purg. 5.103 I will tell the truth, and you retell it among the living: the angel of God took me, and the one from Hell cried out: 'O you from heaven, why do you rob me? You carry off the eternal part of this man for one little tear that takes him from me; but I will deal with the other part in another way.' You know well how that moist vapor gathers in the air which turns back into water as soon as it rises to where the cold seizes it. Purg. 5.112 He joined that evil will, which seeks only evil, to intellect, and stirred up the mist and the wind by the power his nature gave him. Then, when the day was spent, he covered the valley from Pratomagno to the great ridge with fog, and made the sky above so dense that the saturated air turned to water: the rain fell, and what the earth could not absorb of it came down to the gullies; and as it joined the great streams, it rushed toward the royal river so

26 The Antenori are the Paduans, whose city was said to have been founded by the Trojan Antenor; "he of Este" is Azzo VIII d'Este, lord of Ferrara. La Mira and Oriago lie between Padua and Venice.

27 Buonconte da Montefeltro, son of Guido da Montefeltro, led the Ghibellines of Arezzo and was killed at the battle of Campaldino in 1289; Giovanna was his wife.

28 Campaldino, in the Casentino (the upper Arno valley), is where the Florentine Guelfs defeated the Ghibellines of Arezzo. The Hermitage is the monastery of Camaldoli; the Archiano loses its name where it joins the Arno.

swiftly that nothing held it back.[29] Purg. 5.124 The raging Archiano found my frozen body at its mouth, and swept it into the Arno, and loosened the cross on my breast that I had made of myself when the pain overcame me; it rolled me along its banks and along its bed, then covered and wrapped me with its spoils." "Ah, when you have returned to the world and rested from your long journey," the third spirit went on after the second, "remember me, who am Pia: Siena made me, Maremma unmade me: he knows it who, first giving me his ring, had wedded me with his gem."[30]

CANTO 6

Purg. 6.1 When the game of zara breaks up, the one who loses stays behind, sorrowful, going over the throws again, and sadly learns; all the people go off with the other: one goes in front of him, one tugs at him from behind, and one at his side calls himself to his mind. He does not stop, and listens to this one and that; the one he holds out his hand to presses him no more; and so he defends himself from the crowd. Such was I in that dense throng, turning my face to them here and there, and by promising I freed myself from it.[31] Purg. 6.13 Here was the Aretine who met his death at the fierce arms of Ghin di Tacco, and the other who drowned while running in pursuit. Here, with outstretched hands, Federico Novello was praying, and the one from Pisa who made the good Marzucco show his fortitude. I saw Count Orso, and the soul divided from its body through spite and envy, as it said, and not for any fault committed—Pierre de la Brosse, I mean; and let the lady of Brabant make provision while she is

29 Pratomagno and the main ridge of the Apennines enclose the Casentino; the royal river is the Arno.
30 Pia is traditionally identified as a Sienese noblewoman said to have been put to death by her husband in the Maremma, the marshy coast of southern Tuscany.
31 Zara was a game of dice.

here, so that she does not end up in a worse flock for this.[32] Purg. 6.25 When I was free of all those shades, who prayed only that others pray, so that their becoming holy might be hastened, I began: "It seems that you deny, O my light, expressly in a certain text, that prayer can bend the decree of heaven; and these people pray for nothing but this. Would their hope, then, be vain? Or are your words not quite clear to me?"[33] Purg. 6.34 And he to me: "My writing is plain, and the hope of these people is not mistaken, if one considers it well with a sound mind. For the height of judgment is not brought low because the fire of love fulfills in one moment what each one who lodges here must pay; and there where I set down that point, a fault was not amended by praying, because the prayer was cut off from God. Purg. 6.43 Truly, do not settle on so deep a doubt unless she tells you, who will be a light between truth and intellect. I do not know if you understand; I speak of Beatrice: you will see her above, on the summit of this mountain, smiling and happy." And I: "Lord, let us go with greater haste, for I no longer tire as I did before; and see, the hill is now casting its shadow." Purg. 6.52 "We will go forward with this day," he answered, "as far as we still can; but the matter is otherwise than you suppose. Before you are up there, you will see him return who is already hiding behind the slope, so that you do not break his rays. But see there a soul which, set all alone, is looking toward us: it will show us the quickest way." We came to it: O Lombard soul, how proud and disdainful you stood, and how dignified and slow in the movement of your eyes!

32 The Aretine is the judge Benincasa da Laterina, murdered by the bandit Ghin di Tacco; the others named were also victims of violence in Dante's time. Pierre de la Brosse, chamberlain to Philip III of France, was hanged in 1278, reputedly through the slanders of Queen Marie of Brabant.

33 The text is Virgil's *Aeneid* 6.376, where the Sibyl tells the unburied Palinurus to stop hoping that the decrees of the gods can be bent by prayer.

SORDELLO AND THE LAMENT FOR ITALY

Sordello embraces Virgil as a fellow Mantuan, and Dante denounces the strife of Italy and Florence.

Purg. 6.64 It said nothing to us, but let us go on, only watching, in the manner of a lion when it lies at rest. Still, Virgil drew close to it, asking it to show us the best way up; and it did not answer his request, but asked us about our country and our life. And the sweet guide began: "Mantua."... And the shade, all withdrawn into itself, rose toward him from the place where it had been, saying: "O Mantuan, I am Sordello, from your own city." And they embraced each other.[34] Purg. 6.76 Ah, enslaved Italy, hostel of grief, ship without a pilot in a great storm, no mistress of provinces but a brothel! That noble soul was so quick, only at the sweet sound of his homeland's name, to welcome his fellow citizen there. And now those who live in you cannot stay without war, and those whom one wall and one moat enclose gnaw at one another. Purg. 6.85 Search, wretched one, along the shores of your coasts, and then look into your own heart, and see whether any part of you enjoys peace. What use is it that Justinian refitted your bridle, if the saddle is empty? Without that, the shame would be less. Ah, people who ought to be devout, and let Caesar sit in the saddle, if you rightly understand what God has written down for you! See how this beast has turned vicious, uncorrected by the spurs, ever since you laid your hand on the bridle.[35] Purg. 6.97 O German Albert, who abandon her now that she has grown untamed and wild, when you ought to be astride her saddle, may just judgment fall from the stars upon your blood, and may it be unheard-of and plain to see, so that your successor may stand in fear of it! For you and your father, held back over there by greed, have allowed the

34 Sordello was a thirteenth-century poet from near Mantua, Virgil's birthplace, who wrote in Provençal.

35 The Byzantine emperor Justinian (reigned AD 527–565) codified Roman law. The "people who ought to be devout" are the clergy, and God's words allude to Christ's "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

garden of the empire to be laid waste. Come and see the Montecchi and the Cappelletti, the Monaldi and the Filippeschi, you man without a care: those already ruined, and these living in dread.[36] Purg. 6.109 Come, cruel one, come and see the oppression of your nobles, and tend their wounds; and you will see how safe Santafiora is! Come and see your Rome, who weeps, widowed and alone, and cries out day and night: "My Caesar, why do you not stay with me?" Come and see how much the people love one another! And if no pity for us moves you, come and be ashamed of your reputation.[37] Purg. 6.118 And if I may be allowed to ask, O highest Jove, who were crucified on earth for us, are your just eyes turned elsewhere? Or is this a preparation that you are making in the abyss of your counsel, for some good wholly cut off from our perceiving? For the cities of Italy are all full of tyrants, and every peasant who comes along playing the partisan becomes a Marcellus. My Florence, you may well be pleased with this digression, which does not touch you, thanks to your people, who are so resourceful.[38] Purg. 6.130 Many have justice in their hearts, but it is slow to be loosed, so as not to come to the bow without counsel; but your people have it on the tip of their tongues. Many refuse the common burden; but your people answer eagerly without being called, and shout: "I'll take it on!" Now be glad, for you have good reason: you rich, you at peace, you wise! If I speak the truth, the facts do not hide it. Purg. 6.139 Athens and Lacedaemon, which made the ancient laws and were so well ordered, gave only a slight hint of living well compared with you, who make such subtle provisions that what you spin in October does not last to mid-November. How many times, within the time you remember, have you changed laws, coinage, offices and customs, and renewed your members! And if you

36 Albert I of Habsburg, king of Germany 1298–1308, like his father Rudolf, never came to Italy to claim the imperial crown. The families named were feuding factions in Verona, Cremona and Orvieto.

37 Santafiora, in southern Tuscany, was the county of the Ghibelline Aldobrandeschi, who had lost much of it to Siena.

38 Marcus Claudius Marcellus, consul in 51 BC, was a fierce opponent of Julius Caesar.

remember well and see the light, you will see yourself like that sick woman who cannot find rest on her feather bed, but wards off her pain by tossing and turning.[39]

CANTO 7

Purg. 7.1 After the courteous and joyful greetings had been repeated three and four times, Sordello drew back and said: "Who are you?" "Before the souls worthy to rise to God were turned toward this mountain, my bones were buried by Octavian. I am Virgil; and for no other fault did I lose heaven than for not having faith." So my guide answered then. Like one who suddenly sees something before him that makes him marvel, who believes and does not, saying, "It is... it is not,"[40] Purg. 7.13 so he appeared; and then he lowered his eyes, and humbly turned back toward him, and embraced him where one of lesser rank takes hold. "O glory of the Latins," he said, "through whom our language showed what it could do, O eternal honor of the place I came from, what merit or what grace shows you to me? If I am worthy to hear your words, tell me whether you come from Hell, and from which enclosure."[41] Purg. 7.22 "Through all the circles of the sorrowful kingdom," he answered him, "I have come here: a power from heaven moved me, and with it I come. Not for doing but for not doing have I lost the sight of the high Sun that you long for, and that I came to know too late. There is a place down there made sad not by torments but by darkness alone, where the laments do not sound as wails but are sighs. There I dwell with the innocent little ones, bitten by the teeth of death before they were freed from human guilt. Purg. 7.34 There I dwell with those who did not clothe themselves in the three holy virtues, but without vice knew the others and followed every one of them. But if you know and are able, give us some sign by

39 Lacedaemon is Sparta; Athens and Sparta were famed for the laws of Solon and Lycurgus.
40 Octavian (the emperor Augustus) had Virgil buried at Naples in 19 BC, before Christ's redemption opened Purgatory to souls.
41 That is, around the knees, as an inferior embraces a superior.

which we may come more quickly to where Purgatory has its true beginning." He answered: "No fixed place is set for us; I am allowed to go up and around. As far as I can go, I will join you as your guide. But see already how the day is declining, and one cannot go up by night; so it is good to think of a pleasant place to stay.[42] Purg. 7.46 There are souls here to the right, set apart. If you allow me, I will lead you to them, and not without delight will you come to know them." "How is that?" came the answer. "Whoever wished to climb by night, would he be prevented by someone else? Or would he fail to climb because he could not?" And good Sordello drew his finger along the ground, saying: "See, you would not cross even this line once the sun had gone. Not that anything else would hinder going up except the darkness of night: that entangles the will with powerlessness. Purg. 7.58 With it one could well go back down, and walk around the slope, wandering, while the horizon keeps the day shut away." Then my lord, as if marveling, said: "Lead us, then, to where you say one may have delight in staying." We had gone only a little way from there when I noticed that the mountain was hollowed out, just as valleys hollow out mountains here. "There," said that shade, "we will go, where the slope makes a lap of itself, and there we will await the new day."

THE VALLEY OF THE PRINCES

Sordello shows them a flowering hollow where negligent rulers sing and grieve over their heirs.

Purg. 7.70 Between steep and level ran a winding path, which brought us to the side of the hollow, where its rim dies away to less than half its height. Gold and fine silver, cochineal and white lead, Indian wood, lustrous and clear, fresh emerald at the moment it is split, would each be surpassed in color by the grass and flowers set within that hollow, as the lesser is surpassed by the greater. Nature had not only painted there, but out of the

42 The three theological virtues are faith, hope and charity; the others are the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

sweetness of a thousand scents she made there a single one, unknown and blended. Purg. 7.82 There I saw souls seated on the green grass and on the flowers, singing *Salve Regina* [Hail, Queen], who could not be seen from outside because of the valley. "Before the little sun that remains goes to its nest," began the Mantuan who had led us there, "do not ask me to guide you among them. From this ledge you will make out the gestures and faces of them all better than if you were down in the hollow, received among them.[43] Purg. 7.91 The one who sits highest, and looks as if he had neglected what he ought to have done, and who does not move his lips to the others' singing, was the Emperor Rudolf, who could have healed the wounds that have killed Italy, so that she is restored by another too late. The other, who seems to comfort him, ruled the land where the water rises that the Moldau carries to the Elbe, and the Elbe to the sea. Ottokar was his name, and in swaddling clothes he was far better than his son Wenceslaus, bearded, who feeds on lust and idleness.[44] Purg. 7.103 And that Snub-Nose, who seems to be in close counsel with the one who has so kindly a look, died fleeing and deflowering the lily: look there, how he beats his breast! See the other, who, sighing, has made a bed for his cheek with his palm. They are father and father-in-law of the bane of France: they know his vicious and foul life, and from that comes the grief that pierces them so. The one who seems so strongly built, and who keeps in tune as he sings with the one with the manly nose, wore girded on him the cord of every worth.[45] Purg. 7.115 And if the youth who sits behind him had remained king after him, worth would indeed have passed from vessel to vessel, which cannot be said of the other heirs. James and Frederick hold the kingdoms; neither possesses the better inheritance. Rarely does

43 *Salve Regina* is the evening antiphon to the Virgin Mary.
44 Rudolf I of Habsburg (died 1291) was Albert's father; Ottokar II, king of Bohemia, was his enemy in life and was killed fighting him in 1278.
45 Snub-Nose is Philip III of France, who died in 1285 retreating from Aragon; the kindly one is Henry of Navarre; the bane of France is Philip IV the Fair. The strongly built king is Peter III of Aragon, the one with the manly nose Charles I of Anjou, his rival.

human goodness rise again through the branches; and this is the will of him who gives it, so that it may be asked of him. My words apply to the Big-Nose too, no less than to the other, Peter, who sings with him, for which Apulia and Provence are already grieving.[46] Purg. 7.127 The plant is as far inferior to its seed as Constance still boasts of her husband more than Beatrice and Margaret do of theirs. See the king of the simple life sitting there alone, Henry of England: he has better issue in his branches. The one who sits lowest among them on the ground, looking upward, is William the Marquis, on whose account Alessandria and its war make Montferrat and the Canavese weep."[47]

CANTO 8

Purg. 8.1 It was now the hour that turns back the longing of seafarers and softens their hearts on the day they have said farewell to their dear friends, and that pierces the new pilgrim with love if he hears from afar a bell that seems to mourn the dying day, when I began to let my hearing rest and to gaze at one of the souls, who had risen and was asking with a hand to be heard. It joined and raised both palms, fixing its eyes toward the east, as if saying to God: "I care for nothing else." Purg. 8.13 *Te lucis ante* [To you, before the light ends] came from its mouth so devoutly and with such sweet notes that it made me lose all awareness of myself. And then the others, sweetly and devoutly, followed it through the whole hymn, with their eyes on the heavenly wheels. Here, Reader, sharpen your eyes well to the truth, for the veil is now indeed so thin that passing within is surely easy.[48] Purg. 8.22 Then I saw that noble army gaze upward in silence,

46 The youth is Peter's son Alfonso III (died 1291); James II of Aragon and Frederick II of Sicily were his other sons. Apulia and Provence grieve under Charles I's son, Charles II.

47 Beatrice and Margaret were wives of Charles I of Anjou, Constance the wife of Peter III; Henry III of England reigned 1216–1272. William VII of Montferrat died in 1292 as a prisoner of Alessandria, which then made war on his lands.

48 The hymn sung at Compline, the last prayer of the day, asking protection from the dangers of the night.

as if waiting, pale and humble; and I saw come out from on high and descend two angels with two flaming swords, broken off and deprived of their points. Green as tender leaves just born were their robes, which they trailed behind them, struck and fanned by green wings. One came to stand a little above us, and the other came down on the opposite bank, so that the people were held between them. Purg. 8.34 I could clearly make out their blond heads; but in their faces my eye was lost, like a faculty confounded by excess. "Both come from Mary's bosom," said Sordello, "to guard the valley, because of the serpent that will come at any moment." At this I, not knowing by which path, turned around and pressed close, all frozen, to the trusted shoulders. And Sordello went on: "Now let us go down into the valley among the great shades, and we will speak to them: it will please them greatly to see you."

NINO VISCONTI AND CONRAD MALASPINA

Dante greets his friend Judge Nino, and the guardian angels drive off the serpent.

Purg. 8.46 I think I went down only three steps, and was below, and I saw one who was gazing only at me, as if he wished to recognize me. It was already the time when the air was darkening, but not so dark that between his eyes and mine it did not make clear what it had hidden before. He came toward me, and I went toward him. Noble Judge Nino, how glad I was when I saw that you were not among the guilty![49] Purg. 8.55 No fair greeting was left unsaid between us; then he asked: "How long since you came over the distant waters to the foot of the mountain?" "Oh," I said to him, "I came by way of the sorrowful places this morning, and I am in my first life, though by going this way I may gain the other." And as soon as my answer was heard, Sordello and he drew back, like people suddenly bewildered. One turned to Virgil, and the other to someone sitting there, crying: "Up, Conrad!

49 Nino Visconti (died 1296), judge, that is governor, of Gallura in Sardinia and a Guelf leader of Pisa, was Dante's friend.

Come and see what God by his grace has willed." Purg. 8.67 Then, turning to me: "By that singular gratitude you owe to him who so hides his first reason that there is no ford to reach it, when you are beyond the wide waves, tell my Giovanna to cry out for me there where the innocent are answered. I do not think her mother loves me any longer, since she put off her white veils, which, poor woman, she will yet have to long for.[50] Purg. 8.76 Through her it is easy enough to understand how long the fire of love lasts in a woman, if the eye or touch does not often rekindle it. The viper that leads the Milanese into the field will not make her so fine a tomb as the cock of Gallura would have made." So he spoke, his face stamped with the mark of that righteous zeal which burns in due measure in the heart. My greedy eyes kept going to the sky, just there where the stars are slowest, as on a wheel nearest the axle.[51] Purg. 8.88 And my guide: "Son, what are you gazing at up there?" And I to him: "At those three torches with which the pole on this side is all ablaze." And he to me: "The four bright stars you saw this morning are low over there, and these have risen where those were." As he was speaking, Sordello drew him to himself, saying: "See there our adversary," and pointed his finger so that he would look that way. Purg. 8.97 On that side where the little valley has no barrier was a snake, perhaps the same kind that gave Eve the bitter food. Through the grass and the flowers came the evil streak, turning its head now and then toward its back, licking like a beast that preens itself. I did not see, and so cannot say, how the heavenly hawks set off, but I clearly saw both of them in motion. Hearing the air split by the green wings, the serpent fled, and the angels wheeled back up to their posts, flying side by side. Purg. 8.109 The shade who had drawn close to the Judge when he called had not for a moment, through all that assault, been released from gazing at me. "So may the lamp that leads you on high find in your free will as

50 Giovanna was Nino's young daughter; her mother, Beatrice d'Este, put off her widow's veils to marry Galeazzo Visconti of Milan.

51 The viper was the emblem of the Visconti of Milan; the cock was the emblem of Nino's house as judges of Gallura.

much wax as is needed to reach the enameled summit," it began, "if you know true news of Valdimacra or the region near it, tell it to me, for I was once great there. I was called Conrad Malaspina: I am not the elder, but I descend from him. To my own I bore the love that here is refined."[52] Purg. 8.121 "Oh," I said to him, "I have never been in your lands; but where in all Europe do people live that they are not famous? The renown that honors your house proclaims its lords and proclaims its land, so that even one who has never been there knows of them. And I swear to you, as I hope to go on high, that your honored family does not strip itself of the glory of the purse and of the sword. Purg. 8.130 Custom and nature so favor it that, though the guilty head twists the world awry, it alone goes straight and scorns the evil path." And he: "Now go, for the sun will not lie down seven times in the bed that the Ram covers and bestrides with all four feet before this courteous opinion is nailed into the middle of your head with bigger nails than other people's talk, if the course of judgment is not halted."[53]

CANTO 9

Purg. 9.1 The concubine of ancient Tithonus was already growing white on the balcony of the east, out of the arms of her sweet lover. Her forehead was shining with gems set in the shape of the cold animal that strikes people with its tail. And of the steps by which night climbs, she had taken two in the place where we were, and the third was already bending its wings downward, when I, who had with me something of Adam, overcome by sleep, sank down on the grass where all five of us were already sitting.[54]

52 Conrad Malaspina (died about 1294) belonged to the family that ruled the Lunigiana, around the valley of the Magra (Valdimacra); Dante was the Malaspinas' guest in 1306.

53 The sun is in Aries, the Ram, in spring: the prophecy means within seven years, alluding to the welcome Dante received from the Malaspinas in exile.

54 The dawn (Aurora) was the consort of Tithonus, a mortal granted immortality but not youth. The gems on her brow are the stars of the constellation Scorpio.

DANTE'S DREAM OF THE EAGLE

Dante dreams that an eagle snatches him up, and wakes to learn that Lucy carried him.

Purg. 9.13 At the hour near morning when the swallow begins her sad laments, perhaps in memory of her first woes, and when our mind, more a pilgrim from the flesh and less caught up in thoughts, is almost prophetic in its visions, in a dream I seemed to see an eagle with feathers of gold poised in the sky, with its wings open and intent on swooping down. And I seemed to be in the place where Ganymede left his companions behind when he was snatched up to the highest council.[55] Purg. 9.25 I thought to myself: "Perhaps this eagle strikes only here, by habit, and perhaps it disdains to carry anyone up in its claws from any other place." Then it seemed to me that, after wheeling a little, it came down, terrible as lightning, and snatched me up as far as the fire. There it seemed that it and I were burning, and the imagined blaze scorched me so that my sleep was bound to break.[56] Purg. 9.34 No differently did Achilles start up, turning his awakened eyes around and not knowing where he was, when his mother carried him off, sleeping in her arms, from Chiron to Scyros, the place from which the Greeks later took him away, than I started, as soon as sleep fled from my face, and I turned deathly pale, like a man who freezes with fright. Beside me was only my comfort, and the sun was already more than two hours high, and my face was turned toward the sea.[57] Purg. 9.46 "Do not be afraid," said my lord. "Take heart, for we are at a good point. Do not hold back, but give free rein to all your strength. You have now reached Purgatory: see there the ledge that encloses it all

55 In Ovid, Procne and Philomela were turned into a swallow and a nightingale after the crimes of Tereus. Ganymede, a Trojan youth, was carried off from Mount Ida by Jupiter's eagle to be cupbearer of the gods.

56 Medieval cosmology placed a sphere of fire between the air and the heaven of the moon.

57 Achilles' mother, the sea goddess Thetis, took him from his tutor, the centaur Chiron, and hid him on the island of Scyros to keep him from the Trojan War; Ulysses and Diomedes found him there.

around; see the entrance there, where it seems split. A while ago, in the dawn that comes before the day, when your soul was sleeping within you on the flowers that adorn the place down there, a lady came and said: 'I am Lucy: let me take this man who is sleeping, and so I will speed him on his way.'[58] Purg. 9.58 Sordello stayed behind, and the other noble forms. She took you up, and when the day was bright she came on upward, and I followed in her footsteps. Here she set you down; and first her beautiful eyes showed me that open entrance; then she and sleep went away together." Like a man who is reassured in his doubt, and who changes his fear into comfort once the truth has been revealed to him, so I changed; and when my guide saw me free of care, he moved up along the ledge, and I behind him, toward the height.

THE GATE OF PURGATORY

An angel at the gate marks seven P's on Dante's brow and unlocks it with two keys.

Purg. 9.70 Reader, you see well how I raise my subject, and so do not wonder if I support it with greater art. We drew near, and came to a point from which, where at first there had seemed to me only a break, like a crack that splits a wall, I saw a gate, and three steps beneath it leading up to it, each of a different color, and a gatekeeper who as yet said not a word. Purg. 9.79 And as I opened my eyes more and more to him, I saw him seated on the topmost step, his face such that I could not bear it; and in his hand he held a naked sword, which reflected the rays toward us so that I often raised my eyes to it in vain. "Speak from where you are: what do you want?" he began to say. "Where is your escort? Take care that coming up does not bring you harm!" "A lady from heaven, well acquainted with these things," my master answered him, "told us just now: 'Go there; there is the gate.'" Purg. 9.91 "And may she speed your steps toward good," the cour-

58 Saint Lucy, a martyr of Syracuse, is the heavenly lady who sent Beatrice to help Dante in Inferno 2.

teous gatekeeper began again. "Come forward, then, to our steps." There where we came, at the first step, was white marble, so polished and clear that I saw myself mirrored in it as I appear. The second, darker than purple-black, was of a rough and scorched stone, cracked lengthwise and across. The third, which lies massed on top, seemed to me porphyry, as flaming red as blood that spurts from a vein. Purg. 9.103 On this the angel of God rested both his feet, sitting on the threshold, which seemed to me a stone of diamond. Up the three steps, with good will, my guide drew me, saying: "Ask humbly that he undo the lock." Devoutly I threw myself at the holy feet; I begged him for mercy, to open for me; but first I struck my breast three times. He traced seven *P*'s on my forehead with the point of his sword, and said: "See that you wash away these wounds when you are inside."[59] Purg. 9.115 Ashes, or earth dug out dry, would be of one color with his robe, and from beneath it he drew two keys. One was of gold and the other of silver: first with the white and then with the yellow he did to the gate what made me content. "Whenever one of these keys fails, so that it does not turn rightly in the lock," he said to us, "this passage does not open. Purg. 9.124 One is more precious; but the other requires a great deal of skill and wit before it unlocks, because it is the one that unties the knot. I hold them from Peter; and he told me to err rather in opening it than in keeping it locked, provided the people throw themselves down at my feet." Then he pushed open the door of the sacred gate, saying: "Enter; but I warn you that whoever looks back returns outside."[60] Purg. 9.133 And when the pivots of that sacred portal, which are of metal, resounding and strong, turned in their hinges, the Tarpeian rock did not roar so loud, nor show itself so harsh, when the good Metellus was taken from it, so that it was left lean afterward. I turned, attentive to the first thunder, and I seemed to hear *Te Deum laudamus* [We

59 The seven P's stand for *peccatum* (sin), one for each of the seven deadly sins purged on the mountain's terraces.
60 The keys recall those given by Christ to Saint Peter, the power to bind and to loose (Matthew 16:19).

praise you, O God] in a voice mingled with the sweet sound. What I heard gave me exactly the impression one usually gets when people are singing with an organ: now the words can be made out, and now they cannot.[61]

CANTO 10

Purg. 10.1 When we were inside the threshold of the gate that the souls' bad love leaves unused, because it makes the crooked way seem straight, I heard by its sound that it had closed again; and if I had turned my eyes back to it, what excuse would have been fitting for the fault? We were climbing through a cleft in the rock, which wound now to one side and now to the other, just like a wave that recedes and draws near. Purg. 10.10 "Here we must use a little skill," my guide began, "in keeping close, now here, now there, to the side that curves away." And this made our steps so slow that the waning moon had reached its bed again to lie down before we were out of that needle's eye. But when we were free and in the open, up where the mountain draws itself back, I tired and both of us uncertain of our way, we stopped on a level place more solitary than roads through deserts.

CARVINGS OF HUMILITY

On the first terrace the marble wall shows Mary, David and Trajan as examples of humility.

Purg. 10.22 From its edge, where it borders on empty space, to the foot of the high bank that keeps on rising, it would measure three lengths of a human body; and as far as my eye could take wing, now on the left and now on the right side, this terrace seemed to me the same. Our feet had not yet moved up there when I perceived that the bank all around, which, being sheer, offered no way of climbing, was of white marble, and adorned

61 The Roman treasury lay beneath the Tarpeian rock on the Capitol; when Julius Caesar seized it in 49 BC, the tribune Metellus tried in vain to defend it (Lucan, *Pharsalia* 3).

with carvings such that not only Polycleitus but nature herself would be put to shame there.[62] Purg. 10.34 The angel who came to earth with the decree of the peace wept for over many years, which opened heaven from its long ban, appeared before us carved there in a gentle attitude, so true to life that it did not seem a silent image. One would have sworn that he was saying *Ave* [Hail]; for she was pictured there who turned the key to open the high love. And in her attitude she bore these words imprinted, *Ecce ancilla Dei* [Behold the handmaid of God], as exactly as a figure is stamped in wax.[63] Purg. 10.46 "Do not keep your mind on one place only," said the sweet master, who had me on the side where people have their heart. So I moved my eyes, and saw, beyond Mary, on the side where he who was prompting me stood, another story set into the rock; so I passed across Virgil and drew near, so that it would be laid out before my eyes. There, carved in the same marble, were the cart and the oxen drawing the holy ark, because of which people fear to take on a task not entrusted to them.[64] Purg. 10.58 In front appeared people; and the whole crowd, divided into seven choirs, made one of my two senses say "No," and the other "Yes, they are singing." In the same way, at the smoke of the incense that was pictured there, my eyes and my nose were made to disagree between yes and no. There, going before the blessed vessel, was the humble Psalmist, dancing with his robe tucked up, and in that act he was both more and less than a king. Opposite, portrayed at a window of a great palace, Michal was watching, like a woman scornful and sad.[65] Purg. 10.70 I moved my feet from the place where I was standing to look closely at another story, which gleamed white at me behind Michal. There was storied the high glory of the Roman prince whose worth moved Gregory to his great vic-

62 Polycleitus was a celebrated Greek sculptor of the fifth century BC.
63 The scene is the Annunciation, when the angel Gabriel greeted Mary (Luke 1:26–38).
64 When the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem, Uzzah was struck dead for reaching out to steady it, a task not given to him (2 Samuel 6).
65 The Psalmist is King David, who danced before the ark; his wife Michal, watching from a window, despised him for it (2 Samuel 6:14–16).

tory: I mean the emperor Trajan. And a poor widow was at his bridle, in an attitude of tears and grief. All around him the ground seemed trampled and crowded with knights, and the golden eagles above them seemed to move in the wind.[66] Purg. 10.82 Among all these the poor woman seemed to say: "My lord, avenge my son, who is dead, for my heart is breaking." And he seemed to answer her: "Now wait until I return." And she, like a person whose grief is urgent: "My lord, what if you do not return?" And he: "Whoever is in my place will do it for you." And she: "What will another's good deed be to you, if you put your own out of mind?" Purg. 10.91 So he: "Now take comfort, for I must fulfill my duty before I move on: Justice requires it, and pity holds me back." He who never saw anything new produced this visible speech, new to us because it is not found here. While I was delighting in looking at the images of such great humility, dear to see also for the sake of their maker, "Look, over here, many people—but they take slow steps," the poet murmured; "they will direct us to the high stairs."

THE PROUD UNDER THEIR STONES

The souls of the proud come into view, bent double beneath heavy stones.

Purg. 10.103 My eyes, which were intent on gazing so as to see new things, which they are always eager for, were not slow in turning toward him. But, Reader, I do not want you to be turned aside from your good resolve by hearing how God wills the debt to be paid. Do not dwell on the form of the torment: think of what follows; think that, at the very worst, it cannot go beyond the great Judgment. I began: "Master, what I see moving toward us does not seem to me to be persons, and I do not know what it is, my sight wanders so." Purg. 10.115 And he to me: "The heavy condition of their torment bends them down to the ground, so that my own eyes at first were in dispute over it. But look steadily there,

66 A medieval legend held that Pope Gregory the Great, moved by Trajan's justice to this widow, prayed the pagan emperor out of Hell to salvation.

and with your sight untangle what is coming beneath those stones: already you can make out how each one beats his breast." O proud Christians, wretched and weary, who, sick in the sight of the mind, put your trust in backward steps, do you not perceive that we are worms born to form the angelic butterfly that flies to justice without defenses? Purg. 10.127 Why does your mind float so high, since you are like defective insects, like a worm whose development falls short? As one sometimes sees, holding up a ceiling or a roof, a figure serving as a corbel with its knees drawn up to its chest, which, though it is not real, makes real distress arise in whoever sees it, so formed did I see them when I looked closely. It is true that they were more or less bent over, according as they had more or less on their backs; and the one who showed the most patience in his bearing seemed to say, weeping: "I can bear no more."

CANTO 11

Purg. 11.1 "Our Father, who are in the heavens, not confined there, but through the greater love you have for your first works on high, praised be your name and your power by every creature, as it is fitting to give thanks to your sweet breath. May the peace of your kingdom come to us, for we cannot reach it by ourselves, with all our wit, if it does not come. As your angels make a sacrifice to you of their will, singing *Osanna* [Hosanna], so may human beings do with theirs. Purg. 11.13 Give us this day our daily manna, without which, in this harsh desert, whoever toils hardest to go forward goes backward. And as we forgive everyone the wrong we have suffered, so you too, in your kindness, forgive, and do not look at our merit. Our strength, which is so easily overcome, do not put to the test against the ancient adversary, but deliver it from him who spurs it so. This last prayer, dear Lord, is not made for ourselves, since we have no need of it, but for those who have remained behind us." Purg. 11.25 Thus praying good speed for themselves and for us, those shades went beneath their burden, like the weight one sometimes feels in

dreams, all tormented in unequal measure, round and round, and weary, up along the first terrace, purging away the mists of the world. If over there they always speak good for us, what can be said and done for them here by those whose will has a good root? We should indeed help them wash away the stains they carried from here, so that, pure and light, they may go out to the starry wheels. Purg. 11.37 "Ah, so may justice and pity soon unburden you, so that you can move your wings and they may lift you as you desire, show us on which hand the way to the stairway is shortest; and if there is more than one passage, point out to us the one that is least steep; for this man who comes with me, because of the burden of Adam's flesh in which he is clothed, is slow in climbing up, against his will."

OMBERTO ALDOBRANDESCO

A Tuscan nobleman confesses the family pride that cost him his life.

Purg. 11.46 The words they gave in reply to those spoken by him whom I was following did not make plain who spoke them; but it was said: "Come with us to the right along the bank, and you will find the pass that a living person can climb. And if I were not hindered by the stone that subdues my proud neck, so that I must carry my face low, I would look at this man who is still alive and is not named, to see whether I know him, and to make him pity this burden. Purg. 11.58 I was Italian, the son of a great Tuscan: Guglielmo Aldobrandesco was my father; I do not know whether his name was ever known to you. The ancient blood and the noble deeds of my ancestors made me so arrogant that, not thinking of our common mother, I held every man in such contempt that I died of it, as the Sienese know, and as every child in Campagnatico knows. I am Omberto; and pride does harm not only to me, for it has dragged all my kin down with it into misfortune.[67] Purg. 11.70 And here, because of it, I must carry this weight until God is satisfied, here among the dead, since I

67 Omberto Aldobrandeschi, of the counts of Santa Fiora, was killed by the Sienese at his castle of Campagnatico in 1259.

did not do so among the living." Listening, I bent my face down; and one of them (not the one who was speaking) twisted himself under the weight that encumbers him, and saw me and knew me and called out, keeping his eyes fixed with effort on me, as I went along with them, all bent over.

ODERISI AND THE VANITY OF FAME

The illuminator Oderisi describes how quickly earthly fame passes, from painters to poets.

Purg. 11.79 "Oh," I said to him, "are you not Oderisi, the honor of Gubbio, and the honor of that art which in Paris is called illumination?" "Brother," he said, "the pages that Franco of Bologna paints smile more brightly: the honor is now all his, and mine only in part. I would certainly not have been so courteous while I lived, because of the great desire for excellence on which my heart was set.[68] Purg. 11.88 For such pride the penalty is paid here; and I would not yet be here, were it not that, while I still had the power to sin, I turned to God. O vain glory of human powers, how short a time the green lasts at the top, unless it is followed by duller ages! Cimabue believed he held the field in painting, and now Giotto has the acclaim, so that the other's fame is obscured. So one Guido has taken from the other the glory of our language; and perhaps one is born who will chase both the one and the other from the nest.[69] Purg. 11.100 Worldly fame is nothing but a breath of wind, which now comes from here and now from there, and changes its name because it changes direction. What more renown will you have, if you strip the flesh from yourself when it is old, than if you had died before you outgrew your baby words for food and money, once a thousand years have passed? That is a shorter span, measured against eternity, than the blink of an eye measured against the circle that turns

68 Oderisi of Gubbio (died 1299) and Franco of Bologna were illuminators of manuscripts; the word Dante uses for the art, "alluminare," comes from the French.

69 Cimabue (c. 1240–1302) and his pupil Giotto were Florentine painters; the two Guidos are usually taken to be the poets Guido Guinizelli and Guido Cavalcanti.

most slowly in the heavens.[70] Purg. 11.109 That one who takes so little of the road ahead of me once made all Tuscany ring with his name, and now he is barely whispered of in Siena, where he was lord when the Florentine rage was destroyed, which was proud at that time, just as now it is a prostitute. Your fame is the color of grass, which comes and goes, and it is faded by the very one through whom it springs green from the ground." And I to him: "Your true words fill my heart with good humility, and you bring down a great swelling in me: but who is the one you were speaking of just now?"[71] Purg. 11.121 "That," he answered, "is Provenzan Salvani; and he is here because he was presumptuous enough to try to bring all of Siena into his hands. So he has gone, and so he goes without rest, ever since he died: such is the coin paid in satisfaction by anyone who is too daring over there." And I: "If a spirit who waits until the very edge of life before repenting stays down below, and does not ascend up here—unless good prayer helps him—until as much time has passed as he lived, how was his coming here granted to him?"[72] Purg. 11.133 "When he was living in his greatest glory," he said, "of his own free will, setting all shame aside, he planted himself in the Campo of Siena; and there, to free his friend from the punishment he was suffering in Charles's prison, he brought himself to tremble in every vein. I will say no more, and I know that I speak obscurely; but little time will pass before your neighbors act in such a way that you will be able to gloss it. This deed released him from those confines."[73]

70 The slowest circle is the heaven of the fixed stars, then thought to move one degree every hundred years.

71 The Florentine rage was destroyed at the battle of Montaperti (1260), where Siena routed Florence.

72 Provenzan Salvani was the Ghibelline leader of Siena after Montaperti; he was killed in 1269 at the battle of Colle.

73 Provenzan begged in Siena's main square for the ransom of a friend held by Charles of Anjou; the hint is that Dante, exiled by his fellow Florentines, will learn what it is to beg.

CANTO 12

Purg. 12.1 Side by side, like oxen that go under the yoke, I went along with that burdened soul, as long as the sweet tutor allowed it. But when he said, "Leave him, and press on, for here it is good for each one to drive his boat with sail and oars as hard as he can," I made my body upright again, as one ought to walk, although my thoughts remained both bowed and humbled.

EXAMPLES OF PRIDE IN THE PAVEMENT

Carvings underfoot show the fall of the proud, from Lucifer to Troy.

Purg. 12.10 I had set off, and was gladly following my master's steps, and both of us were already showing how light we were, when he said to me: "Turn your eyes downward: it will be good for you, to ease the way, to see the bed beneath your feet." As the tombs set in the ground over the buried bear carvings of what they were before, so that they may be remembered—and so people often weep there at the prick of remembrance, which spurs only the devout—so I saw there, but of better likeness, according to the craftsmanship, all the path that juts out from the mountain covered with figures. Purg. 12.25 I saw him who was created nobler than any other creature coming down from heaven like lightning, on one side. I saw Briareus, pierced by the celestial bolt, lying on the other side, heavy on the earth with the chill of death. I saw Thymbraeus, I saw Pallas and Mars, still armed, around their father, gazing at the scattered limbs of the Giants. I saw Nimrod at the foot of his great work, as if bewildered, looking at the peoples who were proud with him in Shinar.[74] Purg. 12.37 O Niobe, with what grieving eyes I saw you portrayed upon the road, between your seven and seven children slain! O Saul, how you appeared there, dead on your own sword

74 The first figure is Lucifer; Briareus was a giant who rebelled against Jupiter, and Thymbraeus is Apollo. Nimrod was believed to have built the Tower of Babel in the plain of Shinar.

on Gilboa, which afterward felt neither rain nor dew! O foolish Arachne, so I saw you, already half a spider, wretched on the shreds of the work that was made to your harm. O Rehoboam, your image there does not seem to threaten now; but, full of terror, a chariot carries it off before anyone chases it.[75] Purg. 12.49 The hard pavement showed also how Alcmaeon made his mother pay dearly for the ill-fated ornament. It showed how his sons threw themselves upon Sennacherib inside the temple, and how, once he was dead, they left him there. It showed the ruin and the cruel slaughter that Tomyris wrought when she said to Cyrus: "You thirsted for blood, and with blood I fill you." It showed how the Assyrians fled in rout after Holofernes was killed, and also what remained of the slaughter.[76] Purg. 12.61 I saw Troy in ashes and in ruins: O Ilium, how low and abased you were shown by the image that is seen there! What master was there of brush or of pencil who could draw the shadings and the lines that would make every subtle mind marvel there? The dead seemed dead, and the living seemed alive. One who saw the reality saw no better than I all that I trod on while I went bowed. Purg. 12.70 Now be proud, and go on with haughty looks, children of Eve, and do not bow your heads to see your evil path! We had already gone further round the mountain, and spent much more of the sun's course, than my mind, not free, supposed, when he who was always going ahead, attentive, began: "Lift your head; there is no more time to go so absorbed. Purg. 12.79 See there an angel who is preparing to come toward us; see how the sixth handmaid is returning from the day's service. Adorn your bearing and your face with reverence, so that he may be pleased to send us upward: think that this day will never

75 Niobe boasted of her children over Latona; Saul fell on his sword on Mount Gilboa, which David then cursed; Arachne challenged Minerva at weaving; Rehoboam fled his rebellious subjects by chariot (1 Kings 12).

76 Alcmaeon killed his mother Eriphyle, who had betrayed his father for a necklace; Queen Tomyris plunged the dead Cyrus's head into blood; Holofernes was beheaded by Judith.

dawn again." I was well used to his warnings not to lose time, so that on that subject he could not speak to me obscurely.[77]

THE ANGEL OF HUMILITY

An angel brushes a P from Dante's brow, and the climb grows lighter.

Purg. 12.88 Toward us came the beautiful creature, dressed in white, and in his face such as the morning star appears, trembling. He opened his arms, and then opened his wings; he said: "Come; the steps are near here, and from now on the climbing is easy. Very few come at this summons. O human race, born to fly upward, why do you fall so at a little wind?" He led us to where the rock was cut; there he beat his wings across my forehead, then promised me a safe journey. Purg. 12.100 As on the right hand, to climb the hill where the church sits that looms over the well-guided city above Rubaconte, the bold steepness of the ascent is broken by the steps that were made in an age when the ledger and the stave were safe; so here the bank that falls very steeply from the next ring is eased; but on this side and that the high stone grazes us. As we turned there, voices sang *Beati pauperes spiritu* [Blessed are the poor in spirit] so that no speech could tell it. Ah, how different these openings are from those of Hell! For here one enters through songs, and down there through fierce laments.[78] Purg. 12.115 We were already climbing up the holy stairs, and I seemed to be much lighter than I had seemed on the level before; so I said: "Master, tell me, what heavy thing has been lifted from me, so that I feel almost no fatigue as I go?" He answered: "When the *P*'s that still remain on your face, almost faded, are wholly erased, as one has been, your feet will be so mastered by good will that not only will they feel no fatigue, but it will be a delight to them to be urged upward." Purg. 12.127 Then I did as those do who go about with something on their head that

77 The handmaids are the hours of the day; the sixth is ending, so it is past noon.
78 The church of San Miniato stands above Florence, beyond the Rubaconte bridge; the ledger and the stave recall Florentine scandals over falsified public records and a tampered salt measure.

they do not know of, except that the gestures of others make them suspect; so the hand helps to make sure, and searches and finds, and fulfills that office which cannot be performed by sight; and with the spread fingers of my right hand I found only six of the letters that the one with the keys had cut on me above my temples: and watching this, my guide smiled.

CANTO 13

Purg. 13.1 We were at the top of the stairway where the mountain, which frees from evil those who climb it, is cut back a second time. There a terrace binds the hill all around just as the first one does, except that its arc bends more sharply. No shade is there, nor any carving that can be seen; the bank looks so bare, and the path so plain, with the livid color of the stone. "If we wait here for people to ask the way," the poet was reasoning, "I fear perhaps our choice will be too long delayed." Purg. 13.13 Then he set his eyes steadily on the sun; he made his right side the center of his motion, and turned his left side round. "O sweet light, trusting in which I enter upon the new road, lead us," he said, "as one must be led in this place. You warm the world, you shine upon it; unless some other reason urges to the contrary, your rays must always be our guides." As far as is counted here as a mile, so far had we already gone there, in little time, because of our ready will. Purg. 13.25 And toward us were heard flying, though not seen, spirits speaking courteous invitations to the table of love. The first voice that passed in flight said loudly, *Vinum non habent* [They have no wine], and went on repeating it behind us. And before it had faded wholly from hearing as it drew away, another passed crying, "I am Orestes," and it too did not stop. "Oh, Father," I said, "what voices are these?" And as I was asking, there came the third, saying: "Love those from whom you have suffered harm."[79]

79 Mary's words at the wedding at Cana (John 2:3); Orestes' friend Pylades claimed to be Orestes in order to die in his place.

THE ENVIOUS

On the second terrace the envious sit in haircloth, their eyelids sewn shut with wire.

Purg. 13.37 And the good master: "This circle scourges the fault of envy, and so the cords of the whip are drawn from love. The bridle must have the opposite sound; I think you will hear it, as I judge, before you reach the pass of pardon. But fix your eyes very steadily through the air, and you will see people sitting ahead of us, each one seated along the rock wall." Then I opened my eyes wider than before; I looked ahead of me, and saw shades with cloaks no different from the color of the stone. Purg. 13.49 And when we had gone a little further on, I heard them crying: "Mary, pray for us," crying: "Michael, and Peter, and all the saints." I do not believe there walks the earth today a man so hard that he would not have been pierced with compassion for what I saw next: for when I had come so close to them that their actions reached me clearly, grievous sorrow was wrung from me through my eyes. They seemed to be covered in coarse haircloth, and each supported the other with his shoulder, and all were supported by the bank. Purg. 13.61 So the blind, who lack the means to live, stand at the pardons begging for what they need, and one lets his head sink upon another's, so that pity may quickly be stirred in others, not only by the sound of the words but by the sight, which pleads no less. And as the sun does not reach the blind, so to the shades, there where I was speaking just now, the light of heaven will not grant itself; for an iron wire pierces the eyelids of all of them and sews them up, as is done to a wild sparrow hawk because it will not stay quiet.[80] Purg. 13.73 It seemed to me, as I went, that I was doing them an outrage, seeing others without being seen; so I turned to my wise counsel. He knew well what the mute one meant to say; and so he did not wait for my question, but said: "Speak, and be brief and to the

80 The pardons were church feasts at which indulgences were granted, and where beggars gathered.

point." Virgil was walking with me on that side of the terrace from which one can fall, because it is wreathed by no parapet; on my other side were the devout shades, who were pressing tears out through the horrible seam so hard that they bathed their cheeks. Purg. 13.85 I turned to them, and began: "O people sure of seeing the high light which alone is the object of your desire, so may grace soon dissolve the scum on your conscience, so that the river of the mind may flow down through it clear, tell me—for it will be gracious and dear to me—whether there is any soul here among you that is Italian; and perhaps it will be good for that soul if I learn of it." Purg. 13.94 "O my brother, each one is a citizen of one true city; but you mean one who lived in Italy as a pilgrim." This I seemed to hear by way of answer somewhat farther on than where I stood; so I made myself heard still farther on. Among the others I saw a shade that looked as if it were waiting; and if anyone should ask "How?"—it was lifting its chin upward the way the blind do.

SAPIA OF SIENA

Sapia tells how she rejoiced at her own city's defeat.

Purg. 13.103 "Spirit," I said, "who subdue yourself in order to climb, if you are the one who answered me, make yourself known to me either by your place or by your name." "I was Sienese," she answered, "and with these others here I cleanse my sinful life, weeping to him that he may grant himself to us. Wise I was not, though I was called Sapia, and I was far happier at the harm of others than at my own good fortune.[81] Purg. 13.112 And so that you may not believe I am deceiving you, hear whether I was as foolish as I tell you. When the arc of my years was already descending, my fellow citizens had met their adversaries in the field near Colle, and I prayed God for what he willed. They were broken there, and turned to the bitter steps of flight; and seeing the pursuit, I felt a joy unmatched by any other: so much that I

81 Sapia was a Sienese noblewoman, aunt of Provenzan Salvani; Dante puns on her name and "savia," "wise."

turned my bold face upward, crying to God, 'Now I fear you no more!' as the blackbird does at a little fair weather.[82] Purg. 13.124 I wanted peace with God at the very end of my life; and my debt would not even now be lessened by penance, were it not that Pier Pettinagno remembered me in his holy prayers, he who grieved for me out of charity. But who are you, who go asking about our condition, and have your eyes unbound, as I believe, and breathe as you speak?" "My eyes," I said, "will yet be taken from me here; but for a short time, for small is the offense they committed by turning with envy.[83] Purg. 13.136 Far greater is the fear, which holds my soul in suspense, of the torment below, so that already the load down there weighs on me." And she to me: "Who, then, has led you up here among us, if you think you will return below?" And I: "He who is with me and says no word: and I am alive; and so ask of me, chosen spirit, if you want me still to move my mortal feet over there on your behalf." Purg. 13.145 "Oh, this is so new a thing to hear," she answered, "that it is a great sign that God loves you; so help me sometimes with your prayer. And I ask you, by what you most desire, if you ever tread the earth of Tuscany, to restore my good name among my kin. You will see them among that vain people who put their hope in Talamone, and will lose more hope there than in searching for the Diana; but the admirals will lose most there."[84]

CANTO 14

Purg. 14.1 "Who is this who circles our mountain before death has given him flight, and opens and closes his eyes at will?" "I do not know who he is, but I know he is not alone. You ask him, since you are nearer to him, and greet him gently, so that he will speak." Purg. 14.7 So two spirits, leaning one toward the other, were

82 At Colle di Val d'Elsa (1269) the Florentines and their allies defeated the Sienese. The blackbird, given a few mild days in winter, behaves as if spring had come.
83 Pier Pettinagno (or Pettinaio), a comb-seller of Siena famed for his holiness, died in 1289.
84 Siena bought the harbor of Talamone in 1303, hoping to make it a naval port, and long searched for an underground stream, the Diana; both hopes failed.

talking about me there on my right hand. Then they turned their faces up to speak to me, and one said: "O soul who, still fixed in the body, are going toward heaven, for charity's sake console us and tell us where you come from and who you are; for you make us marvel at this grace of yours as much as a thing must that never was before."

THE CORRUPTION OF THE ARNO VALLEY

Guido del Duca describes the towns along the Arno as beasts and laments the decline of Romagna.

Purg. 14.16 And I: "Through the middle of Tuscany there wanders a little river that rises in Falterona, and a hundred miles of course do not satisfy it. From its banks I bring this body. To tell you who I am would be to speak in vain, for my name does not yet resound much." "If I pierce your meaning rightly with my intellect," the one who had spoken first then answered me, "you are speaking of the Arno." And the other said to him: "Why did he hide the name of that river, just as one does with horrible things?"[85] Purg. 14.28 And the shade who had been asked this discharged his debt thus: "I do not know; but it is right indeed that the name of such a valley should perish. For from its source (where the rugged mountain range from which Pelorus is cut off is so swollen that in few places does it pass beyond that mark) down to where it gives itself up to restore what the sky dries up from the sea, from which the rivers have what flows with them, virtue is driven away by all as an enemy, like a snake, either through some misfortune of the place or through evil habit that goads them:[86] Purg. 14.40 so that the inhabitants of that wretched valley have so changed their nature that it seems Circe had them in her pasture. Among foul hogs, more worthy of acorns than of any other food made for human use, it first directs its paltry course. Then, coming down, it finds curs that snarl more than

85 Falterona is a peak of the Apennines in Tuscany where the Arno rises.
86 Pelorus is a cape in Sicily, believed to have been severed by the sea from the Apennine chain.

their strength warrants, and it turns its snout away from them in disdain. On it goes, falling, and the more it swells, the more this accursed and ill-starred ditch finds dogs turning into wolves.[87] Purg. 14.52 Then, having descended through many deep pools, it finds the foxes, so full of fraud that they fear no cunning that might trap them. Nor will I stop speaking because another hears me; and it will be good for this man if he later remembers what a true spirit unfolds to me. I see your grandson, who is becoming a hunter of those wolves on the bank of the fierce river, and he terrifies them all.[88] Purg. 14.61 He sells their flesh while it is still alive; then he slaughters them like an old beast; many he deprives of life, and himself of honor. He comes out bloody from the dismal wood; he leaves it in such a state that a thousand years from now it will not grow back into its former condition." As, at the announcement of grievous harms, the face of the one who listens grows troubled, from whatever side the danger may sink its fangs into him, so I saw the other soul, who had stood turned to listen, grow troubled and sad once he had taken in the words. Purg. 14.73 The speech of the one and the look of the other made me eager to know their names, and I asked for them, mixing my request with prayers. At this the spirit who had spoken to me first began again: "You want me to bring myself to do for you what you will not do for me. But since God wills that so much of his grace shine through in you, I will not be sparing with you: so know that I am Guido del Duca.[89] Purg. 14.82 My blood was so burned up with envy that if you had seen a man become happy, you would have seen me suffused with livid color. From my sowing I reap such straw. O human race, why do you set your heart where there must be a ban on partnership? This is Rinier; this is the glory and honor of the house of Calboli, where no one since

87 In the *Odyssey* the enchantress Circe turned men into swine. The hogs are the people of the Casentino, the curs the people of Arezzo, and the wolves the Florentines.

88 The foxes are the Pisans. The grandson is Fulcieri da Calboli, who as podestà of Florence in 1303 tortured and executed members of the White party.

89 Guido del Duca was a nobleman and judge of Romagna in the early thirteenth century.

has made himself heir to his worth.[90] Purg. 14.91 And his is not the only blood that has been stripped bare, between the Po and the mountains, the sea and the Reno, of the good required for truth and for delight; for within these boundaries the land is so filled with poisonous growths that only slowly now would they die off through cultivation. Where is the good Lizio, and Arrigo Mainardi, Pier Traversaro, and Guido di Carpigna? O people of Romagna, how degenerate you have become! When will a Fabbro take root again in Bologna? When, in Faenza, a Bernardin di Fosco, a noble shoot from a lowly weed?[91] Purg. 14.103 Do not marvel, Tuscan, if I weep when I remember, with Guido da Prata, Ugolin d'Azzo, who lived among us, Federico Tignoso and his company, the house of Traversari and the Anastagi (and both families are left without heirs), the ladies and the knights, the labors and the ease that love and courtesy made us desire, there where hearts have grown so wicked. O Bertinoro, why do you not flee away, since your family has gone, and many people with it, so as not to be wicked?[92] Purg. 14.115 Bagnacavallo does well not to breed again, and Castrocaro does badly, and Conio worse, troubling itself to breed such counts. The Pagani will do well once their Devil has gone from them, but not so well that a pure record of them will ever remain. O Ugolin de' Fantolin, your name is safe, since no one is any longer expected who could darken it by degenerating. But go on your way now, Tuscan, for now it pleases me far more to weep than to talk, so much has our conversation wrung my mind."[93]

90 Rinieri da Calboli, a Guelf nobleman of Forlì, served as podestà of several cities and died in 1296.

91 The boundaries mark out Romagna; the men named here and below were nobles of Romagna of the generations before Dante, famed for courtesy and liberality.

92 Bertinoro is a hill town in Romagna, Guido del Duca's home.

93 The Pagani's "Devil" is Maghinardo Pagani da Susinana, lord of Faenza and Imola, who died in 1302.

VOICES OF ENVY PUNISHED

Thunderous voices cry out examples of envy, and Virgil reproves those who look only at earth.

Purg. 14.127 We knew that those dear souls heard us going; so by their silence they made us confident of the way. When we had become alone, going on, a voice that came against us seemed like lightning when it splits the air, saying: "Whoever finds me will kill me"; and it fled like thunder that dies away when the cloud suddenly bursts. As soon as our hearing had a truce from it, there came the other, with so great a crash that it resembled thunder following close: "I am Aglauros, who became stone." And then, to draw close to the poet, I took a step backward and not forward.[94] Purg. 14.142 The air was now quiet on every side, and he said to me: "That was the hard bit that should keep man within his bounds. But you take the bait, so that the hook of the ancient adversary draws you to himself; and so the curb or the lure avails little. Heaven calls you and wheels around you, showing you its eternal beauties, and your eye looks only at the earth; therefore he who discerns all things strikes you."

CANTO 15

Purg. 15.1 As much of the sphere that always plays like a child as appears between the end of the third hour and the beginning of the day, so much now seemed to remain of the sun's course toward evening: it was evening there, and midnight here. And the rays were striking us full on the nose, because we had gone so far around the mountain that we were now heading straight toward the sunset, when I felt my brow weighed down by the splendor far more than before, and the things I did not under-

94 The first voice repeats Cain's words after killing Abel (Genesis 4:14). Aglauros, daughter of Cecrops, was turned to stone for envying her sister Herse (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 2).

stand filled me with amazement:[95] Purg. 15.13 so I raised my hands toward the top of my brows and made myself the shade that pares away the excess of light. As when from water or from a mirror a ray leaps to the opposite side, rising in the same manner as it descends, and departs as far from the line of a falling stone over an equal distance, as experiment and science show, so it seemed to me that I was struck by light reflected there in front of me, at which my sight was quick to flee. Purg. 15.25 "What is that, sweet father, from which I cannot shield my sight enough to help me," I said, "and which seems to be moving toward us?" "Do not marvel if the family of heaven still dazzles you," he answered me; "it is a messenger who comes to invite us to climb. Soon seeing these things will not be hard for you, but will be a delight to you, as much as nature has fitted you to feel."

GOODS THAT GROW BY SHARING

Virgil explains why heavenly goods, unlike earthly ones, grow richer the more they are shared.

Purg. 15.34 When we had reached the blessed angel, he said with a glad voice: "Enter here, to a stairway far less steep than the others." We were climbing, having already left that place, and *Beati misericordes* [Blessed are the merciful] was sung behind us, and "Rejoice, you who conquer." My master and I, the two of us alone, were going up, and as I went I thought to gain profit from his words; and I turned to him, asking: "What did the spirit from Romagna mean, mentioning 'ban' and 'partnership'?"[96] Purg. 15.46 And he to me: "He knows the harm of his own greatest fault; and so let no one wonder if he rebukes it, so that it may be less lamented. Because your desires are fixed where sharing lessens each one's portion, envy works the bellows for your sighs. But if love of the highest sphere turned your desire upward, that fear would not be in your breast; for there, the more people say

95 That is, about three hours of daylight remained in Purgatory, while in Italy, where Dante writes, it was midnight.
96 One of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:7).

'ours,' the more good each one possesses, and the more charity burns in that cloister." Purg. 15.58 "I am more starved of contentment," I said, "than if I had kept silent before, and I gather more doubt in my mind. How can it be that a good, when distributed, makes its many possessors richer in it than if it is possessed by a few?" And he to me: "Because you fix your mind once more only on earthly things, you pluck darkness from true light. That infinite and ineffable good that is up there runs to love just as a ray comes to a shining body. Purg. 15.70 It gives itself in the measure of the ardor it finds, so that the further charity extends, the more the eternal worth grows upon it. And the more souls up there are joined in love, the more there is to love well, and the more love there is, and like a mirror each reflects it to the other. And if my reasoning does not appease your hunger, you will see Beatrice, and she will fully take from you this and every other craving. Strive only that the five wounds may soon be erased, as the two already are, the wounds that close again through being painful."[97]

VISIONS OF MEEKNESS

On the third terrace Dante sees visions of patience: Mary, Pisistratus and the martyr Stephen.

Purg. 15.82 As I was about to say, "You satisfy me," I saw that I had arrived on the next ring, so that my eager eyes made me fall silent. There it seemed to me that I was suddenly drawn into an ecstatic vision, and that I saw many people in a temple; and a lady at the entrance, with the gentle bearing of a mother, saying: "My son, why have you treated us so? Look, your father and I were searching for you in sorrow." And as she fell silent at this, what had appeared before vanished.[98] Purg. 15.94 Then another woman appeared to me, with those waters down her cheeks that grief distills when it is born of great resentment against another,

97 The wounds are the P's cut on Dante's brow by the angel at Purgatory's gate; two have now been erased.
98 Mary finding the young Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:48).

and she was saying: "If you are lord of the city over whose name there was such strife among the gods, and from which all knowledge sparkles forth, avenge yourself on those bold arms that embraced our daughter, O Pisistratus." And the lord, kind and gentle, seemed to me to answer her with a calm face: "What shall we do to one who wishes us harm, if one who loves us is condemned by us?"[99] Purg. 15.106 Then I saw people kindled with the fire of wrath killing a young man with stones, loudly crying to one another nothing but: "Kill, kill!" And I saw him sinking toward the earth under death, which already weighed him down, but he made his eyes always gates toward heaven, praying to the high Lord, in such strife, to forgive his persecutors, with that look which unlocks pity.[100] Purg. 15.115 When my soul returned outward to the things that are true outside it, I recognized my errors, which were not false. My guide, who could see me acting like a man freeing himself from sleep, said: "What is wrong with you, that you cannot hold yourself up? Why, you have come more than half a league with your eyes veiled and your legs tangled, like one whom wine or sleep bends over!" Purg. 15.124 "O my sweet father, if you will listen to me, I will tell you," I said, "what appeared to me when my legs were so taken from me." And he: "If you had a hundred masks upon your face, your thoughts, however slight, would not be closed to me. What you saw was shown so that you would have no excuse not to open your heart to the waters of peace that are poured forth from the eternal fountain. Purg. 15.133 I did not ask 'What is wrong?' for the reason one does who looks only with the eye, which does not see when the body lies senseless; but I asked to give strength to your feet. So must the lazy be goaded, who are slow to use their waking hours when they return." We went on through the evening, attentive, looking ahead as far as our eyes could reach against the late, bright rays; and look: little by little a smoke

99 Pisistratus was tyrant of Athens in the sixth century BC; Athena and Poseidon contended over the naming of the city.
100 Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 7).

came toward us, dark as night, and there was no place to escape it. This took from us our sight and the pure air.

CANTO 16

Purg. 16.1 The gloom of Hell, and of a night deprived of every planet under a meager sky, darkened by cloud as much as it can be, never made so thick a veil over my sight as that smoke which covered us there, nor one so harsh in texture to the feel; for it did not allow the eye to stay open. And so my escort, wise and faithful, drew close to me and offered me his shoulder.

MARCO LOMBARDO

In the smoke of the wrathful, Marco Lombardo explains free will and blames the world's ills on bad government.

Purg. 16.10 Just as a blind man goes behind his guide so as not to stray and not to knock against something that might hurt or perhaps kill him, so I went through the bitter and foul air, listening to my guide, who kept saying: "Take care that you are not cut off from me." I heard voices, and each seemed to pray for peace and for mercy to the Lamb of God, who takes away sins. *Agnus Dei* [Lamb of God] was always how they began; there was one word in all and one measure, so that there seemed to be full concord among them.[101] Purg. 16.22 "Are those spirits, master, that I hear?" I said. And he to me: "You grasp the truth, and they are untying the knot of wrath." "Now who are you, who cleave our smoke and speak of us just as if you still measured time by calends?" So it was said by a voice. At this my master said: "Answer, and ask whether one goes up from here." And I: "O creature who are cleansing yourself to return beautiful to him who made you, you will hear a wonder if you follow me."[102] Purg. 16.34 "I will follow you as far as I am permitted," it answered; "and if the smoke does

101 The *Agnus Dei* is the prayer of the Mass, "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us... grant us peace."

102 The calends were the first day of the Roman month: that is, as if you still lived in earthly time.

not let us see, hearing will keep us together instead." Then I began: "With those swaddling bands that death unwinds I am going upward, and I came here through the anguish of Hell; and if God has so enclosed me in his grace that he wills that I see his court in a manner wholly outside modern usage, do not hide from me who you were before death, but tell me, and tell me if I am going the right way to the pass; and your words shall be our escorts." Purg. 16.46 "I was a Lombard, and I was called Marco. I knew the world, and I loved that worth at which everyone has now unbent his bow. For climbing up, you are going straight." So he answered, and added: "I beg you to pray for me when you are up above." And I to him: "I bind myself to you by my faith to do what you ask of me; but I am bursting inside with a doubt unless I free myself of it.[103] Purg. 16.55 At first it was single, and now it is made double by your statement, which makes me certain, both here and elsewhere, of that with which I couple it. The world is indeed as wholly deserted of every virtue as you tell me, and pregnant with malice and covered by it; but I beg you to point out the cause to me, so that I may see it and show it to others; for one places it in the heavens, and another down here." Purg. 16.64 First he let out a deep sigh, which grief wrung into an "Ah!" and then he began: "Brother, the world is blind, and you indeed come from it. You who are living refer every cause only up to the heavens, just as if they moved everything with them by necessity. If this were so, free will would be destroyed in you, and it would not be justice to have joy for good and mourning for evil. Purg. 16.73 The heavens set your impulses in motion. I do not say all of them; but even supposing I did say so, a light is given you to know good and evil, and free will, which, if it endures the strain of its first battles with the heavens, afterward conquers everything, if it is well nourished. To a greater power and a better nature you are subject, and you remain free; and that power creates the mind in you, which the heavens do not have in their charge. Therefore, if the present world goes astray, the cause is

103 Marco Lombardo was a thirteenth-century courtier, remembered for his wisdom and liberality; little else is known of him.

in you, in you let it be sought; and I will now be a true informant to you about it. Purg. 16.85 From the hand of him who delights in it before it exists, there comes forth, like a little girl who weeps and laughs in childish play, the simple little soul, which knows nothing, except that, moved by a joyful Maker, it turns gladly to whatever amuses it. First it tastes the savor of some small good; there it is deceived, and runs after it, unless a guide or a rein turns its love aside. Hence it was necessary to set up law as a rein; it was necessary to have a king who could make out at least the tower of the true city. Purg. 16.97 The laws exist, but who puts his hand to them? No one, because the shepherd who leads the way can chew the cud, but does not have cloven hooves. So the people, who see their guide strike only at that good for which they themselves are greedy, feed on that and ask for nothing more. You can clearly see that bad leadership is the cause that has made the world wicked, and not nature that has been corrupted in you.[104] Purg. 16.106 Rome, which made the world good, used to have two Suns, which made both roads visible, the road of the world and the road of God. One has put out the other; and the sword is joined to the shepherd's crook, and the two held together by force must go badly, because, once joined, neither fears the other. If you do not believe me, look at the ear of grain, for every plant is known by its seed.[105] Purg. 16.115 In the land that the Adige and the Po water, valor and courtesy used to be found, before Frederick met with strife; now anyone may safely pass through there who would avoid, out of shame, talking with good men or coming near them. There are indeed three old men still in whom the ancient age rebukes the new, and they find it long until God takes them to a better life: Corrado da Palazzo, and the good Gherardo, and Guido da Castel, who is better called, in the

104 Under the law of Moses a clean animal must both chew the cud and have a cloven hoof (Leviticus 11:3); Dante applies the image to the pope as the leader of Christians.

105 The two Suns are the emperor, who guides humanity toward earthly happiness, and the pope, who guides it toward God.

French way, the honest Lombard.[106] Purg. 16.127 From now on, say that the Church of Rome, by confounding two governments in herself, falls into the mud, and fouls both herself and her burden." "O my Marco," I said, "you reason well; and now I see why the sons of Levi were excluded from inheritance. But what Gherardo is this who, you say, remains as a specimen of the vanished generation, in reproach of this savage age?"[107] Purg. 16.136 "Either your words deceive me or they are testing me," he answered me, "for, speaking to me in Tuscan, you seem to know nothing of the good Gherardo. I know him by no other surname, unless I were to take one from his daughter Gaia. God be with you, for I come with you no further. See the light that shines through the smoke already turning white; and I must leave—the angel is there—before he sees me." So he turned back, and would hear me no more.[108]

CANTO 17

Purg. 17.1 Remember, reader, if ever in the mountains a mist has caught you, through which you could see no better than moles see through their skin: how, when the damp, thick vapors begin to thin, the sphere of the sun enters feebly through them; and your imagination will be quick to see how I first saw the sun again, which was already setting. So, matching my steps to the trusted steps of my master, I came out of that cloud into rays already dead on the low shores.

106 Emperor Frederick II (1194–1250) waged long wars with the papacy in northern Italy. Corrado da Palazzo of Brescia, Gherardo da Camino of Treviso and Guido da Castel of Reggio were noblemen famed for their virtue; the French called all Italians "Lombards."

107 Under the law of Moses the priestly tribe of Levi received no share of the land (Numbers 18:20–24).

108 Gaia da Camino (died 1311) was Gherardo's daughter.

VISIONS OF WRATH

Dante sees visions of wrath punished, then an angel leads them to the stair.

Purg. 17.13 O imagination, which at times steals us so far from outward things that we notice nothing, though a thousand trumpets sound around us, who moves you, if the senses offer you nothing? A light moves you that takes its form in heaven, either of itself or by a will that guides it downward. Of the impiety of her who changed her form into the bird that most delights in singing, the imprint appeared in my imagination; and here my mind was so withdrawn into itself that nothing came from outside that it then received.[109] Purg. 17.25 Then there rained down into my high fantasy a crucified man, scornful and fierce in his look, and so he was dying. Around him were the great Ahasuerus, Esther his wife, and the just Mordecai, who was so upright in word and deed. And as this image burst of itself, like a bubble when the water fails beneath which it was formed, there rose up in my vision a young woman, weeping bitterly, and she was saying: "O queen, why through wrath have you chosen to be nothing?[110] Purg. 17.37 You have killed yourself so as not to lose Lavinia; now you have lost me! I am the one who mourns, mother, for your ruin before mourning another's." As sleep is broken when a new light suddenly strikes the closed eyes, and, once broken, it flickers before it wholly dies, so my imagining fell away as soon as a light struck my face, far greater than the light we are used to.[111] Purg. 17.46 I was turning to see where I was, when a voice said, "Here is the way up," which drew me away from every other purpose; and it made my desire to see who it was that spoke so eager that it never rests until it comes face to face. But as with

109 Procne, who killed her son and served him to her husband Tereus in revenge, was turned into a nightingale (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6).

110 In the Book of Esther, Haman, minister of King Ahasuerus, is hanged (in the Latin Bible, "crucified") on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai.

111 Queen Amata hanged herself believing that Turnus, whom she wished her daughter Lavinia to marry, was dead; Lavinia then married Aeneas (*Aeneid* 12).

the sun, which weighs on our sight and veils its own form by its excess, so my power failed me there. "This is a divine spirit, who directs us onto the way up without our asking, and hides himself in his own light. Purg. 17.58 He does for us as a man does for himself; for whoever waits to be asked, while seeing the need, has already, unkindly, set himself to refuse. Now let us match our feet to such an invitation; let us try to climb before it grows dark, for afterward we could not until the day returns." So my guide spoke; and he and I together turned our steps to a stairway; and as soon as I was on the first step, I felt near me something like the motion of a wing, fanning my face, and a voice saying: "*Beati pacifici* [Blessed are the peacemakers], who are without evil wrath." Purg. 17.70 Already the last rays, which the night follows, had risen so high above us that the stars were appearing on many sides. "O my strength, why do you melt away so?" I said within myself, for I felt the power of my legs brought to a halt. We were where the stairway climbed no further, and we were stuck fast, just like a ship that reaches the shore; and I waited a little, to see if I could hear anything in the new ring; then I turned to my master and said:

LOVE AND THE ORDER OF PURGATORY

Virgil explains how all sin springs from love misdirected, too weak or excessive.

Purg. 17.82 "My sweet father, tell me, what offense is purged here in the ring where we are? If our feet stand still, let your speech not stand still." And he to me: "The love of good that fell short of its duty is restored right here; here the oar that was wrongly slackened is plied again. But so that you may understand still more clearly, turn your mind to me, and you will gather some good fruit from our delay. Neither Creator nor creature," he began, "son, was ever without love, either natural or of the mind; and you know this. Purg. 17.94 Natural love is always without error; but the other can err through an evil object, or through too little or too much vigor. While it is directed toward the

primary goods, and keeps measure in the secondary ones, it cannot be the cause of sinful pleasure; but when it twists toward evil, or runs toward the good with more zeal or with less than it should, the creature works against its Maker. From this you can understand that love must be the seed in you of every virtue and of every action that deserves punishment. Purg. 17.106 Now, since love can never turn its face away from the well-being of its subject, all things are safe from hating themselves; and since no being can be conceived as divided from the First Being and standing by itself, every affection is cut off from hating him. It remains, if I divide the matter rightly, that the evil one loves is a neighbor's harm; and this love arises in three ways in your clay. There is the one who hopes to excel through his neighbor's being put down, and for this alone longs for him to be cast down from his greatness. Purg. 17.118 There is the one who fears to lose power, favor, honor and fame because another rises higher, and so grieves so much that he loves the opposite; and there is the one who seems so outraged by injury that he grows greedy for revenge, and such a man is bound to contrive another's harm. This threefold love is wept for down below here; now I want you to understand the other love, which runs toward the good in corrupted order. Each of us dimly apprehends a good in which the mind may rest, and desires it; and so each strives to reach it. Purg. 17.130 If a sluggish love draws you to see it, or to gain it, this terrace, after due repentance, torments you for it. There is another good that does not make one happy; it is not happiness, it is not the good Essence, the fruit and root of every good. The love that abandons itself too much to that good is wept for above us in three circles; but how it is divided into three, I keep silent, so that you may search it out for yourself."

CANTO 18

Purg. 18.1 The lofty teacher had brought his reasoning to an end, and was looking attentively into my face to see if I seemed satisfied; and I, whom a new thirst was still goading, was silent out-

wardly, and inwardly said: "Perhaps all my questioning burdens him." But that true father, who perceived the timid wish that did not reveal itself, by speaking gave me the courage to speak.

LOVE AND FREE WILL

Virgil explains how love arises and why the soul remains free to accept or refuse it.

Purg. 18.10 So I said: "Master, my sight is so quickened in your light that I discern clearly all that your reasoning conveys or describes; therefore I beg you, dear sweet father, to explain to me love, to which you trace back every good action and its opposite." "Turn toward me," he said, "the keen eyes of the intellect, and the error of the blind who make themselves guides will be made plain to you. The mind, which is created quick to love, moves toward everything that pleases it, as soon as it is awakened into action by pleasure. Purg. 18.22 Your power of perception draws an image from something real and unfolds it within you, so that it makes the mind turn toward it; and if, having turned, the mind inclines toward it, that inclination is love; that is nature, which is bound anew in you through pleasure. Then, as fire moves upward because of its form, which is born to rise to where it lasts longest in its matter, so the captured mind enters into desire, which is a spiritual motion, and never rests until the thing it loves makes it rejoice. Purg. 18.34 Now you can see how hidden the truth is from the people who claim that every love is in itself a praiseworthy thing, perhaps because its matter appears always to be good; but not every seal's imprint is good, even though the wax is good." "Your words and my mind, which followed them," I answered him, "have revealed love to me; but this has made me more pregnant with doubt; for if love is offered to us from outside, and the soul walks on no other foot, whether it goes straight or crooked is not to its credit." Purg. 18.46 And he to me: "As far as reason sees here, I can tell you; beyond that, wait only for Beatrice, for it is a matter of faith. Every substantial form, which is distinct from matter and yet united with

it, has a specific power gathered within it, which is not perceived except in operation, and never shows itself except by its effects, as life in a plant shows itself by green leaves.[112] Purg. 18.55 Therefore no one knows where the intellect's grasp of first notions comes from, nor the attraction to the first objects of desire, which are in you as the urge to make honey is in the bee; and this first will admits no merit of praise or blame. Now, so that every other will may be brought into accord with this one, the power that counsels is innate in you, and it ought to guard the threshold of assent. Purg. 18.64 This is the principle from which the ground of merit in you is derived, according as it gathers in and winnows good and evil loves. Those who in their reasoning went to the bottom of things recognized this innate freedom; and so they left moral philosophy to the world. Hence, suppose that every love kindled within you arises of necessity, the power to restrain it is still in you. This noble power is what Beatrice means by free will; so see that you keep it in mind, if she should begin to speak to you of it." Purg. 18.76 The moon, rising late, almost at midnight, made the stars seem fewer to us, shaped like a bucket all aflame; and it was running against the heavens along those paths that the sun inflames when someone in Rome sees it set between the Sardinians and the Corsicans; and that noble shade, through whom Pietola is more renowned than any Mantuan town, had laid down the load I had heaped on him; so that I, who had gathered his clear and plain reasoning on my questions, was like a man who drifts in drowsiness.[113]

THE SLOTHFUL

At midnight a crowd of the slothful runs past, crying examples of zeal and its lack.

Purg. 18.88 But this drowsiness was suddenly taken from me by a crowd of people who had already come round behind our backs

112 In scholastic philosophy the "substantial form" of a human being is the soul, distinct from the body yet united with it.

toward us. And as the Ismenus and the Asopus once saw along their banks a frenzied throng by night, whenever the Thebans had need of Bacchus, so, from what I saw, along that ring came sweeping in their stride those whom good will and righteous love ride. Soon they were upon us, for that whole great crowd was moving at a run; and two in front were crying out in tears:[114] Purg. 18.100 "Mary went with haste into the hill country"; and, "Caesar, to subdue Ilerda, struck at Marseilles and then ran on into Spain." "Quickly, quickly, let no time be lost through too little love," the others cried behind them, "for zeal in doing good makes grace green again." "O people, in whom keen fervor now perhaps makes up for the negligence and delay you showed through lukewarmness in doing good, this man, who is alive (and truly I do not lie to you), wants to go up as soon as the sun shines on us again; so tell us where the opening is nearest."[115] Purg. 18.112 These were my guide's words; and one of those spirits said: "Come behind us, and you will find the gap. We are so filled with the desire to move that we cannot stop; so forgive us, if you take our penance for rudeness. I was abbot of San Zeno in Verona under the rule of the good Barbarossa, of whom Milan still speaks with grief.[116] Purg. 18.121 And there is one who already has one foot in the grave who will soon weep for that monastery and be sorry to have had power over it, because he has put his son—deformed in his whole body, and worse in mind, and born in sin—in the place of its true shepherd." I do not know if he said more, or fell silent, he had already run so far beyond us; but this much I heard, and I was glad to keep it. And he who was my help in every need said: "Turn this way: see two of them coming, put-

113 The waning moon stood in the part of the zodiac the sun occupies in late autumn, when from Rome it is seen to set between Sardinia and Corsica. Pietola, near Mantua, was held to be Virgil's birthplace.
114 The Ismenus and the Asopus are rivers near Thebes, along which the Thebans held their nighttime rites of Bacchus.
115 Mary hurried to visit Elizabeth (Luke 1:39). In 49 BC Julius Caesar left the siege of Marseilles to others and pressed on to besiege Ilerda (Lérida) in Spain.
116 Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa razed Milan in 1162. The abbot is usually identified as Gherardo II (died 1187).

ting a bite on sloth."[117] Purg. 18.133 Behind all the rest they were saying: "The people for whom the sea opened were dead before the Jordan saw its heirs"; and, "Those who did not endure the toil to the end with Anchises' son gave themselves up to a life without glory." Then, when those shades were so far from us that they could no longer be seen, a new thought set itself within me, from which many other and different thoughts were born; and I drifted so from one to another that I closed my eyes in that wandering, and turned my musing into a dream.[118]

CANTO 19

Purg. 19.1 At the hour when the heat of the day, overcome by the earth or at times by Saturn, can no longer warm the cold of the moon; when the geomancers see their Greater Fortune rising in the east before dawn, by a path that does not stay dark for it long; there came to me in a dream a stammering woman, cross-eyed, crooked on her feet, with maimed hands and pallid in color.[119] Purg. 19.10 I gazed at her; and as the sun revives cold limbs that the night weighs down, so my gaze loosened her tongue, and then in a little while set her wholly upright, and colored her wan face just as love would have it. Once she had her speech loosened in this way, she began to sing, so that only with pain could I have turned my attention away from her. Purg. 19.19 "I am," she sang, "I am the sweet Siren, who lead sailors astray in mid-sea, so full of pleasure am I to hear. I turned Ulysses, eager on his way, aside to my song; and whoever grows used to me rarely leaves, so wholly do I satisfy him." Her mouth had not yet closed again when a lady appeared, holy and quick, beside me, to put

117 Alberto della Scala, lord of Verona (died 1301), made his illegitimate and lame son Giuseppe abbot of San Zeno.

118 The Israelites who left Egypt through the Red Sea died in the wilderness before their children entered the Promised Land; the Trojans who stayed behind in Sicily abandoned Aeneas, son of Anchises (*Aeneid* 5).

119 Geomancers told fortunes from figures of dots; their "Greater Fortune" resembles a group of stars in Aquarius and Pisces, which at this season rise just before dawn.

that one to confusion. "O Virgil, O Virgil, who is this?" she said fiercely; and he came with his eyes fixed only on that virtuous one. Purg. 19.31 He seized the other and opened her in front, tearing her garments, and showed me her belly; that woke me with the stench that came out of it. I turned my eyes to the good master. "I have called you at least three times," he was saying; "get up and come, let us find the opening by which you may go in." I rose, and all the rings of the sacred mountain were already filled with the high day, and we walked with the new sun at our backs.

THE ANGEL OF ZEAL AND THE AVARICIOUS

Leaving the dream of the Siren, Dante climbs to the fifth terrace, where souls lie face down.

Purg. 19.40 Following him, I carried my brow like one who has it laden with thought and makes himself into half the arch of a bridge, when I heard, "Come, here is the way across," spoken in a manner so gentle and kind as is not heard in this mortal region. With open wings that seemed a swan's, he who had spoken to us so turned us upward between the two walls of the hard stone. Then he moved his feathers and fanned us, declaring that *Qui lugent* [those who mourn] are blessed, for their souls shall be possessed of consolation.[120] Purg. 19.52 "What is the matter with you, that you keep staring at the ground?" my guide began to say to me, when we had both climbed a little above the angel. And I: "A new vision makes me go with such misgiving; it bends me toward itself so that I cannot leave off thinking of it." "Did you see," he said, "that ancient witch, for whom alone there is weeping now above us? Did you see how a man frees himself from her? Let that be enough for you; strike your heels on the ground, and turn your eyes to the lure that the eternal King spins with the great wheels."[121] Purg. 19.64 Like the falcon that first

120 The beatitude is from Matthew 5:4: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

121 A lure is the device a falconer swings to call back the hawk; here it is the revolving heavens.

looks at its feet, then turns at the call and stretches forward out of desire for the food that draws it there, so I became; and so I went on, as far as the rock is split to give a way to one who climbs, up to where the circling begins. When I came out into the open on the fifth ring, I saw people along it who were weeping, lying on the ground all turned face downward. *Adhaesit pavimento anima mea* [My soul has cleaved to the dust], I heard them say, with sighs so deep that the words could hardly be understood.[122] Purg. 19.76 "O chosen of God, whose sufferings both justice and hope make less hard, direct us toward the high stairs." "If you come here exempt from lying down, and wish to find the way most quickly, let your right hands always be on the outer side." So the poet asked, and so the answer came to us from a little ahead of us; so that in the speech I noticed the other thing that was hidden; and I turned my eyes then to my lord, at which he granted with a glad sign what my look of desire was asking. Purg. 19.88 When I could do with myself as I wished, I drew myself over that creature whose words had made me take note of him before, saying: "Spirit, in whom weeping ripens that without which no one can return to God, set aside your greater care a little for my sake. Tell me who you were, and why you have your backs turned upward, and whether you want me to obtain anything for you over there, where I set out from, living."

POPE ADRIAN V

A pope tells how he turned from avarice only after reaching the papacy.

Purg. 19.97 And he to me: "Why heaven turns our backs toward itself you shall know; but first, *Scias quod ego fui successor Petri* [Know that I was a successor of Peter]. Between Sestri and Chiavari a lovely river flows down, and the title of my blood takes its crown from its name. For a month and a little more I learned how the great mantle weighs on one who keeps it out of the mud, so that all other burdens seem a feather. My conversion,

122 The words are from Psalm 119 (118 in the Vulgate), verse 25.

alas, was late; but as soon as I was made Roman shepherd, I discovered how false life is.[123] Purg. 19.109 I saw that the heart found no rest there, nor could one climb any higher in that life; and so love of this life was kindled in me. Until that moment I was a wretched soul, cut off from God, wholly avaricious; now, as you see, I am punished for it here. What avarice does is made plain here in the purging of the souls turned back to God, and the mountain has no bitterer punishment. Just as our eye did not lift itself on high, being fixed on earthly things, so justice here has sunk it to the earth. Purg. 19.121 As avarice quenched our love for every good, so that our working was lost, so justice holds us tight here, bound and seized by feet and hands; and for as long as it shall please the just Lord, so long shall we lie here motionless and outstretched." I had knelt and wanted to speak; but as I began, and he became aware of my reverence only by listening, "What cause," he said, "has bent you down like this?" And I to him: "Because of your dignity my conscience rightly pricked me." Purg. 19.133 "Straighten your legs, get up, brother," he answered; "make no mistake: I am a fellow servant with you and with the others of one Power. If you ever understood that holy sound of the Gospel which says *Neque nubent* [They neither marry], you can well see why I speak like this. Go on your way now; I do not want you to stay any longer, for your staying hinders my weeping, with which I ripen what you spoke of. Over there I have a niece whose name is Alagia, good in herself, so long as our house does not make her wicked by its example; and she alone is left to me over there."[124]

CANTO 20

Purg. 20.1 A will fights poorly against a better will; so, against my own pleasure, to please him, I drew the sponge out of the water

123 The speaker is Pope Adrian V (Ottobuono Fieschi, of the counts of Lavagna, named after the river), who was pope for about five weeks in 1276.
124 In Matthew 22:30 Christ says that in the resurrection people neither marry nor are given in marriage, so the pope's earthly bond to the Church has ended. Alagia Fieschi was the wife of Moroello Malaspina, one of Dante's hosts in exile.

unfilled. I moved on; and my guide moved on through the clear spaces, keeping close along the rock, as one goes along a wall near the battlements; for the people who melt out drop by drop through their eyes the evil that fills the whole world come too near the edge on the other side. Cursed be you, ancient she-wolf, who have more prey than all the other beasts, because of your hunger, deep without end! Purg. 20.13 O heaven, in whose turning it seems people believe that conditions here below are changed, when will he come through whom she will depart? We went on with slow and short steps, and I was attentive to the shades, whom I heard weeping and lamenting piteously; and by chance I heard someone ahead of us call out "Sweet Mary!" in their weeping, just as a woman does who is in labor; and go on: "You were as poor as can be seen from that lodging where you laid down your holy burden." Purg. 20.25 Next I heard: "O good Fabricius, you chose to possess virtue with poverty rather than great wealth with vice." These words had pleased me so much that I drew forward to learn about that spirit from whom they seemed to have come. He was speaking further of the generosity that Nicholas showed to the young girls, to lead their youth to honor. "O soul who speak so well," I said, "tell me who you were, and why you alone renew these worthy praises. Your words shall not go unrewarded if I return to complete the short journey of that life which flies to its end."[125]

HUGH CAPET

The founder of the French royal house denounces the greed of his descendants.

Purg. 20.40 And he: "I will tell you, not for any comfort I expect from over there, but because so much grace shines in you before you are dead. I was the root of the evil plant that so overshadows all the Christian land that good fruit is rarely picked from it. But if

125 Fabricius, a Roman consul of the third century BC, refused bribes from King Pyrrhus and died poor. Saint Nicholas secretly gave dowries to three poor girls to save them from dishonor.

Douai, Lille, Ghent and Bruges could, there would soon be vengeance for it; and I ask it of him who judges all. Over there I was called Hugh Capet; from me were born the Philips and the Louises by whom France has lately been ruled.[126] Purg. 20.52 I was the son of a butcher of Paris. When the ancient kings had all died out except one, who had taken the gray habit, I found the reins of the government of the kingdom tight in my hands, and so much power from new acquisitions, and so many friends, that my son's head was raised to the widowed crown, and from him began the anointed bones of these kings. So long as the great dowry of Provence had not yet taken the sense of shame from my blood, it was worth little, but at least it did no harm.[127] Purg. 20.64 There, with force and with lies, its plundering began; and afterward, by way of amends, it took Ponthieu and Normandy and Gascony. Charles came into Italy and, by way of amends, made a victim of Conradin; and then, by way of amends, sent Thomas back to heaven. I see a time, not long after this day, that draws another Charles out of France, to make both himself and his people better known. He comes out of it unarmed, alone but for the lance that Judas jousted with; and he aims it so that he makes the belly of Florence burst.[128] Purg. 20.76 From this he will gain not land but sin and shame, all the heavier for him the lighter he counts such harm. The other, who once came out of a ship as a prisoner, I see selling his daughter and haggling over her, as pirates do with other slave women. O avarice, what more can you do to us, now that you have so drawn my blood to yourself that it cares nothing for its own flesh?[129] Purg. 20.85 So that the

126 Hugh Capet (king 987–996) founded the Capetian dynasty of France; Dante partly confuses him with his father, Hugh the Great. The Flemish cities named had been seized by Philip IV, "the Fair," and rose against him in 1302.

127 The ancient kings are the Carolingians. Provence came to the French royal house when Charles of Anjou married its heiress Beatrice in 1246.

128 Charles of Anjou seized the kingdom of Naples, beheaded the young Conradin in 1268, and was believed to have had Thomas Aquinas poisoned in 1274. Charles of Valois entered Florence in 1301 as the pope's peacemaker and handed the city to the Blacks, which led to Dante's exile.

129 Charles II of Anjou, captured in a sea battle in 1284, married his young daughter to the aged Azzo VIII d'Este in return for a large sum.

evil to come and the evil done may seem less, I see the fleur-de-lis enter Anagni, and Christ made captive in his Vicar. I see him mocked a second time; I see the vinegar and the gall renewed, and him slain between living thieves. I see the new Pilate so cruel that this does not sate him, but without decree he carries his greedy sails into the temple. O my Lord, when shall I be glad to see the vengeance which, hidden in your secret counsel, makes your wrath sweet?[130] Purg. 20.97 What I was saying of that only bride of the Holy Spirit, which made you turn toward me for some explanation, is the response to all our prayers as long as the day lasts; but when night falls we take up a contrary sound instead. Then we repeat Pygmalion, whom his greedy craving for gold made a traitor and thief and parricide; and the misery of avaricious Midas, which followed on his greedy request, at which one must forever laugh.[131] Purg. 20.109 Then each of us recalls foolish Achan, how he stole the spoils, so that Joshua's wrath seems still to bite him here. Then we accuse Sapphira with her husband; we praise the kicks that Heliodorus received; and Polymestor, who killed Polydorus, circles the whole mountain in infamy. Last of all, the cry here is: 'Crassus, tell us, for you know, what does gold taste like?'[132]

THE MOUNTAIN SHAKES

The mountain quakes and every soul cries "Glory to God," leaving Dante eager to know why.

Purg. 20.118 Sometimes one of us speaks loud and another low, according to the feeling that spurs us to speak, now at a greater and now at a lesser pace; so in telling of the good that is spoken

130 In 1303 agents of Philip IV seized Pope Boniface at Anagni; Philip later destroyed the Knights Templar (1307–1312) and took their wealth.

131 Pygmalion, king of Tyre, murdered Sychaeus, his sister Dido's husband, for his gold (*Aeneid* 1). Midas asked that everything he touched turn to gold, and nearly starved.

132 Achan (Joshua 7), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) and Heliodorus (2 Maccabees 3) stole or withheld wealth belonging to God; Polymestor murdered Priam's son Polydorus for his gold. The wealthy Roman Crassus was said to have had molten gold poured into his mouth by the Parthians after his death.

of here by day I was not alone just now; but here nearby no other person was raising his voice." We had already left him and were striving to get ahead on the road as far as our strength allowed us, when I felt the mountain tremble like something falling; at which a chill seized me, such as seizes one who goes to his death. Purg. 20.130 Surely Delos was not shaken so hard before Latona made her nest there to give birth to the two eyes of heaven. Then on all sides there began such a cry that the master drew close to me, saying: "Do not be afraid while I am guiding you." *Gloria in excelsis*, all were saying, *Deo* [Glory to God in the highest], from what I understood from those nearby, where the cry could be made out.[133] Purg. 20.139 We stood motionless and in suspense, like the shepherds who first heard that song, until the trembling ceased and the song was finished. Then we took up our holy way again, looking at the shades that lay on the ground, already returned to their accustomed weeping. No ignorance ever, if my memory does not err in this, made me so eager to know, with such inner conflict, as I seemed to feel then as I pondered; nor did I dare to ask, because of our haste, nor could I see anything there by myself: so I went on, timid and thoughtful.

CANTO 21

Purg. 21.1 The natural thirst that is never satisfied except with the water for which the poor Samaritan woman asked as a grace was tormenting me, and haste was goading me along the encumbered way behind my guide, and I was grieving at the just vengeance.[134]

133 The floating island of Delos was made fast so that Latona could give birth there to Apollo and Diana, the sun and moon. *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is the angels' hymn at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:14).
134 In John 4 the Samaritan woman at the well asks Christ for the "living water" that ends all thirst.

STATIUS

A shade overtakes them, explains the earthquake, and names himself Statius, Virgil's devoted reader.

Purg. 21.7 And suddenly, just as Luke writes for us that Christ, already risen out of the hollow of the tomb, appeared to the two who were on the road, a shade appeared to us; he was coming behind us, looking down at the crowd lying at our feet; and we did not notice him until he spoke first, saying: "My brothers, may God give you peace." We turned at once, and Virgil returned him the sign that befits such a greeting. Then he began: "May the true court, which binds me in eternal exile, place you in peace in the blessed assembly."[135] Purg. 21.19 "What," he said, as meanwhile we went on quickly, "if you are shades whom God does not deem worthy of heaven, who has guided you so far up his stair?" And my teacher: "If you look at the marks that this man bears, which the angel traces, you will clearly see that he is to reign with the good. But because she who spins day and night had not yet drawn off for him all the thread from the distaff that Clotho loads and packs for each one, his soul, which is your sister and mine, could not come up alone, because it does not see as we do.[136] Purg. 21.31 So I was drawn out of the wide throat of Hell to show him the way, and I will show him further, as far as my teaching can lead him. But tell us, if you know, why the mountain gave such shakes just now, and why all seemed to shout together, all the way down to its wet feet?" By asking he so threaded the needle's eye of my desire that with the hope alone my thirst grew less starved. The other began: "There is nothing that the holy order of the mountain experiences that is without order or that is outside its custom. Purg. 21.43 This place is free from every change; only what heaven receives into itself from itself

135 Luke 24:13–16 tells how the risen Christ joined two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

136 Of the three Fates, Clotho loads the distaff with the thread of each life, Lachesis spins it day and night, and Atropos cuts it; Dante is still alive.

can be a cause here, and nothing else. For no rain, no hail, no snow, no dew, no frost falls any higher than the short little stair of the three steps. Clouds do not appear, dense or thin, nor lightning, nor the daughter of Thaumas, who over there often changes her place. Dry vapor rises no higher than the top of the three steps I spoke of, where Peter's vicar sets his feet.[137] Purg. 21.55 Lower down it may tremble, a little or a lot; but up here it has never trembled, I do not know how, from wind hidden in the earth. It trembles here when some soul feels itself cleansed, so that it rises or moves to climb up, and such a cry accompanies it. Of the cleansing the will alone gives proof, which, wholly free to change its dwelling, takes the soul by surprise and makes it glad to will. It does will before; but the desire does not let it, which divine justice sets, against the will, toward the torment, as it once was set toward sin. Purg. 21.67 And I, who have lain in this pain five hundred years and more, only now felt my will free for a better threshold. That is why you felt the earthquake, and heard the pious spirits throughout the mountain give praise to that Lord—may he soon send them upward." So he spoke to us; and since we enjoy drinking as much as our thirst is great, I could not say how much good he did me. And the wise guide said: "Now I see the net that catches you here, and how one slips free of it, why it trembles here, and what you rejoice at together. Purg. 21.79 Now may it please you to let me know who you were, and let me grasp from your words why you have lain here so many centuries." "In the time when the good Titus, with the help of the highest King, avenged the wounds from which flowed the blood sold by Judas, I was over there, with the name that lasts longest and brings most honor," that spirit answered, "famous enough, but not yet with faith. So sweet was my voice in song that Rome drew me, a man of Toulouse, to herself, where I earned the right to adorn my temples with myrtle.[138] Purg. 21.91 People over there

137 The daughter of Thaumas is Iris, the rainbow. The three steps lead to the gate of Purgatory, where the angel who holds Peter's keys sits.

138 Titus captured and destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, which medieval Christians saw as vengeance for the Crucifixion. Statius was in fact from Naples; Dante, like others of his time, confused him with a rhetorician from Toulouse.

still call me Statius: I sang of Thebes, and then of great Achilles, but I fell on the way with the second burden. The seeds of my ardor were the sparks that warmed me from the divine flame by which more than a thousand have been kindled; I mean the *Aeneid*, which was a mother to me, and a nurse to me in poetry: without it I did not weigh so much as a dram. And to have lived over there when Virgil lived, I would consent to one sun more than I owe before my release from exile."[139] Purg. 21.103 These words turned Virgil toward me with a face that silently said: "Be silent." But the power that wills cannot do everything; for laughter and tears follow so closely on the feeling from which each springs that they obey the will least in the most truthful. I smiled anyway, like someone who winks; at which the shade fell silent, and looked me in the eyes, where expression is most deeply fixed; and "So may you bring so great a labor to a good end," he said, "why did your face just now show me a flash of a smile?" Purg. 21.115 Now I am caught on one side and on the other; one makes me keep silent, the other begs me to speak: so I sigh, and am understood by my master, and "Do not be afraid to speak," he said to me, "but speak, and tell him what he asks with such concern." So I said: "Perhaps you wonder, ancient spirit, at the laugh I gave; but I want a greater wonder to seize you. Purg. 21.124 This one, who guides my eyes on high, is that Virgil from whom you took the strength to sing of men and gods. If you believed my laughter had another cause, set it aside as untrue, and believe it was those words you spoke about him." Already he was bending to embrace my teacher's feet; but he said: "Brother, do not, for you are a shade, and a shade is what you see." And the other, rising: "Now you can grasp the measure of the love for you that warms me, when I forget our emptiness, treating shades as solid things."

139 Publius Papinius Statius (c. AD 45–96), Roman poet of the *Thebaid* and the unfinished *Achilleid*. "One sun" means one year.

CANTO 22

Purg. 22.1 The angel had already been left behind us, the angel who had turned us to the sixth ring, having erased a stroke from my face; and he had told us that those whose desire is set on justice are *Beati* [Blessed], and his words completed this with *sitiunt* [they thirst], and nothing more. And I, lighter than at the other passages, was moving along so that without any labor I followed the swift spirits upward, when Virgil began: "Love, kindled by virtue, has always kindled another, provided its flame showed outwardly.[140]

HOW STATIUS WAS SAVED

Statius tells how Virgil's poems led him to Christianity and to repent of prodigality.

Purg. 22.13 So, from the hour when Juvenal came down among us into the Limbo of Hell and made your affection known to me, my goodwill toward you has been as great as ever bound anyone to a person never seen, so that now these stairs will seem short to me. But tell me—and as a friend forgive me if too much confidence slackens my rein, and as a friend now talk with me—how could avarice find a place within your breast, amid so much wisdom as you were filled with through your diligence?"[141] Purg. 22.25 These words first moved Statius a little to laughter; then he answered: "Every word of yours is a dear sign of love to me. Truly, things often appear that give false matter for doubt, because the true reasons are hidden. Your question assures me that you believe I was avaricious in the other life, perhaps because of that circle where I was. Now know that avarice was too far removed from me, and this lack of measure thousands of moons have punished. Purg. 22.37 And had I not set my concern

140 From the Beatitude "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice" (Matthew 5:6); the angel says only "thirst," leaving "hunger" for the next terrace.
141 Juvenal (c. AD 55–c. 130), Roman satirist who praised Statius.

straight when I understood the place where you exclaim, as if angry at human nature, 'Why, O sacred hunger for gold, do you not rule the appetite of mortals?' I would be rolling round and feeling the grim jousts. Then I perceived that hands could open their wings too wide in spending, and I repented of that as of my other sins. How many will rise again with cropped hair through ignorance, which prevents repentance of this sin in life and at the last hour![142] Purg. 22.49 And know that the fault which strikes back at a sin as its direct opposite has its green withered here together with that sin. So if I have been among those people who weep for avarice, to purge myself, it has befallen me because of its opposite." "Now when you sang of the cruel warfare of Jocasta's twofold sorrow," said the singer of the bucolic songs, "from what Clio touches with you there, it does not seem that faith had yet made you faithful, the faith without which doing good is not enough.[143] Purg. 22.61 If that is so, what sun or what candles so dispelled your darkness that afterward you set your sails to follow the fisherman?" And he to him: "You first sent me toward Parnassus to drink in its caves, and then, after God, you enlightened me. You did as one who walks by night, who carries the light behind him and does not help himself, but makes those who come after him wise, when you said: 'The age renews itself; justice returns, and the first age of humankind, and a new progeny comes down from heaven.'[144] Purg. 22.73 Through you I was a poet, through you a Christian; but so that you may better see what I am sketching, I will put out my hand to color it in. Already the whole world was pregnant with the true belief, sown by the messengers of the eternal kingdom; and your words I touched on above were so in harmony with the new

142 The quotation is from Virgil's *Aeneid* (3.56–57). Statius means the fourth circle of Hell, where the avaricious and the prodigal roll weights and clash, and the prodigal rise with cropped hair (Inf. 7).

143 The *Thebaid* tells of the war between Eteocles and Polynices, the two sons of Jocasta, and invokes Clio, the Muse of history. The "singer of the bucolic songs" is Virgil, author of the *Eclogues*.

144 The fisherman is Saint Peter. The lines paraphrase Virgil's Fourth *Eclogue*, which medieval readers took as a prophecy of Christ's birth.

preachers that I made a habit of visiting them. Then they came to seem so holy to me that when Domitian persecuted them, their weeping was not without my tears.[145] Purg. 22.85 And as long as I remained back there, I helped them, and their upright ways made me scorn all other sects; and before, in my poem, I had led the Greeks to the rivers of Thebes, I received baptism; but out of fear I was a secret Christian, for a long time making a show of paganism; and this lukewarmness made me circle the fourth circle for more than four hundred years.[146] Purg. 22.94 You, then, who have lifted the lid that hid from me all this good I speak of, while we have climbing to spare, tell me where our ancient Terence is, and Caecilius, Plautus and Varro, if you know: tell me if they are damned, and in what quarter." "They, and Persius, and I, and many others," my guide replied, "are with that Greek whom the Muses suckled more than any other, in the first circle of the blind prison. We often talk of the mountain that always has our nurses with it.[147] Purg. 22.106 Euripides is there with us, and Antiphon, Simonides, Agathon, and many other Greeks who once adorned their brows with laurel. There, of your people, one sees Antigone, Deipyle and Argia, and Ismene, as sad as she ever was. One sees her who showed Langia; there is the daughter of Tiresias, and Thetis, and Deidamia with her sisters." Both poets were now silent, intent once more on looking around, free of the climb and of the walls;[148] Purg. 22.118 and already four handmaids of the day had been left behind, and the fifth was at the chariot-pole, still steering its burning tip upward, when my guide said: "I believe we must turn our right shoulders toward the edge, circling the mountain as we are used to doing." So custom was our sign there, and we took the way with less misgiving

145 Domitian, Roman emperor AD 81–96, remembered by Christians as a persecutor.

146 The fourth circle is the terrace of Purgatory where sloth is purged.

147 Terence, Caecilius and Plautus were Roman comic playwrights, Varro a Roman scholar, Persius a satirist; "that Greek" is Homer. The mountain is Parnassus, home of the Muses, the poets' nurses.

148 These are women from Statius' *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*; "she who showed Langia" is Hypsipyle, who led the thirsty Greek army to the spring Langia.

because of the assent of that worthy soul. They went in front, and I alone behind, and I listened to their talk, which gave me understanding of poetry.[149]

THE INVERTED TREE

On the sixth terrace a tree with fragrant fruit and voices praising temperance bars the way.

Purg. 22.130 But soon the sweet talk was broken off by a tree we found in the middle of the road, with fruit sweet and good to smell. And as a fir tapers upward from branch to branch, so that one tapered downward—I think so that no one may climb it. On the side where our path was closed, a clear liquid fell from the high rock and spread over the leaves above. The two poets drew near the tree; and a voice from within the foliage cried: "You shall have a dearth of this food." Purg. 22.142 Then it said: "Mary thought more of how the wedding might be honorable and complete than of her own mouth, which now answers for you. And the Roman women of old were content with water for their drink, and Daniel despised food and gained wisdom. The first age was as beautiful as gold; it made acorns tasty with hunger, and every stream nectar with thirst. Honey and locusts were the food that nourished the Baptist in the desert; for which he is glorious, and as great as the Gospel reveals to you."[150]

CANTO 23

Purg. 23.1 While I was fixing my eyes on the green foliage in this way, as one does who wastes his life chasing little birds, he who was more than a father said to me: "Son, come along now, for the time allotted to us should be divided more usefully." I turned my face, and my step no less quickly, toward the sages, who were talking in such a way that they made the walking cost me

149 The handmaids of the day are the hours: the fifth hour after sunrise now guides the sun's chariot, so it is between ten and eleven in the morning.
150 Mary's concern for the wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–11); Daniel refused the Babylonian king's food (Daniel 1). The Baptist is John the Baptist.

nothing. And then weeping and singing were heard: *Labia mea Domine* [O Lord, my lips], in such a way that it gave birth to both delight and grief.[151] Purg. 23.13 "O sweet father, what is it I hear?" I began; and he said: "Shades who go, perhaps untying the knot of their debt." As pilgrims do when, lost in thought, they overtake people they do not know on the road, and turn toward them but do not stop; so, moving more quickly behind us, coming up and passing us, a crowd of souls, silent and devout, gazed at us in wonder. Each was dark and hollow in the eyes, pale in the face, and so wasted that the skin took its shape from the bones. Purg. 23.25 I do not believe Erysichthon was so dried to his outermost skin by fasting, when he feared it most. Thinking, I said to myself: "Here are the people who lost Jerusalem, when Mary set her beak into her son." The eye sockets seemed rings without gems. Whoever reads *omo* [man] in the faces of men would surely have recognized the M there. Who would believe that the smell of a fruit, begetting craving, and that of water, could rule them so, if he did not know how?[152]

FORESE DONATI

Dante recognizes his emaciated friend Forese, who praises his widow Nella and attacks Florentine women.

Purg. 23.37 I was already wondering what famishes them so, since the cause of their thinness and their sad scaly skin was not yet clear; and then from deep in his head a shade turned his eyes on me and stared fixedly, then cried aloud: "What grace is this granted to me?" I would never have recognized him by his face; but in his voice was revealed to me what his appearance had destroyed in itself. Purg. 23.46 This spark rekindled all my knowledge of the altered features, and I recognized the face of Forese. "Ah, do

151 From Psalm 51:15: "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise."

152 Erysichthon, in Ovid, was cursed with a hunger so great he devoured his own body; Mary was a woman who ate her child during the Roman siege of Jerusalem (AD 70), as told by Josephus. Medieval readers saw OMO, "man," in the face: the eyes as the two O's, the brows and nose as the M.

not dwell on the dry scabs that discolor my skin," he begged, "nor on any lack of flesh I may have; but tell me the truth about yourself, and who are those two souls there escorting you: do not fail to speak to me." "Your face, which I once wept for dead, gives me no less grief to weep for now," I answered him, "seeing it so disfigured.[153] Purg. 23.58 So tell me, for God's sake, what strips you bare like this; do not make me speak while I am marveling, for one who is full of another desire can hardly speak well." And he to me: "From the eternal counsel a power falls into the water and into the tree left behind, by which I am made so thin. All these people who sing while weeping, for having followed gluttony beyond measure, here make themselves holy again in hunger and thirst. Purg. 23.67 The scent that comes from the fruit, and from the spray that spreads over the green leaves, kindles in us the craving to drink and eat. And not just once, as we circle this floor, is our pain renewed—I say pain, and ought to say solace—for that same desire leads us to the tree that led Christ gladly to say 'Eli' when he freed us with his blood." And I to him: "Forese, from that day on which you changed worlds for a better life, five years have not yet rolled round until now.[154] Purg. 23.79 If the power to sin any further came to an end in you before the hour arrived of the good sorrow that weds us to God again, how have you come up here? I thought I would find you still down below, where time is repaid with time." And he to me: "So soon has my Nella, with her streaming tears, brought me to drink the sweet wormwood of the torments. With her devout prayers and with sighs she has drawn me from the slope where they wait, and has freed me from the other rings.[155] Purg. 23.91 My little widow, whom I loved so much, is the more dear and beloved to God the more alone she is in doing good; for the Barbagia of Sardinia is far more modest in its women than the Barbagia where I left her. O

153 Forese Donati (died 1296), Dante's friend and brother of Corso and Piccarda Donati; the two once exchanged a series of mocking sonnets.

154 From Christ's cry on the cross, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani"—"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

155 Below is Ante-Purgatory, where those who delayed repentance until death must wait as long as they lived. Nella was Forese's wife.

sweet brother, what would you have me say? A future time is already in my sight, to which this hour will not be very old, when it will be forbidden from the pulpit to the brazen women of Florence to go about showing their bosoms, breasts and all.[156] Purg. 23.103 What foreign women, what Saracen women, were there ever who needed spiritual or other disciplines to make them go covered? But if the shameless creatures were certain of what swift heaven is preparing for them, they would already have their mouths open to howl. For if foresight here does not deceive me, they will be sorrowful before he grows hair on his cheeks who is now soothed with lullabies. Ah, brother, now hide yourself from me no longer; you see that not only I, but all these people are gazing at the place where you veil the sun." Purg. 23.115 At which I said to him: "If you call to mind what you were with me and what I was with you, the memory will still be grievous now. From that life I was turned by this one who goes before me, the other day, when the sister of that one showed herself round to you (and I pointed to the sun). He has led me through the deep night of the truly dead, with this true flesh that follows him.[157] Purg. 23.124 From there his encouragement has drawn me up, climbing and circling the mountain that straightens you whom the world made crooked. He says he will keep me company until I am where Beatrice will be; there I must remain without him. Virgil is this one who tells me so (and I pointed to him), and this other is that shade for whom your realm, which now releases him from itself, just shook every slope."

CANTO 24

Purg. 24.1 Talk did not make our going slower, nor did going make the talk slower, but we went on briskly as we talked, like a ship driven by a good wind. And the shades, who looked like things

156 Barbagia, a wild mountain district of Sardinia, was proverbial for the immodest dress and customs of its women.

157 The sun's "sister" is the moon, which was full on the night Dante was lost in the dark wood.

twice dead, drew wonder at me through the pits of their eyes, aware that I was alive. And I, continuing what I was saying, said: "That soul goes up perhaps more slowly than it otherwise would, for another's sake.[158] Purg. 24.10 But tell me, if you know, where Piccarda is; tell me whether I see anyone worth noting among these people who stare at me so." "My sister, who was so beautiful and so good that I do not know which she was more, already triumphs, joyful in her crown, on high Olympus." So he spoke first, and then: "Here it is not forbidden to name each one, since our likeness is so milked away by the fasting.[159]

BONAGIUNTA AND THE SWEET NEW STYLE

Bonagiunta of Lucca names the gluttons and explains what sets Dante's new poetry apart.

Purg. 24.19 This one"—and he pointed with his finger—"is Bonagiunta, Bonagiunta of Lucca; and that face beyond him, more pinched than the others, held the holy Church in his arms. He was from Tours, and by fasting he purges the eels of Bolsena and the vernaccia wine." He named many others to me one by one, and all of them seemed glad to be named, so that I did not see a single dark look for it. I saw Ubaldin dalla Pila using his teeth on nothing for hunger, and Boniface, who shepherded many peoples with his crozier.[160] Purg. 24.31 I saw Messer Marchese, who once had time to drink at Forlì with less dryness, and even so was such that he never felt satisfied. But as one does who looks and then values one more than another, so did I with the one from Lucca, who seemed most to want to know me. He was murmuring, and I heard something like "Gentucca" there where he felt the wound of the justice that so plucks them bare.[161] Purg. 24.40

158 The soul is Statius, who is lingering to keep company with Virgil.
159 Piccarda Donati, sister of Dante's friend Forese, is among the blessed whom Dante meets in Paradise (Par. 3); "Olympus" here stands for heaven.
160 Bonagiunta Orbicciani (died about 1300) was a poet of Lucca; the pope is Martin IV (died 1285), once treasurer of Tours, said to have loved eels from Lake Bolsena drowned in vernaccia wine.
161 Marchese degli Argogliosi of Forlì was a noted drinker; Gentucca is a woman of Lucca, perhaps one who later showed kindness to Dante in exile.

"O soul," I said, "that seems so eager to speak with me, make me understand you, and with your speech satisfy both yourself and me." "A girl has been born, and she does not yet wear the veil," he began, "who will make my city pleasing to you, however people may reproach it. You will go away with this foreknowledge; if you took my murmuring wrongly, the true events will yet make it clear to you. But tell me if I see here the one who brought forth the new rhymes, beginning: *Donne, ch' avete intelletto d' Amore* [Ladies, who have understanding of love]."[162] Purg. 24.52 And I to him: "I am one who, when Love breathes in me, takes note, and in the way that he dictates within, I go on setting it forth." "O brother, now I see," he said, "the knot that held the Notary, and Guittone, and me short of the sweet new style that I hear. I see well how your pens follow close behind the one who dictates, which certainly did not happen with ours. And whoever sets himself to look further sees no other difference between the one style and the other"; and, as if satisfied, he fell silent.[163] Purg. 24.64 As the birds that winter along the Nile sometimes form a flock in the air, then fly in greater haste and go in a line, so all the people who were there, turning their faces, quickened their pace again, light both through leanness and through will. And as a man who is tired of trotting lets his companions go on, and walks until the heaving of his chest subsides, so Forese let the holy flock pass by, and came along behind with me, saying: "When will it be that I see you again?" Purg. 24.76 "I do not know," I answered him, "how long I shall live; but my return will surely not be so soon that I will not have been at the shore in my desire before it. For the place where I was set to live is stripped of good more each day, and seems destined for grim ruin." "Now go," he said, "for I see the one who is most to blame for it dragged at the tail of a beast toward the valley where guilt

162 The line opens the first canzone of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, the poem in praise of Beatrice.

163 The Notary is Giacomo da Lentini, chief poet of the Sicilian school; Guittone d'Arezzo (died 1294) led the Tuscan poets before Dante's generation.

is never cleared.[164] Purg. 24.85 The beast goes faster at every step, ever gaining speed, until it strikes him and leaves the body shamefully broken. Those wheels have not long to turn"—and he lifted his eyes to the heavens—"before what my words cannot make plainer will be clear to you. Now stay behind, for time is so precious in this realm that I lose too much by coming along with you at your pace."

THE SECOND TREE

A tree grown from the tree of Eve warns of examples of gluttony.

Purg. 24.94 As a horseman sometimes rides out at a gallop from a troop on the move, and goes to win himself the honor of the first clash, so he left us with longer strides; and I remained on the way with those two who were such great marshals of the world. And when he had gone so far ahead of us that my eyes could follow him only as my mind followed his words, there appeared to me the branches, laden and lively, of another fruit tree, and not far off, because I had only then turned that way. Purg. 24.106 I saw people beneath it raise their hands and cry I know not what toward the leaves, like eager, foolish little children who beg, and the one they beg does not answer, but, to make their longing keen, holds up what they want and does not hide it. Then they went away as if undeceived; and we came at once to the great tree that refuses so many prayers and tears. "Pass on without drawing near; higher up is a tree that was bitten by Eve, and this plant was raised from it." Purg. 24.118 So someone among the branches spoke; so Virgil and Statius and I, drawing close together, went on along the side that rises. "Remember," it said, "the accursed ones formed in the clouds, who, when they were gorged, fought Theseus with their double breasts; and the Hebrews who showed themselves soft in drinking, so that Gideon would not have them as companions when he went down the hills toward Midian." So, keeping close to one of the

164 Forese foretells the death of his brother Corso Donati, leader of the Blacks, who was dragged by his horse and killed in 1308.

two edges, we passed by, hearing of faults of gluttony once followed by wretched gains.[165] Purg. 24.130 Then, spread out again along the empty road, we went on a good thousand paces and more, each of us lost in thought without a word. "What are you going along thinking about, you three alone?" said a sudden voice; at which I started, as frightened and sluggish beasts do. I raised my head to see who it might be; and never were glass or metals seen in a furnace so glowing and red as one I saw who said: "If it pleases you to climb upward, here you must turn; this is the way for whoever wishes to go to peace." Purg. 24.142 His appearance had robbed me of my sight, so I turned back to my teachers, like a man who walks by what he hears. And as the May breeze, herald of the dawn, stirs and gives off fragrance, all steeped in grass and flowers, so I felt a wind strike me full on the forehead, and I clearly felt the feather move, which made me sense the scent of ambrosia. And I heard said: "*Beati* [Blessed] are those whom so much grace illumines that the love of taste does not fume too much desire in their breasts, hungering always as much as is just."[166]

CANTO 25

Purg. 25.1 It was the hour when the climb would suffer no delay, for the sun had left the meridian circle to Taurus and the night to Scorpio. So, as a man does who does not stop but goes on his way, whatever may appear to him, if the goad of need pierces him, so we entered the gap, one in front of the other, taking the stairway whose narrowness splits the climbers apart.[167] Purg. 25.10 And like the young stork that lifts its wing from wanting to fly, and does not dare to leave the nest, and lets it drop, so was I,

165 The centaurs, born of a cloud, got drunk at the wedding of Pirithous and were defeated by Theseus; Gideon dismissed the soldiers who knelt to drink their fill (Judges 7).

166 The angel adapts the beatitude "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matthew 5:6).

167 With Taurus on the meridian and the sun in Aries, it is about two in the afternoon.

with the desire to ask kindled and quenched, getting as far as the gesture of a man preparing to speak. Though our pace was quick, my sweet father did not hold back, but said: "Let fly the bow of speech that you have drawn back to the arrowhead." Then I opened my mouth with confidence and began: "How can one grow thin where there is no need of nourishment?"

STATIUS ON THE SOUL AND THE BODY

Statius explains how the soul is created and how shades take on their airy bodies.

Purg. 25.22 "If you recalled how Meleager was consumed as a firebrand was consumed," he said, "this would not be so bitter to you; and if you thought how, at your every quiver, your image quivers within the mirror, what seems hard would seem soft to you. But so that you may rest at ease within your wish, here is Statius, and I call on him and pray him to be now the healer of your wounds." "If I unfold for him the eternal view of things," Statius answered, "in your presence, let my excuse be that I cannot refuse you."[168] Purg. 25.34 Then he began: "Son, if your mind attends to and receives my words, they will shed light for you on the 'how' you ask about. Perfect blood, which is never drunk by the thirsty veins and remains behind like food that you clear from the table, acquires in the heart a power to give form to all the human members, like the blood that flows through the veins to become those members. Further digested, it goes down to where it is more seemly to be silent than to speak; and from there it later drips upon another's blood in a natural vessel. Purg. 25.46 There the one and the other come together, the one disposed to be acted upon and the other to act, because of the perfect place from which it is pressed out; and once joined, it begins to work, first coagulating, and then quickening what it has made to take consistency as its matter. The active power, having become a soul, like that of a plant, but different in this,

168 The Fates tied Meleager's life to a log in the fire; when his mother burned it, he wasted away.

that this one is still on the way and that one has already reached the shore, then works so much that now it moves and feels, like a sea fungus; and then it sets about giving organs to the faculties of which it is the seed. Purg. 25.58 Now, my son, the power that comes from the heart of the begetter, where nature attends to all the members, unfolds and extends; but how from an animal it becomes a speaking being, you do not yet see. This is a point that once led astray one wiser than you, so that in his teaching he made the possible intellect separate from the soul, because he saw no organ taken up by it.[169] Purg. 25.67 Open your breast to the truth that is coming, and know that as soon as the articulation of the brain in the fetus is complete, the First Mover turns to it, rejoicing over such art of nature, and breathes into it a new spirit, full of power, which draws what it finds active there into its own substance, and becomes a single soul, which lives and feels and turns back upon itself. Purg. 25.76 And so that you may marvel less at my words, consider the heat of the sun, which becomes wine when joined to the juice that flows from the vine. And when Lachesis has no more flax, the soul frees itself from the flesh and carries with it, in potential, both the human and the divine: the other faculties all mute, but memory, intelligence and will far keener in act than before. Without stopping, it falls of itself, marvelously, to one of the two shores; there it first learns its roads.[170] Purg. 25.88 As soon as place encloses it there, the formative power radiates around it, in the same way and as much as in the living members; and as the air, when it is full of rain, becomes adorned with various colors through another's rays reflected in it, so the air nearby there sets itself into the form that the soul which has come to rest imprints upon it by its power; and then, like the little flame that follows the fire wherever it moves, its new form follows the spirit. Purg. 25.100 Because from this it then has its appearance, it is called a shade;

169 The philosopher is Averroes, who held that the possible intellect is a single separate substance shared by all humankind.

170 Lachesis is the Fate who spins the thread of each life; the two shores are those of Acheron, for the damned, and of the Tiber, for souls bound for Purgatory.

and from this it then forms the organs of each sense, even to sight. By this we speak, and by this we laugh, by this we make the tears and the sighs that you may have heard around the mountain. As desires and the other affections impress us, so the shade takes its shape; and this is the cause of what you marvel at."

THE TERRACE OF LUST

On the seventh terrace the lustful walk in flames, singing and crying examples of chastity.

Purg. 25.109 And by now we had come to the last torment and had turned to the right hand, and we were intent on another concern. Here the bank shoots flame outward, and the terrace breathes a blast upward that bends it back and keeps it away from the edge; so we had to go along the open side one by one, and on this side I feared the fire, and on that I feared to fall below. Purg. 25.118 My guide said: "Along this place one must keep a tight rein on the eyes, for one could go wrong with very little." *Summae Deus clementiae* [God of supreme clemency] I then heard sung in the heart of the great burning, which made me no less eager to turn; and I saw spirits walking through the flame, so I looked at them and at my own steps, dividing my sight between them from moment to moment. After the ending that is made to that hymn, they cried aloud: *Virum non cognosco* [I do not know a man]; then they began the hymn again, softly.[171] Purg. 25.130 When they had finished it, they cried again: "Diana kept to the woods, and drove out Helice, who had felt the poison of Venus." Then they returned to singing; then they cried out the names of wives and husbands who were chaste, as virtue and marriage require of us. And this way, I believe, suffices them for all the time the

171 The hymn, sung at Matins, prays for chastity; *Virum non cognosco* are Mary's words to the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:34).

fire burns them; with such care and with such food the wound must at last be stitched up.[172]

CANTO 26

Purg. 26.1 While we went on like this along the edge, one ahead of the other, and the good master often said: "Watch out; let my warning help you," the sun was striking me on the right shoulder, and now, raying over all the west, was changing its face from azure to white; and with my shadow I made the flame look redder; and even at so slight a sign I saw many shades, as they went, take notice. This was what first led them to speak of me; and they began to say: "That one does not seem to have an unreal body." Purg. 26.13 Then certain of them came toward me as far as they could, always taking care not to come out where they would not be burned. "O you who walk behind the others, not from being slower but perhaps out of reverence, answer me, who burn in thirst and in fire. Nor is your answer needed by me alone; for all these thirst for it more than an Indian or an Ethiopian for cold water. Purg. 26.22 Tell us how it is that you make yourself a wall against the sun, as if you had not yet entered the net of death." So one of them spoke to me, and I would already have made myself known, had I not been intent on another strange thing that appeared just then; for through the middle of the burning road came people with their faces toward these, which made me stop and stare. There I see every shade on either side make haste and kiss one another, one with one, without stopping, content with a brief greeting. Purg. 26.34 So, within their dark column, one ant touches muzzles with another, perhaps to ask about their way and their fortune. As soon as they end the friendly greeting, before the first step carries them on from there, each one strives to outshout the other: the newcomers, "Sodom and Gomorrah"; and the others, "Pasiphaë enters the cow, so that the young bull may run to her lust." Then, like

172 Helice (Callisto), a nymph of Diana, was seduced by Jupiter and banished by the goddess.

cranes, if some should fly to the Riphaean mountains and some toward the sands, these shunning the frost, those the sun,[173] Purg. 26.46 the one people goes off, the other comes on, and weeping they return to their former songs and to the cry that best befits them; and the very ones who had entreated me drew close to me as before, their faces intent on listening. I, who had twice seen what they wished, began: "O souls, sure of reaching, whenever it may be, a state of peace, my limbs have not remained over there, either green or ripe, but are here with me, with their blood and their joints. Purg. 26.58 I am going up from here so as to be blind no longer: there is a lady above who wins grace for us, by which I bring my mortal body through your world. But—so may your greatest wish soon be fulfilled, so that the heaven which is full of love and spreads most widely may shelter you—tell me, so that I may yet set it down on paper, who you are, and who is that crowd that is going off behind your backs?" Purg. 26.67 Just as the mountain man, rough and uncouth, is troubled and dazed, and falls silent as he stares about when he comes into the city, so each shade looked. But when they had shed their amazement, which in noble hearts is soon subdued, "Blessed are you," began again the shade who had questioned me before, "who, in order to die better, take on board experience of our regions! The people who are not coming with us sinned in that for which Caesar once, in his triumph, heard himself taunted with the name 'Queen.'[174] Purg. 26.79 That is why they go off crying 'Sodom,' reproaching themselves, as you have heard, and with their shame they add to the burning. Our sin was hermaphrodite; but because we did not keep human law, and followed our appetite like beasts, to our own disgrace, when we part from them, we recite the name of her who made herself a beast inside the beast-shaped planks. Now you know our deeds, and what we

173 Pasiphaë, wife of King Minos, hid inside a wooden cow to mate with a bull and conceived the Minotaur; the Riphaean mountains were a legendary range in the far north.

174 Suetonius reports that Caesar's soldiers mocked him as "queen" in his triumph, because of a rumored affair with King Nicomedes of Bithynia.

were guilty of. If perhaps you want to know by name who we are, there is no time to tell, and I would not know how.[175]

GUIDO GUINIZELLI AND ARNAUT DANIEL

Dante meets the poet he calls his father, who points out the troubadour Arnaut Daniel.

Purg. 26.91 I will indeed satisfy your wish concerning me: I am Guido Guinizelli, and I am already purging myself because I repented well before the end." As the two sons became on seeing their mother again in the grief of Lycurgus, so I became, though I do not go so far, when I heard him name himself, the father of me and of others better than me who ever used sweet and graceful rhymes of love. And without hearing or speaking I went on, lost in thought, gazing at him for a long while, yet because of the fire I came no closer to him.[176] Purg. 26.103 When I had fed my fill of gazing, I offered myself, wholly ready, for his service, with assurances such as make others believe. And he said to me: "From what I hear, you leave such a trace in me, and so clear, that Lethe cannot remove it or make it dim. But if your words have just now sworn the truth, tell me, what is the reason why you show in your speech and your look that you hold me dear?" And I said to him: "Your sweet verses, which, for as long as modern usage lasts, will make their very ink precious."[177] Purg. 26.115 "O brother," he said, "this one whom I single out to you with my finger"—and he pointed to a spirit ahead—"was a better craftsman of the mother tongue. In verses of love and in prose romances he surpassed them all; and let the fools talk who believe that the one from Limoges excels him. They turn their faces toward report more than toward truth, and so they settle their opinion

175 "Hermaphrodite": that is, between man and woman, unlike the other group's sin.

176 Guido Guinizelli (died 1276), poet of Bologna, was the founder of the style of love poetry Dante followed. In Statius' *Thebaid*, Hypsipyle was condemned to death by King Lycurgus after his son died in her care, and her two sons rushed to embrace her.

177 Lethe is the river of forgetfulness, which Dante will reach at the summit of the mountain.

before art or reason is heard by them. So did many of the older generation with Guittone, giving the prize to him alone, from voice to voice, until with most people the truth has defeated him.[178] Purg. 26.127 Now if you have so ample a privilege that you are allowed to go to the cloister in which Christ is abbot of the college, say for me an Our Father to him, as much of it as we need in this world, where the power to sin is no longer ours." Then, perhaps to make room for the next one, whom he had close by, he vanished through the fire, like a fish going to the bottom through the water. I moved forward a little toward the one who had been pointed out, and said that my desire was preparing a gracious place for his name.[179] Purg. 26.139 He began freely to say: "*Your courteous request so pleases me that I cannot and will not hide myself from you. I am Arnaut, who weep and go singing; full of care I see my past folly, and joyful I see ahead the day I hope for. Now I beg you, by that power which guides you to the summit of the stair, remember my pain in due time.*" Then he hid himself in the fire that refines them.[180]

CANTO 27

Purg. 27.1 Just as when it darts its first rays there where its Maker shed his blood, with the Ebro falling beneath the lofty Scales and the waves of the Ganges scorched by noon, so stood the sun; so the day was departing when the glad angel of God appeared to us. He stood outside the flame, on the bank, and was singing *Beati mundo corde* [Blessed are the pure in heart] in a voice far more alive than ours. Then: "One goes no farther, holy souls,

178 The spirit is the Provençal troubadour Arnaut Daniel; "the one from Limoges" is the troubadour Giraut de Bornelh.
179 The prayer's last petition, against temptation and evil, is not needed by souls who can no longer sin (compare Purg. 11.19–24).
180 Arnaut's speech is in Provençal (Occitan), the language of the troubadours, in the original.

unless the fire bites first; enter into it, and do not be deaf to the singing beyond,"[181]

THE WALL OF FIRE

Dante refuses to enter the fire until Virgil reminds him that Beatrice is on the other side.

Purg. 27.13 he said to us, as we came near him; at which I became, when I heard him, like one who is laid in the pit. I leaned forward over my clasped hands, looking at the fire and vividly imagining human bodies I had once seen burned. My good escorts turned toward me, and Virgil said to me: "My son, here there may be torment, but not death. Remember, remember... and if I guided you safely even on Geryon, what shall I do now, nearer to God? Purg. 27.25 Believe for certain that if you stayed inside the womb of this flame a full thousand years, it could not make you bald of a single hair. And if perhaps you believe that I am deceiving you, go toward it, and get proof for yourself with your own hands on the hem of your clothes. Put down now, put down all fear; turn this way, and come on, secure." And I still stood fixed, and against my conscience. Purg. 27.34 When he saw me still standing fixed and stubborn, he said, a little troubled: "Now see, son: between Beatrice and you is this wall." As at the name of Thisbe Pyramus, at the point of death, opened his eyes and looked at her, at the time when the mulberry turned crimson, so, my stubbornness softened, I turned to my wise guide, hearing the name that forever springs up in my mind. At which he shook his head and said: "What? Do we want to stay on this side?" Then he smiled, as one does at a child who is won over by an apple.[182] Purg. 27.46 Then he went into the fire ahead of me, asking Statius, who for a long way before had separated us, to come behind. As

181 Sunrise at Jerusalem, with midnight in Spain (the Ebro) and noon in India (the Ganges), means sunset on the mountain of Purgatory, which lies opposite Jerusalem on the globe.

182 In Ovid's tale, Pyramus, believing Thisbe dead, stabbed himself beneath a mulberry tree, whose white fruit his blood turned red; he opened his eyes once more when she spoke her name.

soon as I was inside, I would have thrown myself into boiling glass to cool off, so measureless was the burning there. My sweet father, to comfort me, kept talking of Beatrice as he went, saying: "I seem already to see her eyes." A voice that was singing on the other side guided us; and we, attentive to it alone, came out where the ascent began. Purg. 27.58 *Venite, benedicti patris mei* [Come, you blessed of my Father] sounded from within a light that was there, so bright that it overcame me, and I could not look at it. "The sun is going," it added, "and evening comes; do not stop, but quicken your pace while the west is not yet darkened." The way rose straight up through the rock, in such a direction that I was cutting off before me the rays of the sun, which was already low. Purg. 27.67 And we had tried only a few steps when I and my sages felt the sun set behind us, by the shadow that died away. And before the horizon in all its immense reaches had taken on a single aspect, and night held all her domains, each of us made a bed of a step; for the nature of the mountain took away from us the power to climb, more than the desire. Purg. 27.76 As goats that were swift and wayward on the heights before they had fed grow tame as they chew the cud, silent in the shade while the sun blazes, watched by the shepherd who has leaned on his staff and, leaning so, tends them; and as the herdsman who lodges in the open spends the night quietly beside his flock, watching that no wild beast scatter it; such were all three of us then, I like a goat and they like shepherds, hemmed in on this side and that by the high rock.

DREAM OF LEAH

Sleeping on the stair, Dante dreams of Leah gathering flowers and her sister Rachel at her mirror.

Purg. 27.88 Little of the outside could be seen from there; but through that little I saw the stars, both brighter and larger than is their custom. As I was thus ruminating, and thus gazing at them, sleep took me—sleep, which often knows the news before the thing has happened. At the hour, I believe, when Cytherea,

who seems always burning with the fire of love, first shone on the mountain from the east, I seemed in a dream to see a woman, young and beautiful, going across a meadow gathering flowers; and singing, she said:[183] Purg. 27.100 "Let whoever asks my name know that I am Leah, and I go moving my lovely hands around to make myself a garland. To please myself at the mirror I adorn myself here; but my sister Rachel never turns from her mirror, and sits all day. She is as eager to see her beautiful eyes as I am to adorn myself with my hands: seeing satisfies her, and doing satisfies me."[184] Purg. 27.109 And already, before the glow that comes ahead of dawn—which rises the more welcome to pilgrims the less far from home they lodge on their return—the darkness was fleeing on every side, and my sleep with it; at which I rose, seeing the great masters already risen. "That sweet fruit which the care of mortals goes seeking on so many branches will today give peace to your hungers." Virgil used such words as these toward me, and never were there gifts that equaled these in pleasure.

VIRGIL'S LAST WORDS

Virgil tells Dante that his will is now free and that he crowns him lord of himself.

Purg. 27.121 So much desire upon desire came over me to be above that at every step thereafter I felt my feathers growing for flight. When the whole stair had been run beneath us and we were on the topmost step, Virgil fixed his eyes on me and said: "The temporal fire and the eternal you have seen, son, and you have come to a place where I by myself discern no further. I have brought you here with wit and with art; from now on take your own pleasure as your guide. You are out of the steep ways, out of the narrow ones. Purg. 27.133 See there the sun shining on your brow; see the tender grass, the flowers and the shrubs, which

183 Cytherea is Venus, here the planet as morning star, rising before dawn.
184 Leah and Rachel, daughters of Laban, were the wives of Jacob (Genesis 29); medieval tradition took them as types of the active and the contemplative life.

the earth here brings forth of itself alone. Until the beautiful eyes come rejoicing which, weeping, made me come to you, you may sit and you may walk among them. Expect no more word or sign from me. Free, upright and whole is your will, and it would be a fault not to act as it bids; therefore over yourself I crown and miter you."[185]

CANTO 28

Purg. 28.1 Eager now to search within and around the divine forest, thick and living, which tempered the new day to my eyes, without waiting any longer I left the edge, crossing the open ground very slowly over the soil that gave off fragrance on every side. A sweet breeze, which had no variation in itself, struck me on the brow with no heavier a blow than a gentle wind; Purg. 28.10 at which the leaves, readily trembling, all bent toward the side where the holy mountain casts its first shadow; yet they were not swayed so far from their upright state that the little birds in the treetops left off practicing all their art. With full joy, singing, they welcomed the morning breezes among the leaves, which kept up a low accompaniment to their rhymes, such as gathers from branch to branch through the pine forest on the shore of Chiassi when Aeolus lets loose the Sirocco.[186] Purg. 28.22 Already my slow steps had carried me so far into the ancient wood that I could no longer see where I had entered; and then a stream took from me any further going, which, flowing toward the left, bent with its little waves the grass that sprang up on its bank. All the waters that are clearest here in our world would seem to have some mixture in them, compared with that water, which hides nothing, although it moves very dark under the perpetual shade, which never lets sun or moon shine there.

185 The crown and the miter are the emblems of temporal and of spiritual authority.

186 Chiassi (Classe), the ancient port of Ravenna, has a famous pine forest; Aeolus is the god of the winds, and the Sirocco is the warm southeast wind.

THE LADY BY THE STREAM

Across a small river Dante sees a lady singing and gathering flowers.

Purg. 28.34 I stopped with my feet, and with my eyes I passed beyond the little river, to gaze at the great variety of the fresh flowering boughs; and there appeared to me, as there suddenly appears a thing that through wonder turns aside every other thought, a lady all alone, who went singing and choosing flower from flower, with which her whole path was painted. "Ah, beautiful lady, who warm yourself in the rays of love, if I may believe your looks, which are usually witnesses of the heart, may it please you to come forward," I said to her, "toward this river, close enough that I may understand what you are singing.[187] Purg. 28.49 You make me remember where and what Proserpina was at the time when her mother lost her, and she lost the spring." As a woman turns when she dances, with her feet close to the ground and to each other, and scarcely sets foot before foot, she turned toward me on the red and the yellow little flowers, just like a maiden who lowers her modest eyes; and she satisfied my prayers, drawing so near that the sweet sound reached me with its meaning.[188] Purg. 28.61 As soon as she was where the grass is already bathed by the waves of the lovely river, she granted me the gift of raising her eyes. I do not believe that so much light shone beneath the eyelids of Venus when she was pierced by her son, quite against all his custom. She smiled, standing upright on the other bank, gathering in her hands many colors, which the high land puts forth without seed.[189] Purg. 28.70 The river kept us three paces apart; but the Hellespont, where Xerxes crossed—still a curb on all human pride—did not suffer more hatred from Leander for its heaving waters between Sestos and Abydos than that river suffered from me, because it did not part then. "You

187 The lady is named as Matelda only later, in Purg. 33.
188 Proserpina was gathering flowers in a meadow when Pluto carried her off to the underworld, and her mother Ceres lost her.
189 In Ovid, Cupid accidentally grazed his mother Venus with an arrow while kissing her, and she fell in love with Adonis.

are newcomers," she began, "and perhaps, because I am smiling in this place chosen for human nature as its nest, some suspicion keeps you wondering; but the psalm *Delectasti* [You have delighted me] gives light that can clear the mist from your intellect.[190] Purg. 28.82 And you who are in front, and who entreated me, say if you wish to hear anything else, for I have come ready to answer every question of yours, as far as will suffice." "The water," I said, "and the sound of the forest contend within me against a recent belief in something I heard that is contrary to this." At which she said: "I will tell how what makes you wonder proceeds from its cause, and I will clear away the mist that afflicts you.[191]

THE GARDEN EXPLAINED

The lady explains the Earthly Paradise, its wind and plants, and its two rivers, Lethe and Eunoe.

Purg. 28.91 The highest Good, which alone pleases itself, made man good and for good, and gave him this place as a pledge of eternal peace. Through his own failing he dwelt here but a little; through his own failing he exchanged honest laughter and sweet play for weeping and toil. So that the disturbance which the exhalations of water and of earth, which follow the heat as far as they can, produce below it should make no war on man, this mountain rose this high toward heaven, and from the point where it is locked it is free of them. Purg. 28.103 Now, since the whole air revolves in a circle with the first turning, unless its circuit is broken at some point, at this height, which stands wholly free in the living air, that motion strikes and makes the wood resound, since it is dense; and the stricken plant has such power that it impregnates the breeze with its virtue, and the breeze then, circling around, scatters it. And the other land, according as it is

190 Xerxes bridged the Hellespont to invade Greece in 480 BC and returned in defeat; Leander swam it nightly to reach Hero, and drowned. The psalm is Psalm 92 (91 in the Vulgate): "For you, Lord, have delighted me in your works."
191 Statius had told Dante (Purg. 21) that above the gate of Purgatory there is no rain, wind or other change of weather.

fit in itself and by its sky, conceives and brings forth diverse trees of diverse virtues.[192] Purg. 28.115 Once this is heard, it would not then seem a marvel in your world when some plant takes root there without visible seed. And you must know that the holy plain where you are is full of every seed, and has fruit in itself that is not picked over there. The water you see does not rise from a spring replenished by vapor that cold condenses, like a river that gains and loses force; but it issues from a fountain steady and sure, which regains from the will of God as much as it pours out, open on two sides. Purg. 28.127 On this side it descends with a power that takes from one the memory of sin; on the other, it restores the memory of every good deed. On this side it is called Lethe, and likewise on the other, Eunoe, and it does not take effect unless it is first tasted on this side and on that. Its savor is above all other savors; and although your thirst may be fully satisfied even if I reveal nothing more to you, I will give you a corollary besides, as a favor; nor do I think my words will be less dear to you if they reach beyond my promise to you.[193] Purg. 28.139 Those who in ancient times sang in poetry of the Age of Gold and its happy state perhaps dreamed of this place on Parnassus. Here the root of humankind was innocent; here it is always spring, and every fruit; this is the nectar of which each of them speaks." I then turned fully around to my poets, and saw that they had heard this last deduction with a smile; then I turned my face back to the beautiful lady.[194]

CANTO 29

Purg. 29.1 Singing like a woman in love, she went on, as her words ended: *Beati quorum tecta sunt peccata* [Blessed are they whose sins are covered]. And like nymphs who used to wander alone

192 The "first turning" is the daily revolution of the outermost moving heaven (the Primum Mobile), which carries the air around with it.

193 Eunoe (Greek for "good mind") is Dante's invention, a counterpart to the classical Lethe.

194 Parnassus is the mountain of Apollo and the Muses; the Golden Age was the first and happiest age of the world in classical myth (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1).

through the woodland shades, one longing to see the sun, another to escape it, she then moved upstream, walking along the bank, and I kept level with her, matching her small steps with small steps of my own. Her steps and mine together were not yet a hundred when both banks curved alike, so that I found myself facing east.[195] Purg. 29.13 Nor had we gone very far this way when the lady turned fully toward me, saying: "My brother, look, and listen." And suddenly a brightness swept through the great forest on every side, so that it made me wonder whether it was lightning. But since lightning stops just as it comes, and this, lasting, shone more and more, I said in my mind: "What can this be?" Purg. 29.22 And a sweet melody ran through the luminous air; at which a righteous zeal made me rebuke Eve's daring, for there, where earth and heaven obeyed, a woman, alone and only just created, would not bear to remain under any veil; and had she stayed devoutly under it, I would have known those ineffable delights sooner, and for longer.

THE PROCESSION APPEARS

A light and a melody fill the forest, and a procession of candlesticks and elders approaches.

Purg. 29.31 While I went on among so many first fruits of the eternal pleasure, utterly rapt, and longing for still more joy, the air before us, under the green branches, became like a blazing fire, and the sweet sound could now be heard as singing. O most holy Virgins, if ever I endured hunger, cold or sleepless nights for you, need now spurs me to claim my reward. Now Helicon must pour forth for me, and Urania help me with her choir to put into verse things hard even to conceive.[196] Purg. 29.43 A little farther on, the long stretch of space that still lay between us and them gave the false appearance of seven trees of gold; but when I had come so near them that the common object, which deceives the

195 Psalm 32:1 (31 in the Vulgate).
196 The Virgins are the Muses, whose springs rose on Mount Helicon; Urania is the Muse of the heavens.

senses, lost none of its features through distance, the faculty that prepares material for reason's discourse perceived that they were candlesticks, and that the voices were singing *Osanna* [Hosanna]. Above, the lovely array blazed far brighter than the moon in a clear midnight sky in the middle of her month.[197] Purg. 29.55 I turned, full of wonder, to good Virgil, and he answered me with a look no less laden with amazement. Then I turned my gaze back to those lofty things, which were moving toward us so slowly that new brides would have outpaced them. The lady chided me: "Why do you burn so only to gaze at the living lights, and do not look at what comes behind them?" Then I saw people coming behind, as if following their leaders, dressed in white; and such whiteness has never been seen here in our world. Purg. 29.67 The water gleamed on our left, and when I looked into it, it gave back my left side to me as well, like a mirror. When I had reached such a point on my bank that only the river separated me from them, I halted my steps to see better, and I saw the little flames advance, leaving the air behind them painted, and they looked like brushes drawn along; so that overhead the air remained marked with seven bands, all in those colors from which the sun makes his bow and Delia her girdle.[198] Purg. 29.79 These banners stretched back farther than my sight could reach; and, as far as I could judge, the outermost were ten paces apart. Beneath so fair a sky as I describe, twenty-four elders came two by two, crowned with lilies. All were singing: "Blessed are you among the daughters of Adam, and blessed forever be your beauties." When the flowers and the other fresh grasses opposite me on the other bank were free of those chosen people, then, as light follows light in the heavens, four living creatures came behind them, each crowned with green leaves.[199] Purg. 29.94 Each was feathered with six wings, the feathers full of eyes; and the eyes of Argus, if they were alive, would be like these. Reader, I

197 The "common object" is a scholastic term for qualities, such as size and shape, perceived by more than one sense.

198 Delia is the moon (Diana, born on Delos); her "girdle" is the halo around it.

199 The procession draws on Revelation 4, where twenty-four elders and four living creatures surround the throne of God.

will spend no more rhymes describing their forms; for other expenses press on me so hard that I cannot be lavish with this one. But read Ezekiel, who depicts them as he saw them coming from the cold north with wind, with cloud and with fire; and such as you will find them in his pages, such they were here, except that as to the wings John is with me, and parts from him.[200]

THE CHARIOT AND THE GRIFFIN

A griffin draws a triumphal chariot, attended by dancing virtues and elders.

Purg. 29.106 The space within the four of them held a triumphal chariot on two wheels, which came drawn at the neck of a griffin. He stretched up one wing and the other between the middle band and the three and three on either side, so that he cut through none of them and harmed none. They rose so high that they were lost from sight; his limbs were of gold as far as he was bird, and the rest was white mixed with crimson. Not only did Rome never gladden Africanus, or even Augustus, with so fine a chariot; but the Sun's own would be poor beside it;[201] Purg. 29.118 the Sun's, which went astray and was burned up at the prayer of the devout Earth, when Jove was just in his secret ways. Three women came dancing in a ring beside the right wheel; one so red that she would hardly have been noticed in fire; the second looked as if her flesh and bones had been made of emerald; the third seemed snow just fallen. And now they seemed led by the white one, now by the red, and from the song of the leader the others took their pace, now slow, now swift.[202] Purg. 29.130 On the left four made festival, dressed in purple, following the measure of one of them who had three eyes in her head.

200 Argus was the hundred-eyed watchman of Greek myth. Ezekiel (chapter 1) gives the creatures four wings, John in Revelation (chapter 4) six.
201 A griffin is half eagle, half lion. Scipio Africanus, conqueror of Carthage, and the emperor Augustus both rode in triumph through Rome.
202 Phaëthon, driving the chariot of his father the Sun, lost control and scorched the earth; Jupiter struck him down at Earth's plea.

Behind the whole group I have described, I saw two old men, unlike in dress but alike in bearing, both dignified and grave. One showed himself to be of the household of that supreme Hippocrates whom nature made for the creatures she holds dearest. The other showed the opposite concern, with a sword so bright and sharp that it made me afraid even on this side of the stream.[203] Purg. 29.142 Then I saw four of humble appearance, and behind them all an old man alone, coming on asleep, with a keen face. And these seven were dressed like the first company; but they wore no garland of lilies around their heads, but rather of roses and other crimson flowers: anyone looking from not far away would have sworn that they were all on fire above their brows. And when the chariot was opposite me, a thunderclap was heard; and those worthy people seemed forbidden to go farther, halting there together with the foremost standards.

CANTO 30

Purg. 30.1 When the Septentrion of the first heaven—which never knew setting or rising, nor any veil of mist but that of guilt, and which there made each one aware of his duty, as the lower one does for whoever turns the helm to come into port—had stopped and stood fixed, the truthful people who had come first, between the griffin and it, turned toward the chariot as to their peace; and one of them, as if sent from heaven, singing *Veni, sponsa, de Libano* [Come, bride, from Lebanon], cried it out three times, and all the others after him.[204] Purg. 30.13 As the blessed at the last summons will rise swiftly, each from his cave, singing alleluia with their voices clothed again in flesh, so upon the divine chariot there rose a hundred, *ad vocem tanti senis* [at the voice of so great an elder], ministers and messengers of eternal life. All were saying: *Benedictus qui venis* [Blessed are you who

203 Hippocrates was the Greek physician regarded as the father of medicine.
204 The seven candlesticks are likened to the Septentrion, the seven stars of the Great Bear by which sailors steer; the first heaven is the Empyrean. The Latin is from the Song of Songs 4:8.

come], and, scattering flowers above and all around, *Manibus o date lilia plenis* [Oh, give lilies with full hands]. I have seen, at the beginning of the day, the eastern sky all rosy, and the rest of the heavens adorned with fair clear weather, and the face of the sun rise shaded, so that, through the tempering of the mists, the eye could bear it for a long while;[205]

BEATRICE APPEARS

A lady appears on the chariot, Dante turns to Virgil, and finds him gone.

Purg. 30.28 so, within a cloud of flowers that rose from the angelic hands and fell back down within and without, a lady appeared to me, wreathed with olive over a white veil, beneath a green mantle, clothed in the color of living flame. And my spirit, which for so long a time had not stood trembling in her presence, broken with awe, without any further knowledge through the eyes, through a hidden power that came from her, felt the great might of the old love.[206] Purg. 30.40 As soon as that lofty power struck my sight, which had pierced me already before I was out of boyhood, I turned to the left with the trust with which a little child runs to its mother when it is frightened or hurt, to say to Virgil: "Not a dram of blood is left in me that does not tremble: I know the signs of the old flame." But Virgil had left us bereft of himself, Virgil, sweetest father, Virgil, to whom I gave myself for my salvation; nor could all that our ancient mother lost keep my cheeks, washed clean with dew, from turning dark again with tears.[207] Purg. 30.55 "Dante, because Virgil goes away, do not weep yet, do not weep yet; for another sword must make you weep." Like an admiral who goes to stern and to bow to see the crews serving on the other ships, and heartens them to do well, on the

205 *Benedictus qui venis* echoes the crowd's greeting to Christ entering Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9); the line about lilies is from Virgil's *Aeneid* (6.883).

206 The lady is Beatrice, the Florentine woman Dante loved from boyhood, who died in 1290.

207 Dante translates Dido's words in Virgil's *Aeneid* (4.23): "I recognize the traces of the old flame."

left side of the chariot, when I turned at the sound of my name, which of necessity is recorded here, I saw the lady who had first appeared to me veiled beneath the angels' festival direct her eyes toward me across the stream.[208] Purg. 30.67 Although the veil that fell from her head, circled by Minerva's leaves, did not let her be seen plainly, royally, still stern in her bearing, she went on, like one who speaks and keeps the hottest words for last: "Look at us well: we are indeed, we are indeed Beatrice. How did you deign to approach the mountain? Did you not know that here man is happy?"[209] Purg. 30.76 My eyes fell down to the clear spring; but seeing myself in it, I drew them back to the grass, so heavy was the shame upon my brow. So does a mother seem harsh to her son as she seemed to me; for the savor of stern pity tastes bitter. She fell silent, and at once the angels sang: *In te, Domine, speravi* [In you, Lord, I have hoped]; but beyond *pedes meos* [my feet] they did not go.[210] Purg. 30.85 Just as snow among the living beams along the back of Italy freezes, blown and packed hard by the Slavonian winds, then, melting, trickles down into itself, if only the land that loses its shadow breathes, so that it seems like fire melting a candle: so I was without tears or sighs before the singing of those who always sing in tune with the notes of the eternal spheres. But when I heard in their sweet harmonies their compassion for me, more than if they had said: "Lady, why do you so undo him?"[211]

BEATRICE'S ACCUSATION

Beatrice tells the angels how Dante strayed after her death and why he must repent in tears.

Purg. 30.97 the ice that had tightened around my heart turned to breath and water, and with anguish poured out of my breast

208 This is the only place in the poem where Dante's name appears.
209 The olive was sacred to Minerva, goddess of wisdom.
210 Psalm 31 (30 in the Vulgate), sung as far as verse 8: "you have set my feet in a spacious place."

through mouth and eyes. She, still standing motionless on that same side of the chariot, then turned her words to the compassionate beings thus: "You keep watch in the eternal day, so that neither night nor sleep steals from you any step the world takes along its ways; therefore my answer is given with greater care that he who weeps over there may understand me, so that guilt and grief may be of one measure. Purg. 30.109 Not only through the working of the great wheels, which direct each seed to some end according to the stars that accompany it, but through the bounty of divine graces, which have for their rain vapors so high that our sight cannot come near them, this man was such in his new life, in potential, that every good disposition would have yielded marvelous results in him. But the more good earthly vigor the ground has, the more malignant and wild it grows when sown with bad seed and left untilled.[212] Purg. 30.121 For a time I sustained him with my face; showing him my young eyes, I led him with me, turned in the right direction. As soon as I was on the threshold of my second age, and changed lives, he took himself from me and gave himself to others. When I had risen from flesh to spirit, and beauty and virtue had grown in me, I was less dear and less welcome to him; and he turned his steps along an untrue way, following false images of good, which never keep any promise in full. Purg. 30.133 Nor did it help me to obtain inspirations for him, with which I called him back, in dreams and in other ways; so little did he care for them. He fell so low that all means for his salvation already fell short, except to show him the lost people. For this I visited the threshold of the dead, and to the one who has led him up here my prayers were offered with tears. The high decree of God would be broken if Lethe were crossed and such food were tasted without some payment of repentance that sheds tears."

211 The "back of Italy" is the Apennines, whose "living beams" are trees; the Slavonian winds blow from the northeast, and the land that loses its shadow is Africa, source of the warm south wind.

212 "New life" means youth, and also recalls the title of Dante's early book about Beatrice, the *Vita Nuova*.

CANTO 31

Purg. 31.1 "O you, who are beyond the sacred river," she began again, turning the point of her speech on me, when even its edge had seemed sharp to me, and continuing without delay, "say, say whether this is true; to so great an accusation your confession must be joined." My faculties were so confounded that my voice stirred, and died before it was released from its organs. She waited a little, then said: "What are you thinking? Answer me; for the sad memories in you are not yet destroyed by the water." Purg. 31.13 Confusion and fear, mixed together, forced such a *yes* out of my mouth that eyes were needed to make it out. As a crossbow, when it shoots at too great a tension, breaks its string and bow, and the shaft strikes the target with less force, so I burst under that heavy load, pouring out tears and sighs, and my voice failed along its passage. Purg. 31.22 At which she said to me: "Within your desires for me, which were leading you to love the good beyond which there is nothing to aspire to, what ditches across your path or what chains did you find, that you should so have stripped yourself of the hope of going forward? And what attractions or what advantages showed in the faces of the others, that you should go strolling back and forth before them?" Purg. 31.31 After heaving a bitter sigh, I barely had the voice to answer, and my lips shaped it with difficulty. Weeping, I said: "Present things, with their false pleasure, turned my steps aside as soon as your face was hidden." And she: "Had you kept silent, or denied what you confess, your guilt would be no less known: such a Judge knows it. But when the accusation of sin bursts from the sinner's own cheek, in our court the grindstone turns itself back against the edge.[213] Purg. 31.43 Nevertheless, so that you may now bear the shame of your error, and so that another time, hearing the Sirens, you may be stronger, lay aside the seed of weeping, and listen; so you will hear how my buried flesh

213 A grindstone turned against the edge blunts a blade instead of sharpening it: confession dulls the sword of justice.

should have moved you in the opposite direction. Never did nature or art offer you a pleasure as great as the fair limbs in which I was enclosed, and which are now scattered in the earth; and if the highest pleasure so failed you through my death, what mortal thing should then have drawn you to desire it? Purg. 31.55 Truly, at the first arrow of deceitful things, you ought to have risen up after me, who was no longer such. No young girl, nor other vanity of such brief use, should have weighed your wings down to await more shots. A young fledgling waits for two or three; but before the eyes of full-feathered birds the net is spread or the arrow shot in vain." Purg. 31.64 As children, speechless with shame, stand listening with their eyes on the ground, acknowledging their fault and repentant, so I stood. And she said: "Since hearing grieves you, lift up your beard, and looking will give you greater grief." With less resistance is a sturdy oak uprooted, whether by our wind or by the one from Iarbas' land, than I raised my chin at her command; and when she asked for my face by saying "beard," I well understood the venom in her words.[214] Purg. 31.76 And when my face was lifted, my eye perceived that those first creatures had ceased from their scattering; and my eyes, still far from steady, saw Beatrice turned toward the beast that is only one person in two natures. Beneath her veil and beyond the river she seemed to me to surpass her former self more than she surpassed the others here when she was here. The nettle of repentance stung me so sharply there that, of all other things, whichever had most turned me aside into loving it became most hateful to me.[215]

214 Iarbas was a king in Libya, Dido's rejected suitor; the wind from his land is the south wind.

215 The "first creatures" are the angels who had been scattering flowers over the chariot (Purg. 30.28–33).

IMMERSION IN LETHE

Dante faints in remorse, and the lady draws him through Lethe to the four virtues.

Purg. 31.88 Such recognition of myself gnawed at my heart that I fell down overcome; and what I then became, she knows who gave me the cause. Then, when my heart restored my outward powers to me, I saw above me the lady whom I had found alone, and she was saying, "Hold on to me, hold on to me!" She had drawn me into the river up to my throat, and, pulling me along behind her, she went over the water, light as a shuttle. When I was near the blessed shore, *Asperges me* [You will sprinkle me] was heard so sweetly that I cannot remember it, let alone write it.[216] Purg. 31.100 The beautiful lady opened her arms, clasped my head, and plunged me under, where I had to swallow the water. Then she drew me out and presented me, bathed, within the dance of the four beautiful ones, and each of them covered me with her arm. "Here we are nymphs, and in heaven we are stars; before Beatrice descended to the world, we were appointed to her as her handmaids. We will lead you to her eyes; but in the joyful light that is within them the three over there, who see more deeply, will sharpen yours."[217] Purg. 31.112 So, singing, they began; and then they led me with them to the griffin's breast, where Beatrice stood turned toward us. They said, "See that you do not spare your gaze: we have set you before the emeralds from which Love once drew his weapons against you." A thousand desires hotter than flame bound my eyes to those shining eyes, which remained fixed only upon the griffin. Like the sun in a mirror, not otherwise, the twofold beast shone within them, now with one bearing, now with the other. Purg. 31.124 Think, reader, whether I marveled when I saw the thing itself stay still,

216 From Psalm 51 (50 in the Vulgate), sung at the sprinkling with holy water: "You will sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean."

217 The four nymphs are the cardinal virtues and the three the theological virtues, who dance beside the chariot (Purg. 29.121–132); the four stars recall Purg. 1.23.

while in its image it kept transforming. While my soul, full of amazement and joy, was tasting that food which, satisfying with itself, makes one thirst for itself, the other three, showing themselves in their bearing to be of a higher order, came forward, dancing to their angelic measure. "Turn, Beatrice, turn your holy eyes," was their song, "to your faithful one, who has taken so many steps to see you. Purg. 31.136 Of your grace, grant us the grace of unveiling your mouth to him, so that he may see the second beauty that you hide." O splendor of living, eternal light, who has ever grown so pale under the shade of Parnassus, or drunk so deeply at its well, that he would not seem to have his mind encumbered, trying to render you as you appeared there where heaven, in its harmony, overshadows you, when you unveiled yourself in the open air?[218]

CANTO 32

Purg. 32.1 So fixed and intent were my eyes on quenching their ten-year thirst that all my other senses were extinguished; and on this side and on that they had a wall of indifference, so did the holy smile draw them to itself with the old net; when my face was turned by force toward my left by those goddesses, because I heard from them: "Too intently!"[219] Purg. 32.10 And the condition of sight that exists in eyes just struck by the sun left me without vision for a while; but when my sight readjusted itself to the lesser—I say the lesser in respect to the great object of sense from which I had been forced to withdraw—I saw that the glorious army had wheeled about on its right flank and was returning with the sun and the seven flames in its face. Purg. 32.19 As a troop, to save itself, turns beneath its shields and wheels round with its standard before the whole of it can change direction, so that soldiery of the heavenly kingdom which went in front had

218 Parnassus was the mountain sacred to Apollo and the Muses; its well is the Castalian spring, source of poetic inspiration.
219 Beatrice had died in 1290, ten years before the imagined date of the journey (1300).

all passed by us before the chariot swung round its pole. Then the ladies returned to the wheels, and the griffin moved the blessed burden, yet in such a way that not one of his feathers was ruffled. The beautiful lady who had drawn me across the ford, and Statius and I, were following the wheel that made its orbit with the smaller arc.

THE STRIPPED TREE

The procession circles Adam's bare tree, which blossoms when the griffin binds the chariot to it.

Purg. 32.31 So, as we walked through the lofty wood, empty through the fault of her who believed the serpent, an angelic melody set the measure of our steps. Perhaps an arrow let fly would cover in three flights as much distance as we had moved when Beatrice came down. I heard them all murmur, "Adam!" Then they encircled a tree stripped of flowers and of every other leaf on each of its branches. Its crown, which spreads out the more the higher it rises, would be marveled at for its height by the Indians in their forests. Purg. 32.43 "Blessed are you, griffin, for you do not tear with your beak any of this wood, sweet to the taste, since the belly is racked with pain by it." So the others cried around the sturdy tree; and the twofold animal: "Thus is the seed of all that is just preserved." And turning to the pole he had drawn, he pulled it to the foot of the widowed bough, and what came from it he left bound to it. Purg. 32.52 As our plants, when the great light falls mingled with the light that shines behind the heavenly carp, swell, and then each renews itself in its own color before the sun yokes his steeds beneath another star, so, disclosing a color less than of roses and more than of violets, the tree renewed itself, which before had its branches so bare. I did not understand it—nor is it sung here—the hymn that those people sang then, nor did I endure the whole of the melody.[220] Purg. 32.64 If I could portray how the pitiless eyes fell asleep as they

220 The "heavenly carp" is the constellation Pisces; the light behind it is that of Aries, where the sun stands in spring.

heard of Syrinx—the eyes whose longer watching cost so dear—like a painter who paints from a model I would depict how I fell asleep; but whoever wishes may be the one to portray falling asleep well. So I pass on to when I awoke, and I say that a splendor tore the veil of my sleep, and a voice calling, "Get up—what are you doing?"[221] Purg. 32.73 As Peter and John and James, led to see some of the blossoms of the apple tree that makes the angels greedy for its fruit and holds a perpetual wedding feast in heaven, were overcome, and came back to themselves at the word by which greater sleeps were broken, and saw their company diminished by Moses as well as by Elijah, and their Master's robe changed, so I came back to myself, and saw standing over me that kind lady who earlier had been the guide of my steps along the river; and all in doubt I said, "Where is Beatrice?" And she: "See her sitting beneath the new foliage, upon its root.[222] Purg. 32.88 See the company that surrounds her; the others are going up after the griffin with a sweeter and deeper song." And whether her speech went on further I do not know, because already before my eyes was she who had closed me off from attending to anything else. She sat alone on the bare ground, like a guard left there for the chariot that I had seen the two-formed beast bind. The seven nymphs made of themselves a cloister in a circle around her, with those lights in their hands that are safe from the north wind and the south. Purg. 32.100 "Here you will be a forest-dweller for a little while, and with me you will be, without end, a citizen of that Rome of which Christ is a Roman. Therefore, for the good of the world that lives badly, keep your eyes now on the chariot, and what you see, once you are back over there, be sure that you write." So Beatrice; and I, who was wholly devoted at the feet of her commands, gave my mind and my eyes where she wished.

221 Argus, the hundred-eyed watchman of Io, was lulled asleep by Mercury's tale of the nymph Syrinx and then killed (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1).
222 The Transfiguration (Matthew 17): the three apostles fell to the ground and rose at Christ's word, the word that also raised the dead.

THE CHARIOT'S TRANSFORMATIONS

An eagle, a fox and a dragon attack the chariot, which turns into a monster ridden by a prostitute.

Purg. 32.109 Never did fire come down with so swift a motion from a thick cloud, when it rains from that boundary which lies most remote, as I saw the bird of Jove swoop down through the tree, tearing away some of the bark, as well as of the flowers and the new leaves; and it struck the chariot with all its force, so that it lurched like a ship in a storm, beaten by the waves, now to leeward, now to windward.[223] Purg. 32.118 Then I saw a fox spring into the cradle of the triumphal vehicle, which seemed starved of all good food. But, rebuking it for its foul sins, my lady turned it to flight as fast as its fleshless bones allowed. Then, by the same way it had come before, I saw the eagle swoop down into the body of the chariot and leave it feathered with its own plumes. And such a voice as comes from a heart that grieves came forth from heaven, and spoke thus: "O my little ship, how badly you are laden!" Purg. 32.130 Then it seemed to me that the earth opened between the two wheels, and I saw a dragon come out of it, which drove its tail up through the chariot; and like a wasp that draws back its sting, drawing its malignant tail back to itself, it dragged out part of the floor and went off, wandering this way and that. What remained, like fertile soil with couch grass, covered itself again with the plumage—offered perhaps with a sound and kindly intention—and both the one wheel and the other and the pole were covered with it in less time than a sigh keeps the mouth open. Purg. 32.142 Transformed in this way, the holy structure put forth heads on its parts, three over the pole and one at each corner. The first were horned like oxen, but the four had a single horn on each forehead: such a monster was never seen before. Secure as a fortress on a high mountain, a shameless prostitute appeared to me, sitting upon it, with her

223 The eagle, bird of Jupiter, was the emblem of the Roman Empire.

eyes darting quickly all around.[224] Purg. 32.151 And, as though so that she should not be taken from him, I saw a giant standing upright beside her, and from time to time they kissed each other. But because she turned her greedy and wandering eye on me, that fierce lover scourged her from her head to the soles of her feet. Then, full of suspicion and cruel with rage, he unfastened the monster and dragged it through the wood so far that he made the wood alone a shield between me and the prostitute and the strange new beast.

CANTO 33

Purg. 33.1 *Deus, venerunt gentes* [O God, the nations have come], now three, now four, in alternation, the ladies began, weeping, a sweet psalmody; and Beatrice, sighing and full of pity, listened to them, so altered that Mary at the cross was changed little more. But when the other virgins gave her room to speak, she rose upright on her feet and answered, colored like fire: "*Modicum, et non videbitis me* [A little while, and you will not see me], *Et iterum* [and again], my beloved sisters, *Modicum, et vos videbitis me* [a little while, and you will see me]."[225] Purg. 33.13 Then she set all seven in front of her, and behind her, merely with a nod, she moved me and the lady and the sage who had stayed. So she went on, and I do not think her tenth step had been set on the ground when with her eyes she struck my eyes; and with a tranquil look, "Come more quickly," she said to me, "so that if I speak with you, you will be well placed to listen to me." Purg. 33.22 As soon as I was with her, as I ought to be, she said to me, "Brother, why do you not venture to question me, now that you are coming with me?" As it happens to those who are too reverent when speaking before their superiors, so that they do not bring their voice out whole to their teeth, so it happened to me,

224 The seven heads and ten horns, and the woman seated on the beast, come from Revelation 17.

225 Psalm 79 (78 in the Vulgate) laments the profanation of the Temple and Jerusalem; Beatrice answers with Christ's words to his disciples in John 16:16.

and without full sound I began, "My lady, you know my need, and what is good for it." And she to me: "From fear and from shame I want you now to free yourself, so that you no longer speak like a man who is dreaming.

BEATRICE'S PROPHECY

Beatrice foretells a leader, "five hundred, ten and five," who will slay the prostitute and the giant.

Purg. 33.34 Know that the vessel the serpent broke was, and is not; but let whoever bears the blame believe that God's vengeance fears no sops. The eagle that left its feathers on the chariot, by which it became a monster and then a prey, will not be without an heir for all time; for I see with certainty, and therefore I tell it, stars already near at hand, safe from every obstacle and every barrier, to bring us a time in which a five hundred, ten and five, sent by God, will slay the thief, along with that giant who sins with her.[226] Purg. 33.46 And perhaps my dark telling, like Themis and the Sphinx, persuades you less, because in their manner it clouds the intellect; but soon events will be the Naiads that will solve this hard riddle, without loss of flocks or crops. Take note; and just as these words are delivered by me, so mark them down for those who live the life that is a race toward death; and bear in mind, when you write them, not to hide how you have seen the tree, which has now been twice despoiled here.[227] Purg. 33.58 Whoever robs it or breaks it offends God with blasphemy in deed, for he created it holy for his own use alone. For biting it, the first soul longed, in pain and desire, five thousand years and more, for him who punished that bite in himself. Your wit is asleep if it does not judge that it is for a singular reason that the tree is so tall and so inverted at its top. Purg. 33.67 And if your vain

226 Medieval belief held that a murderer who ate a sop of bread in wine on the victim's grave within nine days was safe from vengeance. "Five hundred, ten and five" is DXV in Roman numerals, readable as DUX, "leader."

227 Themis gave obscure oracles; following a corrupt text of Ovid, Dante has the Naiads solve the Sphinx's riddle, after which Themis sent a beast to ravage the flocks and fields of Thebes.

thoughts had not been water of the Elsa around your mind, and your pleasure in them a Pyramus to the mulberry, by so many circumstances alone you would recognize, in the moral sense, God's justice in the prohibition placed on the tree. But since I see you in your intellect turned to stone, and, petrified, so darkened that the light of my words dazzles you, I also want you to carry it away within you—if not written, at least painted—for the same reason that the pilgrim's staff is brought back wreathed with palm."[228] Purg. 33.79 And I: "As wax under a seal, which does not alter the figure stamped on it, so my brain is now marked by you. But why does your longed-for word fly so far above my sight that the more my sight strives, the more it loses it?" "So that you may know," she said, "that school which you have followed, and see how its teaching can follow my word; and see that your way is as distant from the divine way as the heaven that spins highest is from the earth." Purg. 33.91 So I answered her, "I do not remember that I ever estranged myself from you, nor have I any conscience that pricks me for it." "And if you cannot remember it," she answered, smiling, "recall now how you drank of Lethe this very day; and if fire is inferred from smoke, this forgetfulness of yours clearly proves a fault in your will, which was intent elsewhere. Truly, from now on my words will be bare, as far as it is fitting to lay them open to your untrained sight."

EUNOE

At noon they reach the source of the two rivers, and Matelda leads Dante to drink of Eunoe.

Purg. 33.103 And more blazing, and with slower steps, the sun was holding the circle of noon, which shifts here and there according to the point of view, when the seven ladies stopped—just as one who goes ahead of a company as their escort stops if he

228 The waters of the Elsa, a Tuscan river, coat objects dropped in them with lime; Pyramus's blood stained the mulberry's white fruit dark red (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4).

finds something strange in his path—at the edge of a pale shade, such as the mountains cast, beneath green leaves and dark branches, over their cold streams. In front of them I seemed to see the Euphrates and the Tigris flowing out from a single spring, and parting slowly, like friends. Purg. 33.115 "O light, O glory of the human race, what water is this that pours forth here from one source and draws away from itself?" In answer to this plea I was told, "Ask Matelda to tell you"; and here the beautiful lady answered, as anyone does who frees himself of blame: "This and other things have been told him by me, and I am sure that the water of Lethe did not hide that from him."[229] Purg. 33.124 And Beatrice: "Perhaps a greater care, which often robs the memory, has darkened his mind's eyes. But see Eunoe, flowing forth there: lead him to it, and, as you are accustomed to do, revive his fainting power." Like a noble soul that makes no excuse, but makes another's will its own as soon as it is disclosed outwardly by a sign, so, once I had been taken by her, the beautiful lady moved on, and said to Statius with a lady's grace, "Come with him." Purg. 33.136 If, reader, I had more space to write, I would still sing, in part, of the sweet drink that would never have sated me; but since all the pages laid out for this second canticle are full, the curb of art lets me go no further. I came back from that most holy water remade, as new plants are renewed with new foliage, pure and ready to rise to the stars.

229 This is the only place the poem names the lady, Matelda, whose identity remains uncertain.

Paradiso

Paradise
Beatrice leads Dante up through the heavens to the Empyrean and the vision of God.

CANTO 1

Par. 1.1 The glory of him who moves all things penetrates the universe and shines in one part more, and less elsewhere. I was in the heaven that receives most of his light, and I saw things that one who comes down from up there neither knows how nor is able to tell again; because, as it draws near to its desire, our intellect sinks so deep that memory cannot follow behind it.[1] Par. 1.10 Yet as much of the holy kingdom as I was able to store up as treasure in my mind will now be the matter of my song. O good Apollo, for this last labor make me such a vessel of your power as you require before you grant your beloved laurel. Until now one peak of Parnassus was enough for me, but now I need both as I enter the arena that remains. Enter into my breast, and breathe as you did when you drew Marsyas out of the sheath of his limbs.[2] Par. 1.22 O divine power, if you lend yourself to me so far that I may make manifest the shadow of the blessed kingdom imprinted in my head, you will see me come to your beloved tree and then crown myself with those leaves of which the matter and you will make me worthy. So seldom, father, are they

1 The heaven that receives most of God's light is the Empyrean, the highest heaven beyond all the physical spheres.
2 Parnassus, the mountain of poetry, has two peaks, traditionally sacred to the Muses and to Apollo. The satyr Marsyas challenged Apollo to a musical contest and, defeated, was flayed alive.

gathered for the triumph of either Caesar or poet (the fault and shame of human wishes), that the Peneian frond should give birth to joy in the joyful Delphic deity whenever it makes anyone thirst for it. A great flame follows a small spark: perhaps after me prayer will be made with better voices, so that Cirrha may respond.[3] Par. 1.37 The lamp of the world rises upon mortals through different outlets; but from the one that joins four circles with three crosses it comes forth on a better course and joined with a better star, and it tempers and seals the wax of the world more after its own fashion. That outlet, more or less, had made morning there and evening here; and all that hemisphere there was white, and the other part black, when I saw Beatrice turned toward her left side and gazing into the sun: never did an eagle fix its eyes on it so.[4] Par. 1.49 And just as a second ray usually issues from the first and rises up again, like a pilgrim who wants to return, so from her act, poured through my eyes into my imagination, mine was made, and I fixed my eyes on the sun beyond our custom. Much is permitted there that is not permitted here to our powers, thanks to the place made as the proper home of the human race. I did not endure it long, nor so little that I did not see it sparkle all around, like molten iron coming out of the fire. Par. 1.61 And suddenly it seemed that day had been added to day, as if he who has the power had adorned the heaven with another sun. Beatrice was standing with her eyes wholly fixed on the eternal wheels, and I fixed on her my eyes, withdrawn from on high; gazing at her I became within me as Glaucus became on tasting the herb that made him a companion of the other gods in the sea. To pass beyond the human could not be signified *per verba* [in words]; so let the example suffice for those

3 The Peneian frond is the laurel, into which Daphne, daughter of the river-god Peneus, was changed as she fled Apollo, the Delphic deity. Cirrha was a town near Delphi sacred to Apollo.

4 The four circles (horizon, equator, ecliptic and equinoctial colure) meet in three crosses where the sun rises at the spring equinox, in Aries. It is morning in the hemisphere of Purgatory and evening in ours.

to whom grace reserves the experience.[5] Par. 1.73 Whether I was only that part of me which you created last, Love who governs the heavens, you know, who lifted me with your light. When the wheel that you make eternal by being desired drew my attention to itself with the harmony that you tune and measure out, so much of the sky then seemed to me kindled by the flame of the sun that rain or river never made a lake so wide. The newness of the sound and the great light kindled in me a desire to know their cause, never felt with such keenness.[6] Par. 1.85 Then she, who saw me as well as I saw myself, to quiet my stirred mind, opened her mouth before I could open mine to ask, and began: "You make yourself dull with false imagining, so that you do not see what you would see if you had shaken it off. You are not on earth, as you believe; but lightning, fleeing its proper place, never ran as fast as you who are returning to yours." Par. 1.94 If I was stripped of my first doubt by those brief little words, smiled out to me, I was caught all the more within a new one; and I said: "I was already content and at rest from a great wonder; but now I wonder how I rise beyond these light bodies." Then she, after a sigh of pity, turned her eyes toward me with the look a mother gives her delirious child, and began: "All things whatsoever have an order among themselves; and this is the form that makes the universe resemble God.[7] Par. 1.106 In this the high creatures see the imprint of the eternal Worth, which is the end for which the rule just mentioned is made. In the order I speak of all natures are inclined, by different lots, nearer to their source or less near; so they move to different ports over the great sea of being, each with an instinct given to it to carry it. This carries fire toward the moon; this is the moving force in mortal hearts; this binds the earth together and unites it in

5 In Ovid, Glaucus was a fisherman who ate a magic herb and was changed into a sea-god.

6 The part created last is the soul, which God creates directly once the body is formed; the doubt echoes Saint Paul's "whether in the body or out of the body" (2 Corinthians 12).

7 The light bodies are the elements of air and fire, which in medieval cosmology lie between the earth and the sphere of the moon.

itself. Par. 1.118 And this bow shoots not only the creatures that lack intelligence, but also those that have intellect and love. The providence that sets all this in order makes forever still with its light the heaven within which turns the one that has the greatest speed; and there now, as to an appointed site, the power of that bowstring carries us, which aims whatever it shoots at a joyful target.[8] Par. 1.127 It is true that, just as a form often does not accord with the intention of the art, because the material is deaf to respond, so the creature sometimes departs from this course, since it has the power, though so impelled, to swerve in another direction (just as fire can be seen to fall from a cloud), if the first impulse, twisted by false pleasure, brings it down to earth. Par. 1.136 You should no longer wonder, if I judge rightly, at your rising, any more than at a stream if it descends from a high mountain down to the bottom. It would be a marvel in you if, freed of hindrance, you had stayed seated below, as stillness on earth would be in living fire." Then she turned her face back toward heaven.

CANTO 2

Par. 2.1 O you who are in a little boat, eager to listen, who have followed behind my ship that sails on singing, turn back to see your own shores again; do not put out onto the open sea, for perhaps, losing me, you would be left astray. The waters I take were never sailed before: Minerva breathes, and Apollo guides me, and nine Muses show me the Bears.[9] Par. 2.10 You other few who lifted your necks in time toward the bread of angels, on which one lives here but never comes away from it filled, you may well put your vessel out upon the deep salt sea, keeping to my furrow ahead of the water that turns level again. Those glorious ones who crossed over to Colchis were not as amazed as you will be,

8 The still heaven is the Empyrean; the one turning within it with the greatest speed is the Primum Mobile, the outermost moving sphere.
9 Minerva is the goddess of wisdom; the Bears are the northern constellations by which sailors steered.

when they saw Jason turned plowman. The thirst, inborn and perpetual, for the godlike kingdom carried us up almost as swiftly as you see the heavens move.[10] Par. 2.22 Beatrice was looking upward, and I at her; and perhaps in as much time as a bolt strikes, and flies, and is released from the catch, I saw myself arrived where a wondrous thing drew my sight to itself; and so she from whom my doings could not be hidden turned toward me, as happy as she was beautiful, and said to me: "Direct your mind gratefully to God, who has joined us with the first star." It seemed to me that a cloud covered us, shining, dense, solid and polished, like a diamond struck by the sun.[11] Par. 2.34 The eternal pearl received us within itself, as water receives a ray of light while remaining whole. If I was a body—and here one cannot conceive how one dimension admitted another, as must happen if body enters body—the desire should kindle us all the more to see that essence in which one sees how our nature and God were united. There what we hold by faith will be seen, not demonstrated, but known in itself, like the first truth that man believes.

THE SPOTS ON THE MOON

Dante asks what causes the moon's dark marks, and Beatrice refutes his explanation.

Par. 2.46 I answered: "My lady, as devoutly as I possibly can, I thank him who has removed me from the mortal world. But tell me, what are the dark marks on this body, which down there on earth make people tell tales of Cain?" She smiled a little, and then: "If the opinion of mortals errs," she said to me, "where the key of the senses does not unlock, surely the arrows of wonder should not pierce you now, since you see that reason, following the senses, has short wings.[12] Par. 2.58 But tell me what you your-

10 The Argonauts sailed with Jason to Colchis for the Golden Fleece and saw him yoke fire-breathing bulls to plow a field.
11 The first star is the Moon, the lowest of the heavenly spheres.
12 Popular belief held that the spots on the moon showed Cain carrying a bundle of thorns.

self think of it." And I: "What appears varied to us up here I believe is caused by bodies rare and dense." And she: "Certainly you will see your belief deeply sunk in falsehood, if you listen well to the argument I will make against it. The eighth sphere shows you many lights, which in quality and in quantity can be seen to have different aspects. If rare and dense alone did all this, one single power would be in them all, distributed more or less, or equally. Par. 2.70 Different powers must be the fruits of formal principles, and those, all but one, would by your reasoning be destroyed. Moreover, if rarity were the cause of that darkness you ask about, either this planet would be so starved of its matter right through in places, or else, just as a body apportions fat and lean, so this one would alternate the pages in its volume. If the first were so, it would be evident in the eclipse of the sun, from the light shining through, as it does through anything else rare into which it is poured. Par. 2.82 This is not so; therefore we must look at the other case, and if I happen to cancel the other, your opinion will be proved false. If it is so that this rarity does not pass right through, there must be a limit beyond which its contrary will not let it pass further; and from there the ray of another body is thrown back, just as color returns through glass that hides lead behind it. Now you will say that the ray shows itself dimmer there than in other parts, because it is reflected there from farther back. Par. 2.94 From this objection experiment can free you, if you ever try it — experiment, which is usually the spring for the streams of your arts. You will take three mirrors, and set two at an equal distance from you, and let the other, set farther away, meet your eyes between the first two. Turning toward them, have a light placed behind your back that lights the three mirrors and comes back to you reflected from them all. Although the more distant image does not spread as far in size, there you will see that it must shine with equal brightness. Par. 2.106 Now, just as under the blows of the warm rays the substance beneath the snow is left bare both of its former color and of its cold, so you, left thus in your intellect, I wish to inform with a light so living that it will twinkle as you look on it.

Within the heaven of the divine peace a body turns, in whose power lies the being of all that it contains. The following heaven, which has so many sights, distributes that being among diverse essences, distinct from it and contained by it.[13] Par. 2.118 The other circling heavens, by various differences, dispose the distinctions they hold within themselves toward their ends and their seeds. These organs of the world proceed thus, as you now see, from grade to grade, for they take from above and act below. Watch well how I make my way through this place toward the truth you desire, so that afterward you may know how to keep to the ford alone. Par. 2.127 The motion and the power of the holy circles must breathe forth from the blessed movers, as the art of the hammer from the smith; and the heaven that so many lights make beautiful takes the image from the deep mind that turns it, and makes itself the seal of it. And as the soul within your dust is diffused through different members, shaped for different powers, so the intelligence unfolds its goodness, multiplied through the stars, while revolving upon its own unity.[14] Par. 2.139 Different power makes a different alloy with the precious body that it quickens, in which it is bound, just as life is in you. Because of the joyful nature from which it derives, the mingled power shines through the body as joy through a living pupil. From it comes what seems different from light to light, not from dense and rare: it is the formal principle that produces, according to its goodness, the dark and the bright."

CANTO 3

Par. 3.1 That sun which first warmed my breast with love had uncovered for me, by proof and refutation, the sweet face of a beautiful truth; and I, to confess myself corrected and certain, as far as was fitting, raised my head higher to speak. But a vision

13 The heaven of the divine peace is the motionless Empyrean; the body turning within it is the Primum Mobile, and the next heaven, with its many sights, is the sphere of the fixed stars.

14 The blessed movers are the angels, who in medieval cosmology turn the heavenly spheres.

appeared to me that held me so close to itself, to look at it, that I did not remember my confession. Par. 3.10 As through clear and polished glass, or else through limpid and tranquil waters, not so deep that the bottom is lost, the outlines of our faces come back so faint that a pearl on a white forehead comes no more slowly to our pupils; so I saw many faces eager to speak, so that I ran into the error opposite to the one that kindled love between the man and the spring.[15] Par. 3.19 At once, as soon as I became aware of them, thinking them mirrored semblances, I turned my eyes to see whose they were; and I saw nothing, and turned them forward again, straight into the light of my sweet guide, who was smiling and glowing in her holy eyes. "Do not wonder that I smile," she said to me, "at your childish thought, since it does not yet trust its foot upon the truth, but turns you, as it usually does, toward emptiness. What you see are true substances, relegated here for failure in their vows.

PICCARDA

In the heaven of the Moon, Piccarda Donati tells Dante who she is and why she is here.

Par. 3.31 So speak with them, and listen, and believe; for the true light that satisfies them does not let them turn their feet away from it." And I turned to the shade that seemed most eager to talk, and began, almost like a man whom too much longing confounds: "O well-created spirit, who in the rays of eternal life feel the sweetness that, untasted, is never understood, it would be a kindness to me if you satisfied me with your name and with the lot you share." At which she, readily and with smiling eyes: Par. 3.43 "Our charity does not shut its doors to a just wish, any more than does that charity which wills all its court to be like itself. In the world I was a virgin sister; and if your mind looks well into itself, my being more beautiful will not hide me from you, but you will recognize that I am Piccarda, who, placed here with

15 Narcissus fell in love with his reflection in a spring, taking an image for a real person; Dante makes the opposite mistake.

these other blessed ones, am blessed in the slowest sphere. Our affections, which are kindled only in the pleasure of the Holy Spirit, rejoice in being formed according to his order.[16] Par. 3.55 And this lot, which seems so low, is given to us because our vows were neglected, and void in some respect." Then I to her: "In your marvelous aspects there shines I know not what divine, which transforms you from our first conceptions of you. So I was not quick to remember, but now what you tell me helps me, so that recognizing you is easier for me. But tell me: you who are happy here, do you desire a higher place, to see more, or to make yourselves more dear?" Par. 3.67 With those other shades she first smiled a little; then she answered me so gladly that she seemed to burn with love in the first fire: "Brother, the power of charity quiets our will, which makes us will only what we have, and gives us no thirst for anything else. If we desired to be higher up, our desires would be in discord with the will of him who assigns us here; which you will see has no place in these circles, if to be in charity is here *necesse* [necessary], and if you consider its nature well. Par. 3.79 Indeed it is the very form of this blessed *esse* [being] to keep ourselves within the divine will, so that our wills themselves are made one. So the way we are placed, from threshold to threshold throughout this kingdom, pleases the whole kingdom, as it pleases the king who draws our wills to his will; and his will is our peace; it is that sea to which all things move, whatever it creates and nature makes." Par. 3.88 It was clear to me then how everywhere in heaven is Paradise, even though the grace of the highest good does not rain down there in one measure. But just as it happens, if one food satisfies us and the appetite for another still remains, that we ask for this and give thanks for that; so did I with gesture and with word, to learn from her what was the web through which she did not draw the shuttle to the end. Par. 3.97 "A perfect life and high merit place in heaven, higher up, a lady," she said to me, "by whose rule in your world below women take the habit and the veil, so

16 Piccarda Donati, sister of Forese and of the Black leader Corso Donati, was a nun of the Poor Clares whom Corso took by force from her convent to be married.

that until death they may wake and sleep with that bridegroom who accepts every vow that charity conforms to his pleasure. To follow her, I fled from the world as a young girl, and enclosed myself in her habit, and promised to keep the way of her order. Then men more used to evil than to good tore me out of the sweet cloister; and God knows what my life became after that.[17] Par. 3.109 And this other splendor that shows itself to you on my right side, and that kindles with all the light of our sphere, takes what I say of myself as said of herself: she was a sister, and in the same way the shadow of the sacred veils was taken from her head. But after she had been turned back to the world, against her will and against good custom, she was never released from the veil of the heart. Par. 3.118 This is the light of the great Constance, who from the second gale of Swabia bore the third, and the last power." So she spoke to me, and then began to sing *Ave Maria* [Hail Mary], and singing she vanished, like a heavy thing through deep water. My sight, which followed her as far as was possible, after it lost her, turned to the mark of its greater desire and gave itself wholly to Beatrice; but she flashed so on my gaze that at first my sight could not endure it; and this made me slower to ask.[18]

CANTO 4

Par. 4.1 Between two foods, equally distant and equally tempting, a free man would die of hunger before he brought either one to his teeth. So a lamb would stand still between the cravings of two fierce wolves, fearing both alike; so a dog would stand still between two does. Therefore, if I kept silent, driven equally by my two doubts, I do not reproach myself, since it was necessary, nor do I commend myself. I kept silent, but my desire was painted on my face, and my question with it, far more ardently

17 The lady is Saint Clare of Assisi (c. 1194–1253), follower of Saint Francis and founder of the order of the Poor Clares.
18 Constance of Hauteville (1154–1198), queen of Sicily and, by legend, once a nun, married Emperor Henry VI, son of Frederick Barbarossa, and bore Frederick II, the last of the great Swabian emperors.

than if I had spoken it plainly. Par. 4.13 Beatrice did as Daniel did when he lifted Nebuchadnezzar out of the anger that had made him unjustly cruel, and said: "I see clearly how one desire and the other pull at you, so that your eagerness binds itself so tightly that it cannot breathe out. You argue: 'If the good will endures, by what reason does another's violence lessen the measure of my merit?' A further cause for doubt is given you by the souls' seeming to return to the stars, according to the teaching of Plato.[19] Par. 4.25 These are the questions that press equally on your *velle* [will]; and so I will first deal with the one that has more gall in it. Of the Seraphim, the one who most enters into God, Moses, Samuel, and whichever John you choose to take—I say, not even Mary—have their seats in no other heaven than those spirits who appeared to you just now, nor do they have more or fewer years for their existence. But all of them make the first circle beautiful, and they have sweet life in differing measure, through feeling the eternal breath more and less.[20] Par. 4.37 They showed themselves here not because this sphere is allotted to them, but to give a sign of the heavenly rank that is least exalted. It is fitting to speak in this way to your human understanding, since only from what is perceived by the senses does it grasp what it then makes worthy of the intellect. For this reason Scripture condescends to your capacity, and attributes feet and hands to God while meaning something else; and Holy Church represents to you in human form Gabriel and Michael, and the other who made Tobit whole again.[21] Par. 4.49 What Timaeus argues about souls is not like what is seen here, for he seems to mean it just as he says it. He says that the soul returns to its star, believing it was cut off from there when nature gave it to be a body's form. And perhaps his opinion is of another kind than his words

19 Nebuchadnezzar had ordered his wise men killed for failing to recover and interpret a dream he had forgotten; Daniel did both and calmed his anger (Daniel 2).

20 Either John: the Baptist or the Evangelist. The "first circle" is the Empyrean, the highest heaven, where all the blessed actually dwell.

21 The archangel Raphael, who in the Book of Tobit cures the blindness of Tobit.

sound, and may have a meaning not to be laughed at.[22] Par. 4.58 If he means that the honor and the blame for their influence return to these wheels, perhaps his bow strikes some truth. This principle, badly understood, once misled almost the whole world, so that it went astray into naming Jove, Mercury and Mars. The other doubt that troubles you has less venom, because its malice could not lead you elsewhere, away from me. That our justice should seem unjust in the eyes of mortals is a ground for faith, and not for heretical wickedness. Par. 4.70 But since your understanding can well penetrate this truth, I will satisfy you as you desire. If violence is when the one who suffers contributes nothing to what forces him, these souls were not excused by it; for the will, if it does not will, is not extinguished, but does as nature does in fire, even if violence twists it a thousand times. For if it bends, much or little, it goes along with the force; and so these did, when they could have returned to the holy place. Par. 4.82 If their will had been whole, like the will that held Lawrence on the gridiron and made Mucius severe to his own hand, it would have pushed them back along the road from which they had been dragged, as soon as they were free; but so firm a will is all too rare. And by these words, if you have gathered them as you should, the argument is cancelled that would have troubled you many times more. But now another pass crosses before your eyes, such that you would never get out of it by yourself; you would grow weary first.[23] Par. 4.94 I have set it firmly in your mind that a blessed soul could not lie, since it is always close to the first truth; and then you could hear from Piccarda that Constance kept her affection for the veil, so that she seems here to contradict me. Many times before now, brother, it has happened that to escape danger people did, against their will, what it was not right to do; like Alcmaeon, who, begged to do it by his father, killed his own mother: so as not to fail in

22 In Plato's dialogue *Timaeus*, named for its chief speaker, the Creator assigns each soul to a star, to which it returns after a good life.

23 Saint Lawrence was martyred on a gridiron in AD 258; the Roman Mucius Scaevola burned his own right hand in a fire before the Etruscan king Porsenna.

piety, he became pitiless.[24] Par. 4.106 At this point I want you to consider that force mixes with the will, and together they act so that the offenses cannot be excused. The absolute will does not consent to the harm, but it consents to it insofar as it fears that, if it draws back, it will fall into greater trouble. So when Piccarda says this, she means the absolute will, and I mean the other, so that we both speak the truth together." Par. 4.115 Such was the rippling of the holy stream that issued from the spring from which every truth flows; such was what set both one desire and the other at peace. "O beloved of the first lover, O divine one," I said then, "whose speech floods me and warms me so that it quickens me more and more, my affection is not so deep that it can suffice to render you grace for grace; but may he who sees and can, respond to this. Par. 4.124 I see well that our intellect is never satisfied unless the truth illuminates it, beyond which no truth extends. In that truth it rests, like a wild beast in its lair, as soon as it has reached it; and it can reach it—if not, every desire would be *frustra* [in vain]. Because of this, doubt springs up like a shoot at the foot of truth; and it is nature that drives us toward the summit, from ridge to ridge. Par. 4.133 This invites me, this gives me confidence, lady, to ask you with reverence about another truth that is obscure to me. I want to know whether a man can make amends to you for broken vows with other goods, such that they would not weigh too little on your scales." Beatrice looked at me with eyes full of sparks of love, so divine that my power, overcome, turned its back, and I almost lost myself, with my eyes cast down.

CANTO 5

Par. 5.1 "If I flame upon you in the heat of love beyond the measure that is seen on earth, so that I overcome the power of your eyes, do not marvel; for this comes from perfect sight, which, as it apprehends, so moves its foot toward the good it apprehends. I

24 Alcmaeon killed his mother Eriphyle at the bidding of his father Amphiaraus, whom she had betrayed to his death in the war against Thebes.

see clearly how the eternal light is already shining in your intellect, which, merely by being seen, always kindles love; and if anything else seduces your love, it is nothing but some trace of that light, poorly understood, that shines through there. Par. 5.13 You want to know whether, for a broken vow, one can pay so much with some other service as to make the soul secure against any claim." So Beatrice began this canto; and like one who does not break off speaking, she continued her holy discourse thus: "The greatest gift that God in his bounty made in creating, the one most conformed to his goodness and the one he values most, was the freedom of the will, with which the intelligent creatures, all of them and they alone, were and are endowed. Par. 5.25 Now, if you reason from this, the high worth of the vow will be clear to you, if it is so made that God consents when you consent; for in sealing the pact between God and man, this treasure, such as I describe it, becomes the sacrifice, and it becomes so by its own act. What, then, can be given in compensation? If you think you can make good use of what you have offered, you want to do good work with stolen goods. Par. 5.34 You are now certain of the main point; but since Holy Church grants dispensations in this, which seems contrary to the truth I have revealed to you, you must sit a little longer at table, because the tough food you have taken still needs help for your digestion. Open your mind to what I show you, and fix it there within; for to have understood without retaining does not make knowledge. Two things belong to the essence of this sacrifice: one is the thing of which it is made, the other is the agreement itself. Par. 5.46 This last is never cancelled unless it is kept, and it is about this that I spoke so precisely above; that is why the Hebrews were still required to make their offering, even though some offerings could be exchanged, as you must know. The other, which has been made clear to you as the matter, may well be such that there is no fault if it is exchanged for other matter. But let no one shift the load on his shoulder by his own choice, without the turning of both the white key and the yellow; and let him believe every exchange foolish if the thing laid down is not con-

tained in the thing taken up, as four is in six.[25] Par. 5.61 Therefore anything that weighs so much by its own worth that it tips every balance cannot be made good by any other outlay. Let mortals not take vows lightly: be faithful, but not crooked in doing so, as Jephthah was in his first offering; it would have been more fitting for him to say, 'I did wrong,' than to do worse by keeping his vow; and you can find the great leader of the Greeks just as foolish, for which Iphigenia wept for her lovely face, and made both the foolish and the wise weep for her, who heard tell of such a rite.[26] Par. 5.73 Christians, be more serious in your undertakings: do not be like a feather in every wind, and do not believe that every water will wash you. You have the Old and the New Testament, and the shepherd of the Church to guide you: let this be enough for your salvation. If wicked greed cries anything else to you, be men, and not mad sheep, so that the Jew among you does not laugh at you. Do not act like the lamb that leaves its mother's milk and, simple and frisky, fights with itself for its own amusement."

THE HEAVEN OF MERCURY

Dante and Beatrice rise to Mercury, where more than a thousand splendors come to greet them.

Par. 5.85 So Beatrice spoke to me, as I write it; then she turned, all longing, toward that part where the world is most alive. Her silence and her changed look imposed silence on my eager mind, which already had new questions before it. And like an arrow that strikes the target before the bowstring is still, so we sped into the second realm. There I saw my lady so joyful, as she entered the light of that heaven, that the planet itself grew brighter for it.[27] Par. 5.97 And if the star changed and smiled, what

25 The two keys of the Church's authority: in Purgatory 9 the gold key stands for the power to absolve and the silver for the discernment needed to use it.
26 Jephthah vowed to sacrifice whatever first came out of his house, and it was his daughter (Judges 11); Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to gain a fair wind for Troy.
27 The second realm is the heaven of the planet Mercury.

did I become, who by my very nature am changeable in every way! As in a fishpond that is calm and clear the fish draw toward anything that comes from outside, in such a way that they take it for their food, so I saw well over a thousand splendors draw toward us, and from each one was heard: "Here is one who will increase our loves." And as each one came to us, the shade could be seen full of joy in the bright radiance that issued from it. Par. 5.109 Think, reader, if what begins here did not go on, how anguished a craving you would have to know more; and you will see for yourself how I longed to hear from these of their condition, as soon as they were manifest to my eyes. "O you well born, to whom grace grants the sight of the thrones of the eternal triumph before you leave the warfare of life, we are kindled by the light that spreads through all heaven; and so, if you desire to be enlightened by us, satisfy yourself as you please." Par. 5.121 So it was said to me by one of those devout spirits; and by Beatrice: "Speak, speak with confidence, and believe them as you would gods." "I see well how you nest in your own light, and that you draw it from your eyes, because they sparkle when you smile; but I do not know who you are, nor why, worthy soul, you have the rank of this sphere, which is veiled to mortals by another's rays."[28] Par. 5.130 This I said, turned straight toward the light that had first spoken to me, at which it made itself far brighter than it had been. Like the sun, which hides itself through excess of light when the heat has eaten away the tempering of the thick vapors, so, through greater joy, the holy figure hid itself from me within its own ray; and so, wholly enclosed, it answered me in the way that the following canto sings.

CANTO 6

Par. 6.1 "After Constantine turned the eagle against the course of heaven, which it had followed behind the ancient hero who took Lavinia, for a hundred and a hundred years and more the bird of

28 Mercury, the planet nearest the sun, is usually hidden from view by the sun's light.

God remained at the far edge of Europe, near the mountains from which it first came forth; and there, under the shadow of its sacred wings, it governed the world, passing from hand to hand, and, changing so, it came into mine.[29] Par. 6.10 I was Caesar, and I am Justinian, who, by the will of the first Love that I feel, removed from the laws what was excessive and useless; and before I set myself to that work, I believed that there was one nature in Christ, no more, and I was content with that faith; but the blessed Agapetus, who was supreme shepherd, directed me to the true faith with his words. I believed him, and what he held in his faith I now see clearly, as you see that in every contradiction one side is false and the other true.[30] Par. 6.22 As soon as I walked in step with the Church, it pleased God, by grace, to inspire me with that high labor, and I gave myself wholly to it. And to my Belisarius I entrusted arms, and the right hand of heaven was so joined with him that it was a sign that I should rest from them. Now here my answer to your first question comes to its end; but its nature compels me to follow on with an addition, so that you may see with how much reason they move against the sacrosanct sign, both he who takes it for his own and he who opposes it.[31] Par. 6.34 See how much virtue has made it worthy of reverence." And he began from the hour when Pallas died to give it a kingdom. "You know that it made its dwelling in Alba for three hundred years and more, until the end, when the three fought the three for it once more. And you know what it did, from the wrong done to the Sabine women to the grief of Lucretia, under seven kings, conquering the neighboring

29 In AD 330 Constantine moved the seat of the empire east to Byzantium, reversing the westward course from Troy to Italy of Aeneas, who married Lavinia.
30 Justinian, emperor AD 527–565, had Roman law codified; Pope Agapetus I (535–536) was said to have turned him from the belief that Christ had only a divine nature.
31 Belisarius was Justinian's general, who reconquered Africa and Italy. Those who take the eagle for their own and those who oppose it are the Ghibellines and the Guelfs.

peoples round about.[32] Par. 6.43 You know what it did when carried by the outstanding Romans against Brennus, against Pyrrhus, and against the other princes and alliances; by which Torquatus, and Quinctius, who was named for his unkempt locks, the Decii and the Fabii won the fame that I gladly embalm with myrrh. It struck down the pride of the Arabs who, following Hannibal, crossed the Alpine rocks from which you, Po, glide down. Under it Scipio and Pompey triumphed as young men; and to that hill beneath which you were born it seemed bitter.[33] Par. 6.55 Then, near the time when all heaven willed to bring the world back to its own serene state, Caesar, by the will of Rome, takes it; and what it did from the Var to the Rhine, the Isère saw, and the Saône, and the Seine saw it, and every valley that fills the Rhône. What it did after it came out of Ravenna and leapt the Rubicon was of such flight that neither tongue nor pen could follow it.[34] Par. 6.64 Toward Spain it wheeled its host, then toward Durazzo, and struck Pharsalus so hard that the pain was felt as far as the hot Nile. Antandros and the Simois, from which it had set out, it saw again, and the place where Hector lies, and then roused itself again, to Ptolemy's harm. From there it swooped like lightning down on Juba; then it turned toward your west, where it heard the Pompeian trumpet. For what it did with the next bearer, Brutus and Cassius howl in Hell, and Modena and Perugia were made to grieve.[35] Par. 6.76 Because of it the sorrowful Cleopatra still weeps, who, fleeing before it, took from the serpent a sudden and dark death. With him it raced as far as the

32 Pallas died fighting for Aeneas in Virgil's *Aeneid*; the three Roman Horatii fought the three Curiatii of Alba. The abduction of the Sabine women under Romulus and the rape of Lucretia, which ended the monarchy, frame the age of Rome's seven kings.

33 Dante calls the Carthaginians "Arabs" because they came from North Africa; Quinctius is Cincinnatus, from Latin *cincinnus*, "curl." The hill is Fiesole, above Florence, destroyed by Rome according to legend.

34 The time near Christ's birth. The rivers mark the range of Julius Caesar's conquests in Gaul.

35 Antandros and the Simois are near Troy, where the eagle's journey began with Aeneas. The next bearer is Octavian (Augustus), who defeated Caesar's assassins Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42 BC and fought at Modena and Perugia.

shore of the Red Sea; with him it set the world in such peace that the temple of Janus was locked shut. But what the sign that makes me speak had done before, and was yet to do, throughout the mortal kingdom that is subject to it, becomes in appearance small and dim if one looks at it in the hand of the third Caesar with a clear eye and a pure affection;[36] Par. 6.88 for the living justice that inspires me granted it, in the hand of him I speak of, the glory of taking vengeance for its wrath. Now marvel at what I tell you further: afterward it ran with Titus to take vengeance for the vengeance of the ancient sin. And when the Lombard tooth bit the holy Church, Charlemagne, conquering under its wings, came to her aid. Now you can judge those whom I accused above, and their faults, which are the cause of all your ills.[37] Par. 6.100 One sets the yellow lilies against the public sign, and the other claims it for a party, so that it is hard to see which errs more. Let the Ghibellines, let them ply their arts under some other sign, for he always follows this one badly who separates it from justice; and let this new Charles not strike it down with his Guelfs, but let him fear the claws that have stripped the hide from a loftier lion.[38] Par. 6.109 Many times before now have the sons wept for the father's fault, and let no one believe that God will exchange his own arms for those lilies. This little star is adorned with good spirits who were active so that honor and fame might follow them; and when desires mount toward that, straying in this way, the rays of true love must mount upward less alive. But in the measuring of our wages against our merit lies part of our joy, because we see them neither less nor greater.

36 "Him" is Augustus, the eagle's next bearer; the doors of Janus's temple in Rome were shut only when the whole empire was at peace. The third Caesar is Tiberius, under whom Christ was crucified.

37 Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70; Dante sees this as punishing the Crucifixion, which had itself been the just punishment of Adam's sin. Charlemagne defeated the Lombards in 774 at the pope's call.

38 The yellow lilies are the arms of the French royal house, allies of the Guelfs against the imperial eagle; the Ghibellines claim the eagle for their own faction. The new Charles is Charles II of Anjou, king of Naples.

ROMEO OF VILLENEUVE

Justinian points out Romeo, the faithful minister of Provence repaid with slander.

Par. 6.121 Hence living justice so sweetens the affection in us that it can never be twisted toward any wickedness. Different voices make sweet notes down below; so the different seats in our life make sweet harmony among these wheels. And within this present pearl shines the light of Romeo, whose fine and great work was poorly rewarded. But the Provençals who worked against him have not had the last laugh; and so he takes a bad road who makes another's good deeds into his own harm.[39]
Par. 6.133 Raymond Berengar had four daughters, and each of them a queen, and this was done for him by Romeo, a humble man and a pilgrim; and then crooked words moved him to call to account this just man, who had returned him seven and five for every ten. Then he departed, poor and old; and if the world knew the heart he had as he begged his living crust by crust, much as it praises him, it would praise him more."[40]

CANTO 7

Par. 7.1 "*Osanna sanctus Deus Sabaoth, superillustrans claritate tua felices ignes horum malachoth!* [Hosanna, holy God of hosts, who with your brightness illumine from above the happy fires of these kingdoms!]" So, turning to its own melody, that substance, upon which a double light is twinned, seemed to me to sing; and it and the others moved into their dance and, like the swiftest sparks, veiled themselves from me in sudden distance. I was in doubt, and was saying, "Tell her, tell her," to myself, "tell her," I was saying, "tell my lady, who quenches my thirst with sweet

39 Romeo (Romieu de Villeneuve) was the trusted minister of the count of Provence; slandered by jealous courtiers, he is said to have left the court a beggar.
40 Raymond Berengar IV, count of Provence (died 1245), saw his daughters married to the kings of France, England, Germany and Sicily. "Seven and five for ten" means twelve for every ten entrusted to Romeo.

drops";[41] Par. 7.13 but that reverence which masters the whole of me, even at BE and at ICE, bowed me down again like a man falling asleep. Beatrice let me stay like this only a little while, and began, shining on me with a smile such as would make a man happy in the fire: "According to my infallible judgment, how just vengeance could justly be avenged has set you thinking; but I will quickly free your mind; and you listen, for my words will make you a gift of a great doctrine.[42]

WHY GOD BECAME MAN

Beatrice explains the Fall and why redemption came through Christ's death.

Par. 7.25 Because he would not endure a curb, for his own good, on the power that wills, that man who was not born, damning himself, damned all his offspring; and so the human race lay sick down there for many centuries in great error, until it pleased the Word of God to descend, where the nature that had strayed far from its Maker he united to himself in person, by the sole act of his eternal love.[43] Par. 7.34 Now turn your sight to what is now being reasoned out. This nature, united to its Maker, was pure and good as it was created; but by its own doing it was banished from Paradise, because it turned aside from the way of truth and from its life. The punishment, then, that the cross inflicted, if measured by the nature assumed, never bit anyone so justly; and in the same way none was ever so great a wrong, considering the person who suffered it, in whom that nature was joined. Par. 7.46 So from one act came different things; for one death pleased both God and the Jews: because of it the earth trembled and heaven opened. It should no longer seem hard to you when it is said that just vengeance was afterward avenged by a just court. But now I see your mind bound up, from thought to

41 A Latin hymn mixed with Hebrew words: *sabaoth* means "hosts" and *malachoth* "kingdoms." The singer is Justinian.
42 BE and ICE: the syllables of Bice, the familiar short form of Beatrice's name.
43 The man "who was not born" is Adam, created directly by God.

thought, within a knot, from which it waits with great desire to be released. Par. 7.55 You say: 'I clearly discern what I hear; but why God should have willed this way in particular for our redemption is hidden from me.' This decree, brother, lies buried from the eyes of everyone whose understanding has not matured in the flame of love. Yet, since many aim at this mark and few discern it, I will tell you why such a way was the more fitting. The divine goodness, which spurns all envy from itself, so sparkles as it burns within itself that it unfolds the eternal beauties. Par. 7.67 What distills from it without intermediary has no end thereafter, because its imprint does not change when it seals. What rains from it without intermediary is wholly free, because it is not subject to the power of the new things. It is the more like it, and so it pleases it more; for the holy ardor that shines on everything is most alive in what most resembles it. The human creature has the advantage of all these things, and if one is lacking it must fall from its nobility.[44] Par. 7.79 Sin alone is what robs it of its freedom and makes it unlike the Highest Good, so that it is little brightened by his light; and it never returns to its dignity unless it fills up where guilt empties, with just punishments against evil delight. Your nature, when it sinned *tota* [wholly] in its seed, was removed from these dignities, as it was from Paradise; nor could they be recovered, if you consider very carefully, by any way without passing through one of these fords: either that God alone, out of his courtesy, had pardoned, or that man by himself had made satisfaction for his folly. Par. 7.94 Now fix your eye within the abyss of the eternal counsel, fastened as closely as you can on my words. Man, within his own limits, could never make satisfaction, because he could not go as far down in humility, by obeying afterward, as he had meant to go up by disobeying; and this is the reason why man was shut out from being able to make satisfaction by himself. Therefore it was for God, with his own ways, to restore man to his whole life—I mean with one way, or else with both. Par. 7.106 But because a work is the

44 "The new things" are secondary created causes, such as the heavens, whose influence governs what God does not make directly.

more prized by its doer the more it shows of the goodness of the heart from which it came, the divine goodness, which imprints the world, was content to proceed by all its ways to raise you up again; nor between the last night and the first day has there been, or will there be, so lofty and so magnificent a proceeding, by either the one or the other. Par. 7.115 For God was more generous in giving himself to make man able to raise himself up again than if he had simply pardoned of himself; and all the other ways fell short of justice, if the Son of God had not humbled himself to become flesh. Now, to fill your every desire completely, I go back to explain a certain point, so that you may see it there just as I do. Par. 7.124 You say: 'I see water, I see fire, air and earth, and all their mixtures come to corruption and last only a little while; and yet these things were created'; so that, if what I have said was true, they ought to be safe from corruption. The angels, brother, and the pure country in which you are, may be called created just as they are, in their entire being; but the elements you have named, and the things that are made from them, are given their form by a created power. Par. 7.136 Created was the matter that they have; created was the informing power in these stars that wheel around them. The soul of every beast and of the plants is drawn out of a compound endowed with potential by the ray and motion of the holy lights. But your life the highest Beneficence breathes forth without intermediary, and makes it so in love with itself that it desires it ever after. And from this you can further infer your resurrection, if you reflect on how human flesh was made then, when the first parents were both made."

CANTO 8

Par. 8.1 The world used to believe, to its peril, that the fair Cyprian, turning in the third epicycle, rayed down mad love; so that the ancient peoples, in their ancient error, did honor not to her alone with sacrifice and votive cry, but they honored Dione and Cupid, the one as her mother, the other as her son, and they said

that he had sat in Dido's lap; and from her with whom I take my beginning they took the name of the star that the sun woos, now from behind its neck, now from before its brow.[45] Par. 8.13 I was not aware of rising into it; but my lady, whom I saw become more beautiful, gave me full assurance that I was within it. And as a spark is seen within a flame, and as a voice is distinguished within a voice when one holds steady and the other comes and goes, so I saw within that light other lamps moving in a circle, more and less swiftly, according, I believe, to their eternal vision. Par. 8.22 No winds, visible or not, ever came down from a cold cloud so swiftly that they would not have seemed hindered and slow to anyone who had seen those divine lights coming toward us, leaving the circling first begun among the high Seraphim. And within those that appeared foremost *Osanna* [Hosanna] rang out so that never since have I been without the desire to hear it again. Then one came nearer to us and alone began: "We are all ready at your pleasure, so that you may rejoice in us. Par. 8.34 We revolve with the heavenly princes in one circle, with one circling and with one thirst—those to whom you once said in the world: *Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete* [You who by understanding move the third heaven]; and we are so full of love that, to please you, a little quiet will be no less sweet." After my eyes had offered themselves reverently to my lady, and she had made them content and sure of her, they turned back to the light, which had promised so much of itself, and "Say who you are" was my voice, stamped with great affection.[46]

45 The "Cyprian" is Venus, born near Cyprus; Cupid, in Virgil, sat in Dido's lap disguised as Aeneas's son. The planet Venus is seen now after the sun as evening star, now before it as morning star.

46 The quoted line opens one of Dante's own canzoni, which he discusses in the *Convivio*. The "heavenly princes" are the Principalities, the order of angels that moves the heaven of Venus.

CHARLES MARTEL

Charles Martel of Anjou greets Dante, speaks of his lost realms and explains why sons differ from fathers.

Par. 8.46 And how much it grew, and how it changed, as I saw, through the new joy that was added to its joys when I spoke! Changed like this, it said to me: "The world held me below only a short time; and had it been longer, much evil that is to come would not have been. My joy keeps me hidden from you, shining around me and concealing me like a creature swathed in its own silk.[47] Par. 8.55 You loved me much, and you had good reason; for had I remained below, I would have shown you more of my love than the leaves. That left bank which is washed by the Rhône after it has mingled with the Sorgue awaited me in due time as its lord, and so did that horn of Ausonia which has for its towns Bari, Gaeta and Catona, from where the Tronto and the Verde pour into the sea.[48] Par. 8.64 Already there shone on my brow the crown of that land which the Danube waters after it leaves its German banks; and fair Trinacria, which is darkened between Pachynus and Pelorus, above the gulf that suffers most from Eurus—not because of Typhoeus but because of the sulfur forming there—would still have awaited its kings, born through me from Charles and Rudolf, if bad lordship, which always embitters subject peoples, had not driven Palermo to cry: 'Let them die, let them die!'[49] Par. 8.76 And if my brother foresaw this, he would already be fleeing the greedy poverty of Catalonia, so that it might not harm him; for truly provision must be made, by him or by someone else, so that no further load is laid on his already loaded boat. His nature, which came down mean from a

47 The speaker is Charles Martel of Anjou (1271–1295), eldest son of Charles II of Naples, whom Dante had met in Florence in 1294.
48 The left bank of the Rhône below the Sorgue is Provence; the "horn of Ausonia" (Italy) is the kingdom of Naples, bounded by the rivers Tronto and Verde.
49 The crown is that of Hungary. Trinacria is Sicily, lost to the Angevins when Palermo rose against them in 1282 (the Sicilian Vespers); Typhoeus is the giant said to lie beneath Etna.

generous one, would need officers who did not care about filling the coffers."[50] Par. 8.85 "Because I believe that the high joy your words pour into me, my lord, is seen by you, there where every good ends and begins, just as I see it, it is the more welcome to me; and this too I hold dear, that you discern it by gazing on God. You have made me glad, and so now make me clear, since by speaking you have stirred me to doubt, how bitter can come forth from sweet seed." Par. 8.94 This I said to him; and he to me: "If I can show you a truth, you will hold your face toward what you ask as you now hold your back. The Good that turns and contents the whole realm you are climbing makes its providence a power in these great bodies; and not only are the natures provided for in the mind that is perfect in itself, but they together with their well-being. For whatever this bow shoots falls disposed toward a foreseen end, just like a thing aimed at its mark. Par. 8.106 If this were not so, the heaven you are traveling through would produce its effects in such a way that they would be not works of art but ruins; and that cannot be, unless the intellects that move these stars are defective, and defective the first, which failed to make them perfect. Do you want this truth made clearer to you?" And I: "No indeed, for I see that it is impossible for nature to grow weary in what is needful." Par. 8.115 So he went on: "Now tell me, would it be worse for man on earth if he were not a citizen?" "Yes," I answered, "and here I ask for no proof." "And can that be, unless people below live in different ways for different tasks? No, if your master writes rightly for you." So he went on deducing as far as this; then he concluded: "Therefore the roots of your effects must be different: so that one is born Solon and another Xerxes, another Melchizedek, and another the one who lost his son flying through the air.[51] Par. 8.127 Circling nature, which is the seal upon the mortal wax, practices its art well, but does not distinguish one house from another.

50 His brother is Robert, later king of Naples, who brought Catalan officials back with him from his years as a hostage in Aragon.

51 The master is Aristotle, in the *Politics*. Solon stands for the lawgiver, Xerxes the warrior, Melchizedek the priest, and Daedalus, whose son Icarus fell in flight, the craftsman.

Hence it happens that Esau differs in seed from Jacob, and Quirinus comes from so lowly a father that he is ascribed to Mars. Begotten nature would always take a course like that of its begetters, if divine providence did not prevail. Now what was behind you is before you; but so that you may know that I delight in you, I want to cloak you with a corollary.[52] Par. 8.139 Nature, if it finds fortune out of harmony with it, always fares badly, like any other seed out of its own region. And if the world down there paid attention to the foundation that nature lays, and followed it, it would have good people. But you twist toward religion one who was born to gird on the sword, and you make a king of one who is fit for sermons; so your track is off the road."

CANTO 9

Par. 9.1 After your Charles, fair Clemence, had enlightened me, he told me of the frauds that his descendants were to suffer; but he said, "Be silent, and let the years roll on," so that I can say nothing, except that just lament will follow upon the wrongs done to you. And already the life of that holy light had turned back to the sun that fills it, as to that good which suffices for all things. Ah, deluded souls and impious creatures, who twist your hearts away from such a good, turning your heads toward vanity![53] Par. 9.13 And now another of those splendors came toward me, and showed its wish to please me by growing brighter on the outside. Beatrice's eyes, which were fixed on me as before, made me sure of their dear assent to my desire. "Ah, quickly grant fulfillment to my wish, blessed spirit," I said, "and give me proof that I can reflect in you what I am thinking." At this the light that was still new to me, from its depths, where it had been singing before, went on, like one who delights in doing good:

52 Esau and Jacob were twins, yet utterly unlike (Genesis 25). Quirinus is Romulus, whose humble father was replaced in legend by the god Mars.
53 Clemence is probably the daughter (some say the widow) of Charles Martel of Anjou, who spoke in Canto 8. His heirs were cheated of the throne of Naples by his brother Robert.

CUNIZZA

Cunizza da Romano names herself and foretells bloodshed in the Veneto.

Par. 9.25 "In that part of the depraved land of Italy that lies between Rialto and the springs of the Brenta and the Piave, there rises a hill, and it does not rise very high, from which there once came down a torch that made a great assault upon the region. From one root both that torch and I were born. I was called Cunizza, and I shine here because the light of this star overcame me. But I gladly pardon in myself the cause of my lot, and it does not trouble me, which might perhaps seem hard to your common folk.[54] Par. 9.37 Of this resplendent and precious jewel of our heaven, which is nearest to me, great fame has remained, and before it dies this hundredth year will yet be repeated five times. See whether a man should make himself excellent, so that his first life may leave another behind it! And the present crowd that the Tagliamento and the Adige enclose gives no thought to this, nor does it repent though it is beaten. But soon it will be that Padua at the marsh will change the color of the water that bathes Vicenza, because its people are stubborn against their duty.[55] Par. 9.49 And where the Sile and the Cagnano join, one lords it and goes with his head high, for whose capture the net is already being woven. Feltre will weep, too, for the crime of its impious shepherd, which will be so foul that no one ever entered Malta for the like. Too wide would be the vat that held the blood of Ferrara, and weary the man who weighed it ounce by ounce, which this courteous priest will give away to show himself a good party man; and such gifts will suit the way of life

54 Cunizza da Romano (c. 1198–after 1279), famous for her love affairs, was the sister of the tyrant Ezzelino III da Romano, the "torch" who ravaged the Veneto. The star is Venus.

55 The "jewel" is the troubadour Folco (Folquet de Marseille), who speaks next. The Paduans were routed near Vicenza by Cangrande della Scala in 1314.

of that country.[56] Par. 9.61 Above are mirrors—you call them Thrones—from which God in judgment shines upon us, so that these words seem good to us." Here she fell silent, and by the wheel in which she took her place again, as she had been before, she gave me the look of one whose mind had turned to something else. The other joy, already known to me as a precious thing, became in my sight like a fine balas ruby struck by the sun. Up there brightness is gained by rejoicing, as a smile is here; but down below the shade grows dark outwardly, as the mind is sad. Par. 9.73 "God sees everything, and your sight in-Hims itself," I said, "blessed spirit, so that no wish can hide itself from you. Why then does your voice, which ever gladdens heaven together with the singing of those devout fires that make themselves a cowl of six wings, not satisfy my desires? I would not wait for your request if I could in-you myself as you in-me yourself."[57]

FOLCO AND RAHAB

The troubadour Folco names himself, points out Rahab and attacks the greed of Florence and the papacy.

Par. 9.82 "The greatest valley in which the water spreads," his words then began, "apart from that sea that garlands the earth, stretches so far between discordant shores, against the sun, that it makes its meridian where it first used to make its horizon. I lived on the shore of that valley, between the Ebro and the Magra, which with its short course divides the Genoese from the Tuscan. Almost under the same sunset and the same sunrise lie Bougie and the city I came from, which once warmed its harbor with its own blood.[58] Par. 9.94 Folco I was called by those people to

56 Rizzardo da Camino, lord of Treviso (where the Sile and Cagnano meet), was murdered in 1312; in 1314 Alessandro Novello, bishop of Feltre, handed over refugees from Ferrara to be executed. Malta was a papal prison for clergy.
57 Dante coins three verbs here, "s'inluia" (in-Hims itself), "m'intuassi" (in-you myself) and "t'immii" (in-me yourself). The six-winged fires are the Seraphim.
58 The valley is the Mediterranean, believed to span 90 degrees of longitude. The speaker's city is Marseilles, whose harbor ran with blood when Caesar besieged it in 49 BC.

whom my name was known; and this heaven is imprinted with me, as I was with it. For the daughter of Belus, wronging both Sychaeus and Creusa, did not burn more than I did, as long as it befitted my hair; nor did that woman of Rhodope who was deceived by Demophoön, nor Alcides when he had enclosed Iole in his heart.[59] Par. 9.103 Yet here there is no repenting, but smiling—not at the fault, which does not come back to mind, but at the Power that ordained and provided. Here we gaze upon the art that adorns so great an effect, and discern the good by which the world above turns the world below. But so that you may carry away all your wishes fulfilled that were born in this sphere, I must go on still further. Par. 9.112 You want to know who is in this light that sparkles here beside me like a ray of sunlight in clear water. Now know that within it Rahab is at peace, and, being joined to our order, she seals it in its highest rank. By this heaven, where the shadow that your world casts comes to a point, she was taken up before any other soul of Christ's triumph.[60] Par. 9.121 It was indeed fitting to leave her in some heaven as a palm of the high victory that was won with the one palm and the other, because she favored Joshua's first glory in the Holy Land—which little touches the Pope's memory. Your city, which is a plant of him who first turned his back on his Maker, and whose envy has been so much lamented, produces and spreads the accursed flower that has led the sheep and the lambs astray, because it has made a wolf of the shepherd.[61] Par. 9.133 For this the Gospel and the great Doctors are abandoned, and only the Decretals are studied, as their margins show. On this the Pope and the cardinals are intent; their thoughts do not go to Nazareth, where Gabriel spread his wings. But the Vatican

59 Dido, daughter of Belus, loved Aeneas, betraying her dead husband Sychaeus and Aeneas's dead wife Creusa. Phyllis of Rhodope was abandoned by Demophoön, and Alcides (Hercules) loved Iole.

60 Rahab was the woman of Jericho who sheltered Joshua's spies (Joshua 2). The earth's cone of shadow was thought to reach as far as Venus, and Christ's triumph is his freeing of souls from Limbo.

61 The two palms are Christ's hands nailed to the cross. The accursed flower is the florin, Florence's gold coin stamped with a lily.

and the other chosen parts of Rome that have been a burial ground for the soldiery that followed Peter will soon be free of this adultery."[62]

CANTO 10

Par. 10.1 Gazing upon his Son with the Love that the one and the other eternally breathe forth, the first and ineffable Power made all that revolves through mind or through space with such order that no one who contemplates it can be without tasting of him. Lift up your sight, then, reader, with me to the high wheels, straight to that part where the one motion strikes against the other; and there begin to gaze with delight upon the art of that master who loves it so much within himself that his eye never leaves it.[63] Par. 10.13 See how from there the oblique circle that carries the planets branches off, to satisfy the world that calls on them; and if their road were not slanted, much power in the heavens would be in vain, and almost every potency here below would be dead; and if its departure from the straight were farther or less far, much would be lacking in the order of the world, both below and above. Now stay, reader, on your bench, thinking back over what is given here as a foretaste, if you wish to be glad long before you are weary. Par. 10.25 I have set it before you; now feed yourself, for that matter of which I have been made the scribe wrests all my care to itself. The greatest minister of nature, who stamps the world with the power of heaven and with his light measures time for us, joined with that part recalled above, was circling through the spirals in which he shows himself earlier every day; and I was with him, but I was not aware of my ascent, except as a man is aware of his first thought before it comes.[64] Par. 10.37 O Beatrice, she who guides

62 The Decretals were collections of papal decrees, the basis of the canon law that led to profitable church careers.

63 The point where the two motions meet is where the celestial equator crosses the ecliptic, at the spring equinox, when the sun is in Aries.

64 The minister is the sun, which in spring, while in Aries, rises a little earlier each day.

from good to better so suddenly that her action does not stretch out through time, how shining in herself she must have been! What was inside the sun where I had entered, showing itself not by color but by light, though I should call on genius, art and practice, I could never tell so that it might be imagined; but it can be believed—and let us long to see it. And if our imaginings are too low for such a height, it is no wonder, for there was never an eye that went beyond the sun. Par. 10.49 Such was the fourth family there of the high Father, who always satisfies it, showing how he breathes forth and how he begets. And Beatrice began: "Give thanks, give thanks to the Sun of the Angels, who by his grace has raised you to this sun of sense." Never was mortal heart so disposed to devotion, and so ready to give itself to God with all its goodwill, as I became at those words; and all my love was so set on him that it eclipsed Beatrice in forgetfulness.[65] Par. 10.61 It did not displease her; but she smiled at it so, that the splendor of her smiling eyes divided my united mind among many things. I saw many living and overpowering brightnesses make of us a center and of themselves a crown, sweeter in voice than shining in appearance. So we sometimes see the daughter of Latona girdled, when the air is so laden with moisture that it holds the thread that makes her belt.[66] Par. 10.70 In the court of heaven, from which I have returned, there are many jewels so precious and beautiful that they cannot be taken out of the kingdom; and the song of those lights was one of them. Whoever does not grow wings to fly up there, let him wait for news of it from the mute. Then, when, singing so, those burning suns had circled round us three times, like stars near the fixed poles, they seemed to me like women not yet released from the dance, who stop, silent, listening until they have caught the new notes.

65 The Sun is the fourth heaven, where the wise appear. The Father "breathes forth" the Holy Spirit and "begets" the Son.
66 The daughter of Latona is Diana, the moon, here seen ringed by a halo.

THOMAS AQUINAS AND THE WISE

Thomas Aquinas names the twelve wise spirits of the first garland.

Par. 10.82 And within one of them I heard begin: "Since the ray of grace, by which true love is kindled and which then grows, multiplied, by loving, shines so brightly in you that it leads you up that stair which no one descends without climbing it again, whoever denied you the wine of his flask for your thirst would be no more free than water that does not flow down to the sea. You wish to know with what plants this garland is in flower, which gazes lovingly around the lovely lady who strengthens you for heaven. Par. 10.94 I was one of the lambs of the holy flock that Dominic leads along the road where one fattens well if one does not stray after vanities. This one nearest me on my right was my brother and my master, and he is Albert of Cologne, and I am Thomas Aquinas. If you wish to be certain in the same way of all the others, follow my words with your sight, circling round the blessed wreath. That next flaming comes from the smile of Gratian, who so aided the one court and the other that it pleases in Paradise.[67] Par. 10.106 The next who adorns our choir was that Peter who, like the poor widow, offered his treasure to Holy Church. The fifth light, which is the most beautiful among us, breathes with such love that all the world down there is greedy for news of it. Within it is the lofty mind into which so deep a knowledge was put that, if the truth is true, no second ever arose to see so much.[68] Par. 10.115 Next see the light of that candle which, below in the flesh, saw deepest into the angelic nature and its ministry. In the next little light smiles that advocate of the Christian times, whose Latin Augustine made use of. Now if you draw your mind's eye from light to light after my praises, you

67 Albert the Great (d. 1280) was a Dominican philosopher and Aquinas's teacher. Gratian, a twelfth-century monk of Bologna, compiled the Decretum, which reconciled church law with civil law.

68 Peter Lombard (d. 1160) offered his Sentences to the Church as the poor widow offered her coins (Luke 21:1–4). The fifth light is Solomon, whose salvation was much debated.

are already left thirsting for the eighth. Within it, through seeing every good, rejoices the holy soul that makes the deceitful world plain to whoever listens to it well.[69] Par. 10.127 The body from which it was driven lies down below in Cieldauro, and it came from martyrdom and exile to this peace. See, beyond, the burning breath of Isidore, of Bede, and of Richard, who in contemplation was more than man. This one from whom your gaze returns to me is the light of a spirit to whom, in grave thoughts, death seemed slow in coming. It is the eternal light of Siger, who, lecturing in the Street of Straw, drew in syllogisms truths that brought him hatred."[70] Par. 10.139 Then, like a clock that calls us at the hour when the bride of God rises to sing matins to her bridegroom so that he may love her, in which one part pulls and pushes the other, sounding ting, ting with so sweet a note that the well-disposed spirit swells with love, so I saw the glorious wheel move and answer voice with voice in harmony and in sweetness that cannot be known except there where joy becomes everlasting.

CANTO 11

Par. 11.1 O senseless striving of mortals, how faulty are the syllogisms that make you beat your wings downward! One was going after law and one after aphorisms, one pursuing the priesthood, one ruling by force or by sophistry, one robbery and one civil business; one, wrapped in the pleasures of the flesh, was wearing himself out, and one was giving himself to idleness; while I, freed from all these things, was received up in heaven with Beatrice so gloriously. After each had returned to the point of the circle where it had been before, it stood still, like a candle in a candlestick.[71] Par. 11.16 And I heard, within that light which had

69 The candle is Dionysius the Areopagite, held to be the author of a treatise on the angelic hierarchies; the advocate is probably Orosius, who wrote a history defending Christianity. The eighth is Boethius, author of the Consolation of Philosophy.
70 Boethius, executed in AD 524, is buried in San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro at Pavia. Siger of Brabant taught philosophy in the Rue du Fouarre ("Street of Straw") in Paris.
71 The "aphorisms" stand for medicine, after the Aphorisms of Hippocrates.

spoken to me before, smiling, begin, as it grew brighter: "Just as I glow with its ray, so, gazing into the eternal light, I perceive your thoughts and the source from which you draw them. You are in doubt, and you wish my words to be sifted again in language so open and so plain that it may lie level with your understanding, where I said before, 'where one fattens well,' and where I said, 'no second was born'; and here there is need to distinguish carefully. Par. 11.28 The Providence that governs the world with that counsel in which every created gaze is defeated before it reaches the bottom, so that the bride of him who with loud cries wedded her with the blessed blood might go toward her delight, secure in herself and also more faithful to him, ordained two princes in her favor, to be her guides on this side and on that. The one was all seraphic in ardor; the other, for wisdom, was on earth a splendor of cherubic light.[72]

THE LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS

Thomas tells how Francis married Poverty and founded his order.

Par. 11.40 Of one I will speak, because whichever one is praised, both are spoken of, since their works were directed to one end. Between the Tupino and the stream that comes down from the hill chosen by the blessed Ubaldo, a fertile slope hangs from a high mountain, from which Perugia feels cold and heat through Porta Sole, while behind it Nocera and Gualdo weep under a heavy yoke. From this slope, where it most breaks its steepness, a sun was born into the world, as this sun sometimes rises from the Ganges.[73] Par. 11.52 Therefore whoever speaks of that place, let him not say Ascesi, which would be saying too little, but Orient, if he wishes to speak properly. He was not yet very far from his rising when he began to make the earth feel some comfort from his great power; for while still a youth he ran into war with his

72 The bride is the Church; the two princes are Saint Francis and Saint Dominic.
73 The slope is that of Monte Subasio, on which Assisi stands; the stream is the Chiascio, which flows from the hill near Gubbio where Saint Ubaldo lived as a hermit.

father for the sake of such a lady, to whom, as to death, no one gladly unlocks the door; and before his spiritual court, *Et coram patre* [and in his father's presence], he was united to her; and after that he loved her more strongly from day to day.[74] Par. 11.64 She, bereft of her first husband, had stood for eleven hundred years and more, despised and obscure, without any suitor until he came. Nor did it help her that men had heard how he who struck fear into the whole world found her untroubled, with Amyclas, at the sound of his voice. Nor did it help her to be constant and dauntless, so that, where Mary stayed below, she climbed with Christ upon the cross.[75] Par. 11.73 But so that I may not go on too obscurely, take Francis and Poverty from now on as these lovers in my full account. Their harmony and their joyful looks made love and wonder and tender gazing the cause of holy thoughts, so much so that the venerable Bernard was the first to bare his feet, and he ran after such peace, and as he ran he thought himself slow. O unknown wealth, O fruitful good! Giles bares his feet, Sylvester bares his feet, following the bridegroom, so greatly does the bride please.[76] Par. 11.85 Then that father and that master goes on his way with his lady and with that household already bound by the humble cord. Nor did baseness of heart weigh his brow down because he was the son of Pietro Bernardone, nor because he seemed marvelously despised. But royally he laid open his hard resolve to Innocent, and received from him the first seal upon his order.[77] Par. 11.94 After the poor people grew in number behind him, whose wondrous life would be better sung in the glory of heaven, the holy purpose of this chief shepherd was wreathed with a second crown by the eternal Spirit through Honorius. And after he had preached

74 "Ascesi," an old form of Assisi, also means "I rose," hence "Orient." The lady is Poverty; Francis renounced his inheritance before the bishop of Assisi and his father.

75 Her first husband is Christ. In Lucan, the poor fisherman Amyclas lay unafraid when Julius Caesar knocked at his hut.

76 Bernard of Quintavalle was Francis's first follower (not Saint Bernard of Clairvaux); Giles and Sylvester were also among his first companions.

77 Francis's father was a wealthy cloth merchant of Assisi. Pope Innocent III gave first approval to the Franciscan rule around 1209.

Christ and those who followed him, in his thirst for martyrdom, in the proud presence of the Sultan, and, finding the people too unripe for conversion, had returned, so as not to stay there in vain, to the fruit of the Italian grass, on the harsh rock between the Tiber and the Arno he received from Christ the final seal, which his limbs bore for two years.[78] Par. 11.109 When it pleased the one who had chosen him for so much good to draw him up to the reward he had earned by making himself little, he commended his dearest lady to his brothers, as to his rightful heirs, and commanded them to love her faithfully. And from her bosom his radiant soul chose to depart, returning to its own kingdom, and for its body it wanted no other bier. Par. 11.118 Think now what kind of man he was who was a worthy colleague in keeping Peter's ship on its true course on the high sea! And this man was our patriarch; so that whoever follows him as he commands, you can see, takes on good cargo. But his flock has grown so greedy for new fare that it cannot help but scatter through different pastures; and the farther his sheep wander from him, remote and straying, the emptier of milk they come back to the fold.[79] Par. 11.130 There are indeed some of them who fear the harm and keep close to the shepherd; but they are so few that little cloth will supply their cowls. Now, if my words have not been faint, if your hearing has been attentive, if you call back to mind what I have said, your wish will be partly satisfied, because you will see the plant from which they are chipping, and you will see the wearer of the leather belt who argues, 'Where one fattens well if one does not stray after vanities.'"[80]

CANTO 12

Par. 12.1 As soon as the blessed flame had taken up its last word to speak it, the holy millstone began to turn; and it had not yet

78 Pope Honorius III formally confirmed the rule in 1223; in 1219 Francis preached before the Sultan of Egypt. On Mount La Verna he received the stigmata in 1224, two years before his death.

79 Thomas, a Dominican, now means Saint Dominic, founder of his order.

turned full circle before another enclosed it in a ring and matched motion with motion and song with song: a song that, in those sweet pipes, surpasses our Muses, our Sirens, as much as a first splendor surpasses the one it casts back. Par. 12.10 As two arcs, parallel and of the same colors, curve across a thin cloud when Juno gives the command to her handmaid, the outer one born from the inner, like the speech of that wandering nymph whom love consumed as the sun consumes vapors, and they make people here foreknow, by the covenant God made with Noah, that the world will never again be flooded: so the two garlands of those eternal roses circled around us, and so the outer answered the inner.[81] Par. 12.22 When the dance and the high, great festival, both of singing and of flaming, light with light, joyful and gentle, had come to rest together at the same moment and with one will, just as the eyes, at the pleasure that moves them, must close and open together, from the heart of one of the new lights there came a voice that made me seem like the needle to the star as I turned toward where it was; and it began: "The love that makes me beautiful draws me to speak of the other guide, on whose account such fair things are said here of mine. Par. 12.34 It is fitting that where one is brought in, the other should be too, so that, as they fought for one end, so their glory may shine together. The army of Christ, which cost so dear to rearm, was moving behind the standard slow, fearful, and few, when the Emperor who reigns forever provided for his soldiery, which was in peril, out of grace alone, not because it was worthy; and, as has been said, he came to the aid of his bride with two champions, at whose doing and whose saying the people that had strayed gathered themselves again.

80 Dominican friars wore a leather belt; Thomas means himself and his own words in Par. 10.96.

81 Iris, the rainbow, was Juno's messenger; the nymph Echo pined for love of Narcissus until only her voice remained.

THE LIFE OF SAINT DOMINIC

Bonaventure tells of Dominic's birth, his learning and his fight against heresy.

Par. 12.46 In that region where sweet Zephyr rises to open the new leaves with which Europe is seen to clothe herself again, not far from the beating of the waves behind which, after its long course, the sun at times hides itself from everyone, lies fortunate Calaroga, under the protection of the great shield on which the lion is subject and subdues. Within it was born the ardent lover of the Christian faith, the holy athlete, kind to his own and harsh to his enemies;[82] Par. 12.58 and as soon as his mind was created, it was so filled with living power that, while he was still in his mother, it made her a prophet. When the espousals between him and the faith had been completed at the sacred font, where they dowered each other with mutual salvation, the lady who gave the assent for him saw in her sleep the wondrous fruit that was to come from him and from his heirs. And so that he might be in the very form of his name what he was, a spirit went forth from here to name him with the possessive of the one to whom he wholly belonged.[83] Par. 12.70 He was called Dominic; and I speak of him as of the husbandman whom Christ chose for his garden to help him. He truly seemed a messenger and an intimate of Christ, for the first love that showed itself in him was for the first counsel that Christ gave. Many times his nurse found him silent and awake on the ground, as if he were saying, 'I have come for this.'[84] Par. 12.79 O his father, truly Felice! O his mother, truly Giovanna, if the name, interpreted, means what is said! Not for the world, for whose sake men now toil after the Ostian and Taddeo, but for love of the true manna, in a short time he

82 Calaroga is Caleruega in Old Castile, in Spain; the royal arms of Castile and León show a lion both below and above a castle.
83 Dominic's mother was said to have dreamed she bore a dog with a torch in its mouth; his godmother dreamed of a star on his forehead.
84 Dominicus is Latin for "the Lord's." Christ's "first counsel" is commonly taken to be poverty (Matthew 19:21).

became a great teacher, such that he set himself to go round the vineyard, which soon turns white if the vinedresser is bad;[85] Par. 12.88 and of the see that was once kinder to the righteous poor—not through its own fault, but through his who sits there and degenerates—he asked, not to dispense two or three for six, not the fortune of the first vacancy, not *decimas quae sunt pauperum Dei* [the tithes that belong to God's poor], but leave to fight against the erring world for the seed from which the twenty-four plants that encircle you have sprung. Then, with doctrine and with will together, he went forth with the apostolic office, like a torrent driven by a high spring, and his onrush struck the thickets of heresy, most vigorously there where the resistance was most stubborn.[86] Par. 12.103 From him there then sprang various streams by which the catholic garden is watered, so that its saplings stand more alive. If such was the one wheel of the chariot in which Holy Church defended herself and won her civil strife in the field, the excellence of the other should surely be very plain to you, of whom Thomas, before I came, spoke so courteously. Par. 12.112 But the track made by the topmost part of its rim is abandoned, so that there is mold where the tartar used to be. His household, which set out straight, with their feet in his footprints, is so turned around that it sets the front foot where the back one was; and soon the harvest of the bad tillage will be seen, when the tares will complain that the granary is taken from them.[87] Par. 12.121 I do indeed say that whoever searched our volume leaf by leaf would still find a page where he would read, 'I am what I always was'; but it will not be from Casale or from Acquasparta, from where men come to the rule in such a way that one evades it and the other tightens it. I am the life of

85 Felice means "happy," and Giovanna was interpreted as "grace of the Lord." The Ostian is Henry of Susa, cardinal of Ostia, a canon lawyer; Taddeo is probably the Bolognese physician Taddeo d'Alderotto.

86 The see is the papacy. Dominic did not seek leave to give the poor only part of what was owed them, nor the first vacant benefice; the twenty-four plants are the spirits of the two garlands.

87 Good wine leaves a crust of tartar in the cask, bad wine leaves mold. Bonaventure, a Franciscan, is lamenting his own order.

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, who in great offices always put last the cares of the left hand. Illuminato and Augustine are here, who were among the first barefoot poor ones who made themselves friends to God in the cord.[88] Par. 12.133 Hugh of Saint Victor is here with them, and Peter Comestor, and Peter of Spain, who shines down below in twelve little books; Nathan the prophet, and the metropolitan Chrysostom, and Anselm, and that Donatus who deigned to set his hand to the first art. Rabanus is here, and shining at my side is the Calabrian abbot Joachim, endowed with the spirit of prophecy. I was moved to celebrate so great a paladin by the glowing courtesy and the discerning speech of Brother Thomas; and with me it moved this company."[89]

CANTO 13

Par. 13.1 Let whoever wishes to understand well what I now saw imagine—and let him hold the image firm as a rock while I speak—fifteen stars that in different regions quicken the sky with such brightness that it overcomes every thickness of the air; let him imagine that Wain for which the bosom of our sky suffices night and day, so that it does not vanish as its pole turns; let him imagine the mouth of that horn which begins at the tip of the axle around which the first wheel turns,[90] Par. 13.13 forming of themselves two signs in the heavens (like the one the daughter of Minos made when she felt the chill of death), and having their rays one within the other, and both turning in such a way that one went first and the other after; and he will have something like the shadow of the true constellation and of the double

88 Ubertino da Casale and Matteo d'Acquasparta led the strict and the lax factions of the Franciscans. This Augustine was an early follower of Francis, not the Church Father.

89 Peter of Spain's twelve-part logic textbook was famous (he became Pope John XXI). Donatus wrote the standard Latin grammar, grammar being the first of the liberal arts.

90 The fifteen brightest stars, the seven of the Wain (the Big Dipper), and the two at the mouth of the Little Dipper's "horn" make twenty-four, the number of the spirits in the two garlands.

dance that was circling the point where I was; for it is as far beyond our experience as the heaven that outruns all the others moves beyond the motion of the Chiana.[91] Par. 13.25 There they sang not Bacchus, not Paean, but three Persons in the divine nature, and in one person that nature and the human. The singing and the turning completed their measure, and those holy lights gave their attention to us, rejoicing as they passed from one care to the next. Then, among those concordant divine beings, the silence was broken by the light in which the wondrous life of God's little poor man had been told to me, and it said: "Since one sheaf is threshed, since its grain is already stored, sweet love invites me to beat the other.[92]

SOLOMON'S WISDOM

Thomas explains in what sense Solomon's wisdom had no equal.

Par. 13.37 You believe that into the breast from which the rib was drawn to form the lovely cheek whose palate costs the whole world dear, and into that breast which, pierced by the lance, made such satisfaction, both after and before, that it outweighs every fault on the scale, whatever light it is lawful for human nature to have was all infused by that Power which made the one and the other; and so you wonder at what I said above, when I told you that the good enclosed in the fifth light had no second.[93] Par. 13.49 Now open your eyes to what I answer you, and you will see your belief and my words become one in the truth, as the center in a circle. All that does not die and all that can die is nothing but the splendor of that Idea which our Lord, in loving, brings forth; for that living Light which so streams from its shining Source that it is not parted from it, nor from the Love that makes a trinity with them, of its goodness gathers its radiance, as though mirrored, in nine subsistences, eternally

91 Ariadne, daughter of Minos, was turned at her death into the constellation of the Crown. The Chiana was a sluggish, marshy river in Tuscany.
92 Bacchus and Paean (a name of Apollo) were hymned in pagan rites.
93 Thomas means Adam and Christ. The "fifth light" is Solomon, whom Thomas said had no equal in wisdom (Par. 10.109–114).

remaining one.[94] Par. 13.61 From there it descends to the lowest potencies, down from act to act, becoming such that it makes nothing more than brief contingencies; and by these contingencies I mean the generated things which the moving heaven produces with seed and without seed. The wax of these things, and what shapes it, are not always in the same state, and so under the ideal stamp it shines through more and less. Hence it comes about that one and the same tree, in the same species, bears better and worse fruit, and you are born with differing talents. Par. 13.73 If the wax were perfectly prepared, and the heaven were at its supreme power, the light of the seal would appear in full; but nature always gives it deficient, working like the artist who has the skill of the art and a hand that trembles. Therefore, if the fervent Love disposes and imprints the clear Vision of the first Power, all perfection is acquired there. Par. 13.82 Thus the earth was once made worthy of all the perfection of a living being; thus the Virgin was made to conceive. So I approve your opinion that human nature never was, nor will be, what it was in those two persons. Now if I went no further, 'Then how was this man without equal?' your words would begin. But so that what does not appear may appear clearly, think who he was, and the reason that moved him to ask, when he was told, 'Ask.'[95] Par. 13.94 I have not spoken in such a way that you cannot see clearly that he was a king, who asked for wisdom so that he might be a king equal to his task; not to know the number of the movers up here, or whether *necesse* [necessary] with a contingent ever made *necesse*; not *si est dare primum motum esse* [whether one must grant that there is a first motion], or whether a triangle can be made in a semicircle that has no right angle.[96] Par. 13.103 So, if you note what I said and this, kingly prudence is that matchless vis-

94 The Light is the Son, the Word or Idea, issuing from the Father, with the Holy Spirit as Love; the nine subsistences are the nine orders of angels that move the nine heavens.

95 God said to Solomon in a dream, "Ask what I shall give you," and Solomon asked for an understanding heart to judge his people (1 Kings 3:5–9).

96 These are questions of angelology, logic, natural philosophy, and geometry (a triangle drawn in a semicircle on its diameter always has a right angle).

ion at which the arrow of my intention strikes. And if you turn clear eyes to *Surse* [rose], you will see that it refers only to kings, who are many, and the good ones are rare. Take my words with this distinction, and so they can stand with what you believe of the first father and of our Beloved.[97] Par. 13.112 And let this always be lead on your feet, to make you move slowly, like a weary man, both to the yes and to the no that you do not see; for he is very low among the fools who affirms or denies without distinction, in the one case as in the other; because it happens that hasty opinion often bends to the false side, and then affection binds the intellect. Par. 13.121 He who fishes for the truth and lacks the art leaves the shore worse than in vain, because he does not return as he set out; and of this Parmenides, Melissus, Bryson, and many others who went on without knowing where are open proofs to the world. So did Sabellius and Arius, and those fools who were like swords to the Scriptures, in rendering straight faces crooked.[98] Par. 13.130 Let people not yet be too sure in judging, like one who reckons up the grain in the field before it is ripe; for I have seen the briar show itself stiff and fierce all winter long, and afterward bear the rose upon its top; and I once saw a ship, straight and swift, run across the sea through its whole course, and perish at last as it entered the harbor. Let not Dame Bertha or Master Martin think, because they see one man steal and another make offerings, that they see them as they are within the divine counsel; for the one may rise, and the other may fall."[99]

CANTO 14

Par. 14.1 From the center to the rim, and so from the rim to the center, the water in a round vessel moves, according as it is struck

97 *Surse* echoes Thomas's words about Solomon in Par. 10.114: "there never rose a second." The first father is Adam; "our Beloved" is Christ.
98 Parmenides and Melissus were Greek philosophers, and Bryson tried to square the circle; Aristotle criticized all three. Sabellius and Arius were heretics who erred about the Trinity.

from outside or from within. What I am saying fell suddenly into my mind as soon as the glorious life of Thomas fell silent, because of the likeness that arose between his speech and that of Beatrice, who was pleased to begin thus after him: "This man needs, though he does not tell you so, either with his voice or even yet in thought, to go to the root of another truth. Par. 14.13 Tell him whether the light with which your substance blossoms will remain with you eternally just as it is now; and if it remains, tell how, after you are made visible again, it can be that it will not harm your sight." As, when spurred and drawn on by greater gladness, those who go dancing in a ring at times raise their voices and quicken their movements with joy, so at that prompt and devout prayer the holy circles showed new joy in their wheeling and in their wondrous song. Whoever laments that we die here in order to live up there has not seen there the refreshment of the eternal rain. Par. 14.28 That One and Two and Three which ever lives, and ever reigns in Three and Two and One, not circumscribed and circumscribing all, was sung three times by each of those spirits with such melody that it would be a just reward for any merit. And I heard, in the most divine light of the smaller circle, a modest voice, perhaps such as was the Angel's to Mary, answer: "As long as the feast of Paradise shall last, so long will our love radiate such a garment around us.[100] Par. 14.40 Its brightness will follow our ardor, the ardor our vision, and that vision is as great as the grace it has over and above its own merit. When the glorious and holy flesh is put on again, our person will be more pleasing for being complete. Therefore the gratuitous light that the Supreme Good grants us will increase, the light that makes us fit to see him; so the vision must increase, the ardor that is kindled by it must increase, and the radiance that comes from that ardor must increase. Par. 14.52 But just as a coal that gives off flame, and with its living glow outshines it, so that its own form holds its ground, so this brightness that

99 Bertha and Martin are stock names for ordinary people, like "any Tom, Dick, or Harry."

100 The speaker is Solomon, the brightest light of the inner circle of the wise.

already encircles us will be surpassed in appearance by the flesh that the earth still covers over; nor will so much light be able to tire us, for the organs of the body will be strong enough for everything that can delight us." So quick and eager did both the one choir and the other seem to me in saying "Amen" that they clearly showed their desire for their dead bodies; Par. 14.64 perhaps not only for themselves, but for their mothers, for their fathers, and for the others who were dear to them before they became eternal flames. And suddenly, all around, of equal brightness, a luster arose above the one that was there, like a horizon that grows bright. And as at the coming on of early evening new appearances begin to show across the sky, so that the sight seems real and does not seem real, it seemed to me that there I began to see new beings, forming a ring outside the other two circumferences.

THE CROSS OF MARS

Rising to Mars, Dante sees the souls of warriors form a cross in which Christ flashes.

Par. 14.76 O true sparkling of the Holy Spirit! How sudden and glowing it became to my eyes, which, overcome, could not bear it! But Beatrice showed herself to me so beautiful and smiling that she must be left among those sights that the mind did not follow. From this my eyes regained the power to lift themselves, and I saw myself carried, alone with my lady, to a higher blessedness. I clearly perceived that I had risen higher by the fiery smile of the star, which seemed to me redder than usual.[101] Par. 14.88 With all my heart, and with that language which is the same in all people, I made a burnt offering to God, such as befitted the new grace; and the ardor of the sacrifice was not yet spent in my breast when I knew that the offering had been accepted and favorable; for splendors appeared to me within two rays, with such brilliance and so red, that I said: "O Helios, who adorn

101 They have risen to the fifth heaven, the planet Mars.

them so!”[102] Par. 14.97 As the Milky Way, picked out with lesser and greater lights, gleams white between the poles of the world, so that it leaves even the very wise in doubt, so those rays, thus starred, made in the depth of Mars the venerable sign that quadrants make where they join within a circle. Here my memory overcomes my skill; for that cross flashed forth Christ, so that I cannot find a worthy comparison. But whoever takes up his cross and follows Christ will yet forgive me for what I leave unsaid, when he sees Christ flashing in that whiteness. Par. 14.109 From arm to arm, and between the top and the bottom, lights were moving, sparkling brightly as they met and as they passed one another. So we see here, straight and slanting, swift and slow, ever changing in appearance, the motes of bodies, long and short, moving through the ray that sometimes streaks the shade that people contrive with skill and art for their protection. Par. 14.118 And as viol and harp, tuned in harmony with many strings, make a sweet tinkling for one who cannot make out the tune, so from the lights that appeared to me there a melody gathered along the cross that enraptured me, though I did not follow the hymn. I clearly perceived that it was of high praise, because there came to me “Rise again and conquer,” as to one who hears but does not understand. I fell so deeply in love with it that until then there had been nothing that bound me with such sweet bonds. Par. 14.130 Perhaps my word seems too bold, putting second the pleasure of the lovely eyes, gazing into which my desire finds rest. But whoever considers that the living seals of every beauty have more effect the higher they are, and that I had not yet turned there to those eyes, can excuse me for what I accuse myself of in order to excuse myself, and see that I speak the truth: for the holy pleasure is not excluded here, because it becomes purer as it ascends.

CANTO 15

Par. 15.1 A kindly will, in which the love that breathes rightly is always made manifest, as greed is in a wicked will, imposed silence on that sweet lyre and stilled the holy strings that the right hand of heaven slackens and tightens. How shall those beings be deaf to just prayers who, to give me the wish to pray to them, fell silent in accord? It is right that he should grieve without end who, for love of a thing that does not last, strips himself of that love forever.

CACCIAGUIDA

A spirit runs down the cross to greet Dante: his great-great-grandfather Cacciaguida.

Par. 15.13 As through the clear, tranquil and pure night skies a sudden fire shoots from time to time, moving eyes that were at rest, and seems a star changing its place, except that from the part where it flares up no star is lost, and it lasts only a moment: so, from the arm that extends to the right, to the foot of that cross there ran a star of the constellation that shines there; nor did the gem leave its ribbon, but ran along the radial strip, and it looked like fire behind alabaster. Par. 15.25 With such tenderness did the shade of Anchises reach forward, if our greatest Muse deserves belief, when in Elysium he caught sight of his son. *O sanguis meus, o superinfusa gratia Dei! sicut tibi, cui bis unquam coeli ianua reclusa?* [O my blood, O grace of God poured down from above! To whom, as to you, was the gate of heaven ever opened twice?] So spoke that light; and at this I gave it my attention. Then I turned my face back to my lady, and on this side and on that I was struck with amazement; for within her eyes there blazed such a smile that I thought that with mine I had touched the

102 Helios is Greek for the sun; Dante uses it here for God.

depth of my grace and of my Paradise.[103] Par. 15.37 Then, a joy to hear and to see, the spirit added to his beginning things that I did not understand, so deeply did he speak; nor did he hide himself from me by choice, but by necessity, for his conception rose above the mark of mortals. And when the bow of his burning affection had so spent its fire that his speech came down toward the mark of our intellect, the first thing I understood was: "Blessed be you, Three and One, who are so gracious toward my seed." Par. 15.49 And he went on: "A welcome and long-felt hunger, drawn from reading in the great volume where white and dark are never changed, you have satisfied, son, within this light in which I speak to you, thanks to her who clothed you with feathers for the lofty flight. You believe that your thought flows to me from him who is First, just as five and six radiate from one, if one is understood; and therefore you do not ask me who I am, and why I seem to you more joyful than any other in this happy throng. Par. 15.61 You believe the truth; for the lesser and the great of this life gaze into the mirror in which, before you think, you display your thought. But so that the sacred love in which I keep watch with perpetual sight, and which makes me thirst with sweet desire, may be better fulfilled, let your voice, confident, bold and glad, sound out your will, sound out your desire, to which my answer is already decreed." I turned to Beatrice, and she heard before I spoke, and smiled to me a sign that made the wings of my will grow. Par. 15.73 Then I began thus: "Affection and wisdom, as soon as the first Equality appeared to you, became of equal weight in each of you; for the Sun that lit you and set you burning with its heat and its light is so equal that all comparisons fall short. But in mortals will and the means to express it, for the reason that is plain to you, are unequally feathered in their wings. So I, who am mortal, feel myself in this inequality, and therefore I give thanks only with my heart for your fatherly welcome. Par. 15.85 Truly I beseech you, living topaz, who are set as a gem in this precious jewel, to satisfy me with your name." "O

103 Virgil, "our greatest Muse," tells in *Aeneid* 6 how Anchises reached out to his son Aeneas in Elysium.

my branch, in whom I took delight even while only waiting for you, I was your root": such was the beginning he made in answering me. Then he said to me: "He from whom your family takes its name, and who for a hundred years and more has circled the mountain on the first terrace, was my son and was your great-grandfather; it is truly fitting that you should shorten his long labor with your works.[104]

FLORENCE OF OLD

Cacciaguida describes the sober, peaceful Florence of his own day.

Par. 15.97 Florence, within the ancient circle of walls from which she still takes tierce and nones, lived in peace, sober and chaste. She had no necklace, no crown, no women in embroidered shoes, no girdle that was more to look at than the person wearing it. Not yet did a daughter, by being born, make her father afraid, for the marrying age and the dowry did not yet go beyond due measure, the one on this side, the other on that. She had no houses empty of families; Sardanapalus had not yet come there to show what can be done in the bedchamber.[105] Par. 15.109 Montemalo had not yet been surpassed by your Uccellatoio, which, as it has been surpassed in its rise, so will it be in its fall. I saw Bellincion Berti go about girt with leather and bone, and his wife come from her mirror without her face painted; and I saw the head of the Nerli and the head of the Vecchio content with bare leather, and their women content with the spindle and the flax. O fortunate women! Each was certain of her burial place, and none yet lay deserted in her bed for the sake of France.[106] Par. 15.121 One kept careful watch over the cradle

104 Alighiero, from whom the Alighieri take their name, is being purged on the first terrace of Purgatory, that of pride; the living can shorten such pains by prayer and good works.

105 The bells of the Badia, a church on the old city wall, still rang the canonical hours of tierce and nones; Sardanapalus was an Assyrian king proverbial for luxury.

106 Monte Mario (Montemalo) is the first view of Rome and the Uccellatoio of Florence, so Florence's splendor had not yet outdone Rome's. Bellincion Berti was a respected twelfth-century Florentine.

and, comforting the child, used the baby talk that first delights fathers and mothers; another, drawing the flax from the distaff, would tell her household tales of the Trojans, of Fiesole, and of Rome. A Cianghella or a Lapo Salterello would then have been thought as great a marvel as a Cincinnatus or a Cornelia would be now. To so restful, so lovely a life of citizens, to so trustworthy a citizenry, to so sweet a dwelling, Mary gave me, called upon with loud cries; and in your ancient Baptistery I became at once a Christian and Cacciaguida.[107] Par. 15.136 Moronto and Eliseo were my brothers; my wife came to me from the valley of the Po, and from her your surname came. Then I followed the Emperor Conrad, and he girded me as one of his knights, so much did I win his favor by my good deeds. I went with him against the iniquity of that law whose people, through the fault of the shepherds, usurp what is rightfully yours. There, by that foul people, I was freed from the deceitful world, the love of which defiles many souls, and I came from martyrdom to this peace."[108]

CANTO 16

Par. 16.1 O our petty nobility of blood! If you make people glory in you down here, where our affections languish, it will never be a wonder to me; for there, where desire is not bent awry—I mean in heaven—I gloried in it. Truly you are a cloak that quickly shrinks, so that unless something is added day by day, time goes round it with its shears. With the *voi* [you, the respectful plural] that Rome first allowed, and in which her people least persevere, my words began again; at which Beatrice, who was a little apart, smiling, seemed like the lady who coughed at the

107 Cianghella and Lapo Salterello were notoriously dissolute Florentines of Dante's day; Cincinnatus and Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, were models of Roman virtue.

108 Conrad III led the Second Crusade (1147–1149); the "law" is Islam, and what is "rightfully yours" is the Holy Land.

first recorded fault of Guinevere.[109] Par. 16.16 I began: "You are my father, you give me all boldness to speak, you lift me so that I am more than myself. By so many streams is my mind filled with gladness that it makes a joy of itself, because it can bear this and not burst. Tell me, then, my dear source, who your ancestors were, and what years were recorded in your boyhood; tell me of the sheepfold of Saint John, how great it was then, and who among its people were worthy of the highest seats."[110] Par. 16.28 As a coal quickens into flame at the breathing of the winds, so I saw that light grow resplendent at my endearments; and as it became more beautiful to my eyes, so, with a voice sweeter and gentler, but not in this modern speech, it said to me: "From the day on which *Ave* [Hail] was spoken to the birth in which my mother, who is now a saint, was relieved of me, whom she was heavy with, this fire came to its Lion five hundred and fifty and thirty times, to rekindle itself beneath its paw.[111]

THE OLD FAMILIES OF FLORENCE

Cacciaguida recalls the great families of his time and the causes of the city's decline.

Par. 16.40 My ancestors and I were born in the place where the last district is first reached by the one who runs in your annual race. Let it suffice to hear this of my forebears; who they were, and from where they came there, it is more fitting to keep silent than to speak. All those who at that time were there, able to bear arms, between Mars and the Baptist, were a fifth of those who are living now. But the citizenry, which is now mixed with Campi, with Certaldo and with Figline, was seen pure down to

109 Romans were said to have first used the plural voi in addressing Caesar. In the French romance of Lancelot, the Lady of Malehaut coughed on witnessing Guinevere's first kiss with Lancelot.
110 The sheepfold of Saint John is Florence, whose patron is John the Baptist.
111 From the Annunciation to his birth, Mars returned to the constellation Leo 580 times, placing Cacciaguida's birth around AD 1091.

the humblest artisan.[112] Par. 16.52 Oh, how much better it would be for those people I speak of to be neighbors, and to have your boundary at Galluzzo and at Trespiano, than to have them inside and endure the stench of the peasant of Aguglione and of the one from Signa, who already has a sharp eye for graft! If the people who stray furthest in the world had not been a stepmother to Caesar, but kind, like a mother to her son, there is one who has become a Florentine and changes money and trades who would have gone back to Simifonti, where his grandfather used to go about begging.[113] Par. 16.64 Montemurlo would still belong to the Counts; the Cerchi would still be in the parish of Acone, and perhaps the Buondelmonti in Valdigreve. The mingling of peoples has always been the beginning of the city's ills, as food heaped on food is of the body's; and a blind bull falls sooner than a blind lamb, and many times one sword cuts more and better than five. If you consider Luni and Urbisaglia, how they have gone, and how Chiusi and Senigallia are going after them, to hear how families come undone will not seem a strange or hard thing to you, since cities have their end.[114] Par. 16.79 All your things have their death, just as you do; but in some that last a long time it is hidden, and lives are short. And as the turning of the moon's heaven covers and uncovers the shores without rest, so Fortune does with Florence; and so what I shall tell of the great Florentines, whose fame lies hidden by time, should not seem a thing to marvel at. Par. 16.88 I saw the Ughi, and I saw the Catellini, the Filippi, Greci, Ormanni and Alberichi, illustrious citizens already in their decline; and I saw, as great as they were ancient, the Della Sannella together with the Dell'Arca, and the Soldanieri, and the Ardinghi, and the Bostichi. Over the gate

112 Florence was divided into six districts, and the course of the yearly Saint John's Day horse race entered the last at the old Cacciaguida houses. "Between Mars and the Baptist" means between the statue of Mars on the Ponte Vecchio and the Baptistery; Campi, Certaldo and Figline are nearby country towns.
113 The two men are probably Baldo d'Aguglione and Fazio of Signa, officials of Dante's time; those who "stray furthest" are the clergy, who opposed the emperor.
114 The Counts are the Guidi; the Cerchi, later leaders of the Whites, and the Buondelmonti came from the countryside. Luni, Urbisaglia, Chiusi and Senigallia were once-flourishing towns fallen into decline.

that is now laden with new treachery of such weight that it will soon be the ruin of the boat lived the Ravignani, from whom Count Guido is descended, and whoever has since taken the name of the noble Bellincione.[115] Par. 16.100 The Della Pressa already knew how one ought to govern, and Galigaio already had the gilded hilt and pommel in his house. Great already was the column of vair, and the Sacchetti, Giuochi, Fifanti and Barucci, and the Galli, and those who blush for the bushel. The stock from which the Calfucci sprang was already great, and the Sizii and Arrigucci had already been raised to the curule chairs. Oh, how great I saw those who have been undone by their pride! And the balls of gold made Florence flourish in all her great deeds.[116] Par. 16.112 So did the fathers of those who, whenever your church is vacant, grow fat by sitting in consistory. The arrogant clan that turns dragon behind whoever flees, and to whoever shows his teeth, or else his purse, grows meek as a lamb, was already rising, but from humble people, so that it did not please Ubertin Donato that his father-in-law afterward made him their kinsman.[117] Par. 16.121 Already Caponsacco had come down from Fiesole into the market, and already Giuda and Infangato were good citizens. I will tell a thing incredible and true: one entered the small circle by a gate that was named after the Della Pera. Everyone who bears the fair arms of the great baron whose name and worth the feast of Thomas keeps alive received knighthood and privilege from him; although the one who binds

115 The Ravignani houses by the Porta San Piero later passed to the Cerchi, leaders of the Whites. Bellincione Berti dei Ravignani was a contemporary of Cacciaguida.

116 A gilded sword hilt was a mark of knighthood; the "column of vair" was the arms of the Pigli, and "those who blush for the bushel" are the Chiaramontesi, one of whom cheated with the salt measure. Those "undone by their pride" are the Uberti, and the golden balls were the arms of the Lamberti.

117 The Visdomini and Tosinghi administered the bishop's revenues while the see was vacant. The "arrogant clan" is the Adimari, into which Bellincione Berti, Ubertino Donati's father-in-law, married another daughter.

those arms with a border sides with the people today.[118] Par. 16.133 The Gualterotti and the Importuni were already there; and the Borgo would still be quieter if it had gone without new neighbors. The house from which your weeping was born, through the just indignation that has brought death among you and put an end to your happy life, was honored, both it and its allies. O Buondelmonte, how wrongly you fled its wedding at the urging of others! Many who are sad would be happy if God had given you to the Ema the first time you came to the city.[119] Par. 16.145 But it was fitting that Florence, in her last peace, should offer a victim to that broken stone that guards the bridge. With these people, and with others along with them, I saw Florence in such repose that she had no cause to weep. With these people I saw her citizens so glorious and so just that the lily was never set reversed upon the spear, nor made red by division."[120]

CANTO 17

Par. 17.1 As was he who came to Clymene to make certain of what he had heard said against himself—he who still makes fathers sparing toward their sons—so was I, and so was I perceived both by Beatrice and by the holy lamp that had earlier changed its place for my sake. And so my lady said to me: "Send out the flame of your desire, so that it comes forth well marked with the inner stamp; not that our knowledge may grow through your speaking, but so that you may learn to tell your thirst, so that

118 The "small circle" is the city's old walls. The "great baron" is Hugh, margrave of Tuscany (d. AD 1001), commemorated on Saint Thomas's Day, who knighted several families; Giano della Bella, who bore his arms with a gold border, led the popular party.

119 The Amidei, whose daughter Buondelmonte dei Buondelmonti jilted, murdered him in AD 1216, a killing traditionally said to have begun Florence's feud of Guelfs and Ghibellines. The Ema is a stream he would have crossed coming to Florence from his family's castle.

120 The "broken stone" is the battered statue of Mars at the Ponte Vecchio, where Buondelmonte was killed. Victors trailed a defeated enemy's banner reversed; after the factional strife the Guelfs changed Florence's white lily on red to a red lily on white.

someone may pour for you."[121] Par. 17.13 "O my dear root, who are raised so high that, as earthly minds see that a triangle cannot contain two obtuse angles, so you see contingent things before they exist in themselves, gazing at the point to which all times are present: while I was in Virgil's company up the mountain that heals souls, and while descending into the dead world, grave words were spoken to me about my future life; though I feel myself truly four-square against the blows of chance. Par. 17.25 So my wish would be content to know what fortune is drawing near me; for an arrow foreseen comes more slowly." So I said to that same light that had spoken to me before, and, as Beatrice wished, my wish was confessed. Not in riddles, in which foolish people once used to be snared, before the Lamb of God who takes away sins was slain, but in clear words and in precise speech, that fatherly love answered, hidden and revealed by his own smile:

THE PROPHECY OF EXILE

Cacciaguida foretells Dante's exile from Florence and his refuge with the lords of Verona.

Par. 17.37 "Contingency, which does not extend beyond the pages of your material world, is all depicted in the eternal sight. Yet it takes no necessity from this, any more than a ship that goes down with the current takes it from the eye in which it is mirrored. From there, as sweet harmony comes to the ear from an organ, there comes to my sight the time that is being prepared for you. As Hippolytus departed from Athens because of his pitiless and treacherous stepmother, so you must depart from Florence.[122] Par. 17.49 This is willed, this is already being sought, and soon it will be done by him who plans it there where Christ is bought and sold all day long. The blame will follow the

121 Phaethon, taunted that he was not the Sun's son, asked his mother Clymene for the truth; his father's granting of his wish to drive the sun's chariot led to his death.

122 Hippolytus, falsely accused by his stepmother Phaedra after rejecting her advances, was banished from Athens by his father Theseus.

injured side in the outcry, as it usually does; but vengeance will bear witness to the truth that dispenses it. You will leave everything you love most dearly, and this is the arrow that the bow of exile shoots first. You will learn how salty another's bread tastes, and how hard a path it is to go down and go up another's stairs.[123] Par. 17.61 And what will weigh most heavily on your shoulders will be the wicked and senseless company with which you will fall into this valley, which, all ungrateful, all mad and impious, will turn against you; but shortly after, it, not you, will have its brow red for it. Its own conduct will prove its brutishness, so that it will be to your honor to have made a party by yourself.[124] Par. 17.70 Your first refuge and your first lodging will be the courtesy of the great Lombard who bears the holy bird upon the ladder; who will have such kindly regard for you that, between you two, of doing and asking, that will come first which among others comes later. With him you will see the one who was so stamped at his birth by this strong star that his deeds will be notable.[125] Par. 17.79 People have not yet taken notice of him because of his young age; for these wheels have turned around him only nine years. But before the Gascon deceives the noble Henry, sparks of his virtue will appear in his caring for neither silver nor toil. His acts of magnificence will yet be so well known that his enemies will not be able to keep their tongues silent about them. Look to him and to his benefits; through him many people will be transformed, rich and beggars exchanging their condition.[126] Par. 17.91 And you will carry this written in your mind about him, but you will not tell it"; and he told things incredible even to those who will see them. Then he added: "Son, these are the glosses on what was told you; here are the

123 Dante was exiled from Florence in AD 1302; the plotter is Pope Boniface VIII, in Rome.

124 The company is the other exiled Whites, whose attack on Florence in AD 1304 ended in a bloody defeat.

125 The great Lombard is Bartolomeo della Scala, lord of Verona, whose arms showed the imperial eagle on a ladder (scala); "the one" is his younger brother Cangrande, born under Mars.

126 The Gascon is Pope Clement V, who first supported and then worked against the emperor Henry VII (AD 1312).

snares that are hidden behind a few revolutions. Yet I do not want you to envy your neighbors, since your life will reach into the future far beyond the punishment of their treachery."

DANTE'S MISSION

Dante asks whether to tell all he has seen, and Cacciaguida urges him to speak out.

Par. 17.100 After the holy soul, by its silence, showed that it had finished putting the weft into the web I had held out to it warped, I began, like one who in doubt longs for counsel from a person who sees, and wills rightly, and loves: "I see well, my father, how time spurs toward me to deal me such a blow as is heaviest for whoever most gives way; so it is good that I arm myself with foresight, so that if the place dearest to me is taken from me, I may not lose the others through my poems. Par. 17.112 Down through the world that is endlessly bitter, and through the mountain from whose fair summit my lady's eyes lifted me, and afterward through heaven from light to light, I have learned what, if I tell it again, will have for many a sharp and sour taste; and if I am a timid friend to truth, I fear to lose life among those who will call this time ancient." Par. 17.121 The light in which my treasure, whom I had found there, was smiling first flashed, as a golden mirror does in a ray of sun; then it answered: "A conscience darkened by its own shame or by another's will indeed feel your words as harsh. But nonetheless, setting aside every lie, make your whole vision plain, and just let them scratch where the itch is; for if your voice is unpleasant at the first taste, it will leave vital nourishment afterward, once it is digested. Par. 17.133 This cry of yours will do as the wind does, which strikes the highest summits hardest; and that is no small proof of honor. Therefore only the souls known to fame have been shown to you in these wheels, on the mountain, and in the sorrowful valley; for the mind of one who hears does not rest, nor does it settle its faith on an example that has its root unknown and hidden, nor on any other argument that is not evident."

CANTO 18

Par. 18.1 Already that blessed mirror was rejoicing alone in its own word, and I was tasting mine, tempering the bitter with the sweet; and that lady who was leading me to God said: "Change your thought; think that I am near him who lightens the weight of every wrong." I turned to the loving sound of my comfort; and what love I then saw in the holy eyes, I leave untold here; not only because I distrust my speech, but because of the mind, which cannot return so far above itself unless another guides it. Par. 18.13 This much of that moment I can tell again: that, as I gazed at her, my affection was free of every other desire, so long as the eternal delight, which shone directly on Beatrice, contented me from her fair face with its second aspect. Overcoming me with the light of a smile, she said to me: "Turn and listen; for Paradise is not only in my eyes." Par. 18.22 As here on earth one sometimes sees affection in the face, if it is so great that the whole soul is taken up by it, so in the flaming of the holy splendor to which I turned I recognized its wish to speak with me a little more. It began: "In this fifth tier of the tree that lives from its top, and always bears fruit, and never loses a leaf, are blessed spirits who, below, before they came to heaven, were of such great renown that every Muse would be enriched by them. Par. 18.34 So look at the arms of the cross: the one I now name will do there what its swift fire does in a cloud." I saw a light drawn along the cross at the naming of Joshua, the moment it was spoken, nor did I hear the word before I saw the deed. And at the name of the great Maccabeus I saw another move, wheeling, and gladness was the whip of that top. So for Charlemagne and for Roland my attentive gaze followed two of them, as the eye follows its falcon in flight.[127] Par. 18.46 Then William, and Renouard, and Duke Godfrey drew my sight along that cross, and Robert Guiscard. Then, moving and mingling among the other lights, the soul that had

127 Joshua and Judas Maccabeus were warrior heroes of the Hebrew Bible; Charlemagne and his paladin Roland, of medieval epic, fought the Saracens in Spain.

spoken to me showed me what an artist it was among the singers of that heaven. I turned to my right side to see in Beatrice what I ought to do, signified either by speech or by gesture, and I saw her eyes so clear, so joyful, that her looks surpassed both her former and her latest wont.[128]

THE HEAVEN OF JUPITER

In Jupiter the souls of just rulers spell out "Love justice" and form an eagle.

Par. 18.58 And as a man, by feeling greater delight in doing good, becomes aware from day to day that his virtue is advancing, so I became aware that my circling round together with the heaven had widened its arc, seeing that miracle more adorned. And such as is the change, in a brief span of time, in a fair-skinned woman, when her face throws off the burden of shame, such was it in my eyes, when I had turned, because of the whiteness of the temperate sixth star, which had received me within itself.[129] Par. 18.70 I saw in that torch of Jove the sparkling of the love that was there trace out our speech to my eyes. And as birds risen from a riverbank, as if rejoicing together over their pastures, make of themselves now a round flock, now another shape, so within the lights holy creatures, flying about, were singing, and in their figures made themselves now D, now I, now L. At first, singing, they moved to their own note; then, becoming one of these signs, they would stop a little and fall silent. Par. 18.82 O divine Pegasean, who make minds glorious and render them long-lived, as they, with you, make cities and kingdoms, illumine me with yourself, so that I may set forth their figures as I have conceived them; let your power appear in these brief verses. They showed themselves, then, in five times seven vowels and consonants; and I noted the parts as they seemed

128 William of Orange and Renouard were heroes of French epic against the Saracens; Godfrey of Bouillon led the First Crusade; Robert Guiscard was the Norman conqueror of southern Italy.

129 The sixth star is Jupiter, thought temperate between hot Mars and cold Saturn; its white light replaces the red of Mars.

spoken to me. *Diligite iustitiam* [Love justice] were the first verb and noun of the whole design; *Qui iudicatis terram* [you who judge the earth] were the last. Then, in the M of the fifth word, they stayed in order, so that Jupiter seemed silver there, picked out with gold.[130] Par. 18.97 And I saw other lights descend where the peak of the M was, and come to rest there, singing, I believe, the good that moves them to itself. Then, as when burning logs are struck, countless sparks rise up, from which foolish people are accustomed to take omens, so more than a thousand lights seemed to rise again from there, and to climb, some a great deal and some a little, as the Sun that kindles them allotted them; and when each had settled in its place, I saw the head and neck of an eagle represented by that patterned fire. Par. 18.109 He who paints there has no one to guide him, but he himself guides, and from him derives that power which is the form of nests. The other blessedness, which at first seemed content to form a lily on the M, with a slight movement completed the imprint. O sweet star, what gems, and how many, showed me that our justice is the effect of the heaven that you adorn with gems! Par. 18.118 Therefore I pray the Mind, in which your motion and your power begin, to look upon the place from which comes the smoke that dims your ray; so that he may once more be angered at the buying and selling within the temple that was walled with blood and martyrdoms. O soldiery of heaven, on whom I gaze, pray for those who are on earth, all led astray behind the bad example. Par. 18.127 Once it was the custom to make war with swords; but now it is made by taking away, now here, now there, the bread that the merciful Father denies to no one. But you, who write only to cancel, consider that Peter and Paul, who died for the vineyard you are laying waste, are still alive. You may well say: "I have my desire so fixed on him who chose to live

130 The Pegasean is a Muse, so called from the spring Hippocrene struck by the hoof of Pegasus. The words open the biblical Book of Wisdom (1:1).

alone, and who for some dances was dragged to martyrdom, that I know neither the Fisherman nor Paul."[131]

CANTO 19

Par. 19.1 Before me, with its wings outspread, appeared the beautiful image that the interwoven souls, joyful in their sweet fruition, were forming. Each of them seemed a little ruby in which a ray of sunlight burned so brightly that it cast the sun back into my eyes. And what I must now portray no voice has ever carried, no ink has ever written, and no imagination has ever grasped; for I saw the beak, and heard it too, speak, and sound in its voice both "I" and "Mine" when in its meaning it was "We" and "Our."[132] Par. 19.13 And it began: "For being just and merciful I am exalted here to that glory which does not let itself be surpassed by desire; and on earth I left a memory of such a kind that the wicked people there praise it but do not follow its example." As a single warmth is felt from many embers, so from many loves a single sound came out of that image. And I at once: "O perpetual flowers of the eternal joy, who make all your fragrances seem to me a single one, release me, by your breathing, from the great fast that has kept me hungry for so long, since I found no food for it on earth. Par. 19.28 I know well that if divine Justice makes another kingdom in heaven its mirror, your kingdom does not perceive it through a veil. You know how intently I prepare myself to listen; you know what that doubt is which has been so long a fast for me." Like a falcon that, coming out of its hood, moves its head and claps its wings, showing its eagerness and making itself handsome, so I saw that sign, which was woven of praise of divine grace, become, with songs such as are known to whoever rejoices up there.

131 The address is to Pope John XXII, who issued and revoked excommunications for gain. John the Baptist, who lived in the desert and was beheaded after Salome's dance, appeared on the gold florin.

132 The souls of just rulers in the sixth heaven, the sphere of Jupiter, have arranged themselves in the shape of an eagle, the emblem of the Roman Empire.

JUSTICE BEYOND UNDERSTANDING

The eagle explains why human minds cannot grasp divine justice.

Par. 19.40 Then it began: "He who turned the compass round the limit of the world, and within it marked out so much that is hidden and so much that is plain, could not so imprint his power on the whole universe that his word would not remain in infinite excess. And this is made certain by the fact that the first proud one, who was the highest of all creatures, fell unripe because he would not wait for light; and from this it appears that every lesser nature is too small a vessel for that good which has no end and measures itself by itself.[133] Par. 19.52 Therefore our sight, which must be one of the rays of the mind with which all things are filled, cannot by its nature be so powerful that its source does not discern far beyond what is apparent to it. So the sight your world receives penetrates into the eternal justice as the eye does into the sea: for though from the shore it sees the bottom, in the open sea it does not, and yet the bottom is there, but the depth conceals it. Par. 19.64 There is no light unless it comes from the clear sky that is never clouded; otherwise it is darkness, either the shadow of the flesh or its poison. Now the hiding place that concealed from you the living justice, about which you raised your question so often, is opened wide enough to you; for you used to say: 'A man is born on the bank of the Indus, and there is no one there who speaks of Christ, or who reads, or who writes; and all his wishes and actions are good, as far as human reason sees, without sin in his life or in his speech. Par. 19.76 He dies unbaptized and without faith: where is this justice that condemns him? Where is his fault, if he does not believe?' Now who are you, who would sit on the judge's bench to judge from a thousand miles away with sight no longer than a span? Certainly, for one who reasons subtly with me, if the Scripture were not set above you, there would be marvelous cause for doubt. O earthly animals, O dull minds! The first Will, which is good in

133 The "first proud one" is Lucifer.

itself, has never moved from itself, which is the Supreme Good. Par. 19.88 Whatever accords with it is just to that degree; no created good draws it to itself, but it, by shining forth, causes that good." As the stork circles above her nest after she has fed her young, and as the one that has been fed looks up at her, so did the blessed image become (and so I raised my eyes), moving its wings driven by so many wills. Wheeling, it sang, and said: "As my notes are to you, who do not understand them, so is the eternal judgment to you mortals." Par. 19.100 After those shining fires of the Holy Spirit grew quiet, still in the sign that made the Romans revered by the world, it began again: "To this kingdom no one ever rose who did not believe in Christ, either before or after he was nailed to the tree. But see: many cry 'Christ, Christ,' who at the judgment will be far less *prope* [near] to him than someone who does not know Christ; and the Ethiopian will condemn such Christians when the two companies are parted, the one forever rich, the other destitute.

THE BAD KINGS OF CHRISTENDOM

The eagle condemns the rulers of Dante's day one by one.

Par. 19.112 What will the Persians be able to say to your kings when they see that volume open in which all their dishonors are written? There, among the deeds of Albert, will be seen the one that will soon set the pen moving, by which the kingdom of Prague will be laid waste. There will be seen the grief that he is bringing upon the Seine by falsifying the coinage, he who will die by the blow of a boar's hide. There will be seen the pride that brings thirst, which makes the Scot and the Englishman mad, so that neither can stay within his own bounds.[134] Par. 19.124 There will be seen the lust and soft living of the king of Spain, and of the king of Bohemia, who never knew worth, nor wished to. There will be seen the goodness of the Lame King of Jerusalem marked

134 Albert I of Habsburg invaded Bohemia, the kingdom of Prague, in 1304; the debaser of the coinage is Philip IV of France, who died in 1314 after a hunting fall caused by a wild boar.

with an I, while an M will mark the opposite. There will be seen the avarice and cowardice of the one who guards the island of fire, where Anchises ended his long life; and to make it understood how slight he is, his record will be written in abbreviated letters, which will note down much in little space.[135] Par. 19.136 And the foul deeds of the uncle and the brother, who have dishonored so distinguished a nation and two crowns, will be plain to everyone. And the king of Portugal and the king of Norway will be known there, and the king of Rascia, who looked on the coin of Venice to his harm. O blessed Hungary, if she no longer lets herself be ill-used! And blessed Navarre, if she armed herself with the mountains that encircle her! And everyone should believe that already, as a pledge of this, Nicosia and Famagusta are lamenting and crying out because of their beast, who does not stray from the side of the others."[136]

CANTO 20

Par. 20.1 When he who lights the whole world descends from our hemisphere so that the day fades on every side, the sky, which before was kindled by him alone, suddenly shows itself again through many lights, in which one light shines. And this action of the sky came into my mind when the emblem of the world and of its leaders fell silent in the blessed beak; because all those living lights, shining far more brightly, began songs that have slipped and fallen from my memory.[137] Par. 20.13 O sweet love, who clothe yourself in a smile, how ardent you seemed in those flutes, which had only the breath of holy thoughts! After the precious and shining jewels with which I saw the sixth light adorned had imposed silence on their angelic chimes, I seemed to hear the murmur of a river that comes down clear from rock

135 The Cripple of Jerusalem is Charles II of Anjou, king of Naples and titular king of Jerusalem: his virtues count as one (I), his vices as a thousand (M). The island of fire is Sicily, with Etna, ruled by Frederick II of Aragon.
136 Rascia is Serbia, whose king Stephen Uroš II counterfeited the Venetian ducat. Nicosia and Famagusta are cities of Cyprus, then ruled by Henry II of Lusignan.
137 Dante follows the belief that the stars shine with light received from the sun.

to rock, showing the abundance of its summit. Par. 20.22 And as sound takes its form at the neck of the lute, and as wind does that enters the vent of the pipe, so, all delay of waiting removed, that murmuring of the eagle rose up through its neck as if it were hollow. There it became a voice, and from there it came out through its beak in the form of words, such as the heart where I wrote them down was waiting for.

THE EYE OF THE EAGLE

The eagle names the six just rulers in its eye, including two pagans, Trajan and Ripheus.

Par. 20.31 "The part of me that sees, and in mortal eagles endures the sun," it began to me, "must now be gazed at intently, because of the fires from which I make my figure, those with which the eye in my head sparkles are the highest of all their ranks. He who shines in the middle as the pupil was the singer of the Holy Spirit, who carried the ark from town to town. Now he knows the merit of his song, insofar as it was the fruit of his own counsel, by the reward that is equal to it.[138] Par. 20.43 Of the five that form a circle for me as an eyebrow, the one nearest my beak consoled the poor widow for her son. Now he knows how dearly it costs not to follow Christ, by his experience of this sweet life and of its opposite. And the one who follows on the circumference of which I speak, along the upper arc, put off death by true penitence. Now he knows that the eternal judgment is not changed when worthy prayer, down there, makes today's into tomorrow's.[139] Par. 20.55 The next one, with the laws and with me, under a good intention that bore bad fruit, made himself Greek in order to yield place to the shepherd. Now he knows how the evil that came from his good action does not harm him, even though the world is destroyed by it. And the one you see on the

138 David, author of the Psalms, who brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

139 The first is the emperor Trajan, who in legend did justice to a widow and was later brought back from Hell by the prayers of Pope Gregory the Great; the second is Hezekiah, king of Judah, whose life God lengthened by fifteen years (2 Kings 20).

downward arc was William, whom that land mourns which weeps that Charles and Frederick are alive. Now he knows how heaven is in love with a just king, and he still makes it seen in the look of his radiance.[140] Par. 20.67 Who would believe, down in the erring world, that Ripheus the Trojan was the fifth of the holy lights in this circle? Now he knows much of divine grace that the world cannot see, although his sight does not discern its depths." Like a little lark that soars in the air, first singing, and then falls silent, content with the last sweetness that fills it, so seemed to me the image of the imprint of the eternal pleasure, by whose desire each thing becomes what it is.[141] Par. 20.79 And although, with my doubt, I was there like glass to the color that clothes it, it would not bear to wait its time in silence; but by the force of its weight it pushed out of my mouth: "What things are these?"—at which I saw great festivities of flashing light. Then at once, with its eye more kindled, the blessed sign answered me, so as not to keep me suspended in wonder: "I see that you believe these things because I say them, but you do not see how; so that, though they are believed, they are hidden. Par. 20.91 You are doing as one who grasps a thing well by its name but cannot see its essence unless someone else sets it forth. *Regnum coelorum* [the kingdom of heaven] suffers violence from ardent love and from living hope, which conquers the divine will: not in the way one man overpowers another, but it conquers that will because it wishes to be conquered, and, conquered, it conquers with its own kindness. The first life in the eyebrow and the fifth make you marvel, because you see the region of the angels adorned with them.[142] Par. 20.103 They did not leave their bodies as Gentiles, as you believe, but as Christians, in firm faith, the one in the feet that were to suffer, the other in the feet that had suffered. For

140 Constantine moved the empire, with its laws and its eagle, to Byzantium and, by the medieval legend of the Donation, left Rome to the pope. William II "the Good" ruled Sicily and southern Italy (d. 1189); that land now suffers under Charles II of Anjou and Frederick II of Aragon.

141 Ripheus is a minor Trojan whom Virgil calls "the most just" of his people (*Aeneid* 2.426).

142 The Latin echoes Matthew 11:12.

the one came back to his bones from Hell, where no one ever returns to good will, and this was the reward of living hope: of living hope, which put power into the prayers made to God to raise him up, so that his will could be moved. The glorious soul of whom I speak, having returned to the flesh, where it remained only a short while, believed in him who had the power to help it; Par. 20.115 and, believing, it was kindled in such a fire of true love that at its second death it was worthy to come to this joy. The other, through grace that wells from so deep a fountain that no creature has ever pushed its eye down to the first wave, set all his love, down there, on righteousness; so that, from grace to grace, God opened his eye to our future redemption; and so he believed in it, and from then on no longer endured the stench of paganism, and he rebuked the perverse peoples for it. Par. 20.127 Those three ladies whom you saw by the right wheel served him for baptism, more than a thousand years before baptizing. O predestination, how far removed is your root from the sight of those who do not see the first cause *tota* [whole]! And you mortals, keep yourselves restrained in judging; for we who see God do not yet know all the elect; and such a lack is sweet to us, because our good is perfected in this good, that what God wills we also will."[143] Par. 20.139 So by that divine image, to make my short sight clear, sweet medicine was given me. And as a good lute player makes the quivering of the string follow a good singer, so that the song gains more pleasure, so, while it spoke, I remember that I saw the two blessed lights, just as eyes blink together in accord, moving their little flames in time with the words.

CANTO 21

Par. 21.1 Already my eyes were fixed again on the face of my lady, and my mind with them, and it had withdrawn from every other purpose; and she was not smiling, but, "If I were to smile," she

143 The three ladies are Faith, Hope and Charity, who danced by the right wheel of the chariot in the Earthly Paradise (Purg. 29).

began to me, "you would become what Semele became when she turned to ashes; for my beauty, which, as you have seen, burns brighter the higher one climbs the stairs of the eternal palace, if it were not tempered, shines so much that your mortal power, at its brightness, would be a branch split by thunder.[144] Par. 21.13 We have been raised to the seventh splendor, which, beneath the breast of the burning Lion, now rays down mingled with its power. Fix your mind where your eyes are going, and make of them mirrors for the figure that will appear to you in this mirror." Whoever knew what pasture my sight found in that blessed face, when I turned to another care, would know how glad I was to obey my heavenly escort, weighing the one side against the other.[145]

THE GOLDEN LADDER

In Saturn Dante sees a golden ladder down which the contemplative souls descend.

Par. 21.25 Within the crystal that, circling the world, bears the name of its illustrious ruler, under whom all wickedness lay dead, I saw, the color of gold with a ray shining through it, a ladder rising upward so far that my sight could not follow it. I also saw so many splendors coming down its rungs that I thought every light that appears in the sky had been poured out from there. And as, by their natural habit, the jackdaws move about together at daybreak to warm their cold feathers;[146] Par. 21.37 then some fly off without returning, others turn back to where they started from, and others, wheeling, stay where they are; such, it seemed to me, was the way of that sparkling throng that came down together, as soon as it struck a certain rung; and the one that stopped nearest to us grew so bright that I said in my

144 Semele, mother of Bacchus, was burned to ashes when she beheld Jupiter in his full glory.
145 The seventh heaven is the sphere of Saturn, which at this time stood in the constellation of Leo.
146 The planet Saturn is named after the king of the Golden Age, the age of innocence.

thought: "I see well the love that you are signaling to me." But she from whom I await the how and the when of speaking and of keeping silent stays still; and so I, against my desire, do well not to ask. Par. 21.49 So she, who saw my silence in the sight of him who sees all, said to me: "Release your ardent desire." And I began: "My merit does not make me worthy of your answer; but for the sake of her who grants me leave to ask, blessed life, you who remain hidden within your joy, make known to me the cause that has placed you so near me; and tell me why in this wheel the sweet symphony of Paradise is silent, which sounds so devoutly down through the others." Par. 21.61 "You have mortal hearing, as you have mortal sight," it answered me; "so there is no singing here for the same reason that Beatrice has not smiled. I came down so far along the steps of the holy ladder only to welcome you with my words and with the light that mantles me; nor did greater love make me more prompt, for as much love and more burns from here upward, as the flaming shows you; but the high charity that makes us ready servants of the counsel that governs the world assigns our parts here, as you observe." Par. 21.73 "I see well, sacred lamp," I said, "how free love in this court is enough to follow eternal providence; but this is what seems hard for me to discern: why you alone among your companions were predestined to this office." I had not reached the last word before the light made a center of its middle, whirling itself like a swift millstone. Then the love that was within it answered: "A divine light is focused upon me, piercing through this light in which I am enwombed; Par. 21.85 and its power, joined with my sight, lifts me so far above myself that I see the supreme essence from which it is drawn. From this comes the joy with which I flame; for I match the brightness of my flame to the clearness of my vision, as clear as it is. But the soul in heaven that is most brightly lit, that Seraph who has his eye most fixed on God, would not satisfy your question; for what you ask lies so deep within the abyss of the eternal decree that it is cut off from every created sight. Par. 21.97 And when you return to the mortal world, report this, so that it may no longer pre-

sume to move its feet toward so great a goal. The mind that shines here smokes on earth; consider, then, how it could do down there what it cannot do even though heaven takes it up to itself." His words so set limits on me that I left the question and drew back to asking it humbly who it had been.

PETER DAMIAN

Peter Damian tells of his life and attacks the luxury of modern prelates.

Par. 21.106 "Between the two shores of Italy, and not very far from your homeland, crags rise so high that the thunder sounds far below them, and they form a hump called Catria, beneath which a hermitage is consecrated that used to be given over to the worship of God alone." So it began its third speech to me; and then, continuing, it said: "There I became so steadfast in the service of God that, with food seasoned only with the juice of olives, I passed lightly through heat and frost, content in contemplative thoughts.[147] Par. 21.118 That cloister used to yield a rich harvest to these heavens, and now it has become empty, so that soon this must be revealed. In that place I was Peter Damian; and I was Peter the Sinner in the house of Our Lady on the Adriatic shore. Little of mortal life was left to me when I was called and dragged to that hat which is only ever poured from bad into worse. Cephas came, and the great vessel of the Holy Spirit came, lean and barefoot, taking their food at any inn whatever.[148] Par. 21.130 Now the modern shepherds need someone to prop them up on this side and on that, and someone to lead them, so heavy are they, and someone to hold them up from behind. They cover their palfreys with their cloaks, so that two beasts go under one hide: O patience, that bears so much!" At this cry I saw more little flames descending from step to step and whirling, and

147 Catria is a peak of the Apennines between Umbria and the Marche; beneath it stands the monastery of Fonte Avellana.

148 Peter Damian (c. 1007–1072), a reforming monk of Fonte Avellana, was made a cardinal ("that hat") in 1057. Cephas is Saint Peter, and the "great vessel" Saint Paul, the "chosen vessel" of Acts 9:15.

every turn made them more beautiful. They came around this one and stopped, and raised a cry of so loud a sound that nothing here could be likened to it; nor did I understand it, so the thunder overcame me.

CANTO 22

Par. 22.1 Overwhelmed with amazement, I turned to my guide, like a little child who always runs back to the one he trusts most; and she, like a mother who quickly comforts her pale and breathless son with her voice, which is accustomed to calm him, said to me: "Do you not know that you are in heaven? And do you not know that heaven is all holy, and that whatever is done here comes from good zeal? Par. 22.10 How the song would have transformed you, and I by smiling, you can now imagine, since the cry has moved you so much; and in it, if you had understood its prayers, you would already know the vengeance that you will see before you die. The sword from up here does not cut in haste, nor late, except as it seems to the one who awaits it in longing or in fear. Par. 22.19 But now turn toward the others; for you will see many illustrious spirits, if you bring your gaze back as I say." As it pleased her, I directed my eyes, and saw a hundred little spheres, which together grew more beautiful with their mutual rays. I stood like one who represses within himself the prick of desire, and does not venture to ask, so afraid is he of going too far. And the largest and most luminous of those pearls came forward, to satisfy my wish concerning itself.

SAINT BENEDICT

Saint Benedict names himself and laments the corruption of his monks.

Par. 22.31 Then within it I heard: "If you saw, as I do, the charity that burns among us, your thoughts would have been expressed; but so that you may not, by waiting, be delayed from the high goal, I will answer the very thought about which you are so guarded. That mountain on whose slope Cassino lies was once frequented

at its summit by the deceived and ill-disposed people.[149] Par. 22.40 And I am he who first carried up there the name of him who brought to earth the truth that so exalts us; and so much grace shone upon me that I drew the surrounding towns away from the impious worship that seduced the world. These other fires were all contemplative men, kindled by that warmth which gives birth to holy flowers and fruits. Here is Macarius, here is Romuald, here are my brothers who stayed their feet within the cloisters and kept their hearts steadfast."[150] Par. 22.52 And I to him: "The affection you show in speaking with me, and the kindly look that I see and note in all your fires, have expanded my confidence as the sun does the rose when it opens as wide as it has power to. So I beg you—and do you, father, assure me—whether I may receive so great a grace that I may see you in your unveiled form." And he: "Brother, your high desire will be fulfilled in the last sphere, where all others are fulfilled, and mine. Par. 22.64 There every desire is perfect, ripe and whole; in that one alone every part is where it always was, for it is not in space and has no poles; and our ladder reaches all the way up to it, which is why it steals itself from your sight. The patriarch Jacob saw it stretch its upper part all the way up there, when it appeared to him so laden with angels. But now no one lifts his feet from the earth to climb it, and my rule is left only to waste the paper it is written on.[151] Par. 22.76 The walls that used to be an abbey have become dens, and the cowls are sacks full of rotten flour. But even heavy usury is not exacted so much against God's pleasure as that fruit which makes the hearts of monks so mad. For whatever the Church keeps belongs entirely to the people who beg in God's name; not to relatives, nor to others fouler still. The flesh of mortals is so soft that down there a good beginning does not last from the springing of the oak to the bearing of the acorn. Par. 22.88

149 The speaker is Saint Benedict (c. 480–547), who founded the abbey of Monte Cassino on a mountain where a temple of Apollo had stood.

150 Macarius is probably the Egyptian desert father (4th century AD); Romuald (c. 951–1027) founded the Camaldolese order of hermits.

151 In Genesis 28:12 Jacob dreams of a ladder reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it.

Peter began his without gold and without silver, and I mine with prayers and with fasting, and Francis his community in humility. And if you look at the beginning of each, then look again at where it has strayed to, you will see the white turned dark. Truly, the Jordan turned back, and the sea fleeing when God so willed, were more marvelous to see than help would be here." So he spoke to me, and then drew back to his company, and the company closed together; then, like a whirlwind, it all gathered itself upward.[152]

INTO THE FIXED STARS

Dante rises to the sign of Gemini and looks down at the little earth.

Par. 22.100 The sweet lady urged me after them up that ladder with a single sign, so did her power overcome my nature; nor ever down here, where one climbs and descends by nature, was there motion so swift that it could equal my wing. As I hope ever to return, reader, to that devout triumph for whose sake I often weep for my sins and beat my breast, you would not have drawn out and thrust your finger into the fire in as little time as it took me to see the sign that follows the Bull, and to be within it.[153] Par. 22.112 O glorious stars, O light pregnant with great power, from which I acknowledge all my genius, whatever it may be: with you was rising and with you was setting he who is the father of every mortal life, when I first breathed the Tuscan air; and then, when grace was granted me to enter the high wheel that turns you, your region was allotted to me.[154] Par. 22.121 To you my soul now devoutly sighs, to gain strength for the hard passage that draws it to itself. "You are so near the final salvation," Beatrice began, "that you must have your eyes clear and keen. And therefore, before you enter further into it, look down again and see

152 The Red Sea parted for Moses and the Jordan turned back for Joshua (Psalm 114:3).

153 The sign that follows Taurus (the Bull) is Gemini, Dante's birth sign, here in the heaven of the fixed stars.

154 The "father of every mortal life" is the sun, which was in Gemini at Dante's birth in late May or June 1265.

how much of the world I have already set beneath your feet; so that your heart, as joyful as it can be, may present itself to the triumphant throng that comes rejoicing through this round ether." Par. 22.133 With my sight I went back through all the seven spheres, and saw this globe such that I smiled at its paltry appearance; and I approve as best the judgment that holds it least; and one who sets his thoughts elsewhere may truly be called upright. I saw Latona's daughter glowing without that shadow which was the reason why I once believed her rare and dense. The face of your son, Hyperion, I endured there, and I saw how Maia and Dione move around him and near him.[155] Par. 22.145 Then there appeared to me the tempering of Jupiter between the father and the son; and then the variations they make in their positions were clear to me. And all seven showed me how great they are and how swift, and how far apart their dwellings lie. The little patch of ground that makes us so fierce, as I turned with the eternal Twins, appeared to me entire, from the hills to the river mouths. Then I turned my eyes back to the beautiful eyes.[156]

CANTO 23

Par. 23.1 As the bird among the beloved leaves, having rested on the nest of her sweet young through the night that hides things from us, in order to see the longed-for faces and to find the food to feed them with—a task in which her heavy labors are a pleasure to her—forestalls the hour on the open bough and with ardent affection awaits the sun, gazing fixedly until the dawn is born; so my lady stood erect and attentive, turned toward the region beneath which the sun shows less haste;[157]

155 Latona's daughter is the moon (Diana), Hyperion's son the sun; Maia and Dione, mothers of Mercury and Venus, stand for those planets.
156 Temperate Jupiter lies between cold Saturn, his father, and hot Mars, his son; the eternal Twins are Gemini.
157 The sun seems to move most slowly at the meridian, where it stands at noon.

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

Christ appears in glory among the blessed, and Dante can at last bear Beatrice's smile.

Par. 23.13 so that, seeing her rapt and eager, I became like one who in desire would wish for something more, and in hope is satisfied. But brief was the time between one when and the other—between my waiting, I mean, and my seeing the heavens grow brighter and brighter. And Beatrice said: "See the hosts of Christ's triumph, and all the fruit harvested from the turning of these spheres!" It seemed to me that her face was all aflame, and her eyes were so full of joy that I must pass on without putting it into words. Par. 23.25 As on clear nights of full moon Trivia smiles among the eternal nymphs that paint the sky through all its depths, so I saw, above thousands of lamps, a Sun that kindled each and every one of them, as ours kindles the sights above; and through the living light the shining substance showed so bright upon my sight that it could not bear it. O Beatrice, sweet and dear guide! She said to me: "What overpowers you is a power from which nothing can shield itself.[158] Par. 23.37 Here is the Wisdom and the Power that opened the roads between heaven and earth, for which there was once so long a longing." As fire breaks loose from a cloud, swelling until it cannot be contained there, and against its nature plunges down to earth, so my mind, grown greater amid those feasts, went out of itself, and what it became it cannot remember. "Open your eyes and look at what I am; you have seen things that have made you strong enough to bear my smile." Par. 23.49 I was like one who comes to himself from a forgotten vision and strives in vain to bring it back to mind, when I heard this offer, worthy of such gratitude that it will never be erased from the book that records the past. If all those tongues were now to sound which Polyhymnia and her sisters made richest with their sweetest milk, to help me, one would not come to a thousandth part of the truth in singing the holy

158 Trivia, a name of Diana, is the moon; the eternal nymphs are the stars.

smile and how it made the holy face shine pure.[159] Par. 23.61 And so, in depicting Paradise, the sacred poem must make a leap, like one who finds his path cut off. But whoever considered the weighty theme, and the mortal shoulder that is burdened with it, would not blame it if it trembles beneath it. This is no voyage for a little boat, this sea that the bold prow goes cleaving, nor for a helmsman who would spare himself. "Why does my face so enamor you that you do not turn to the beautiful garden that blossoms beneath the rays of Christ? Par. 23.73 There is the rose in which the Divine Word became flesh; there are the lilies by whose scent the good way was taken." So spoke Beatrice. And I, who was wholly ready for her counsels, gave myself up once more to the battle of my weak brows. As my eyes, themselves in shadow, have before now seen a meadow of flowers under a ray of sun that streams pure through a broken cloud, so I saw many throngs of splendors, lit from above by burning rays, without seeing the source of the brightness.

THE CROWNING OF MARY

An angel circles Mary in a crown of light, and she rises out of sight.

Par. 23.85 O kindly power that so imprints them, you raised yourself on high to make room there for my eyes, which were not strong enough. The name of the lovely flower that I always invoke, morning and evening, drew my whole mind together to gaze upon the greatest fire. And when the quality and the magnitude of the living star, which conquers up there as it conquered down here, had been painted in both my eyes, there descended through the heaven a torch, formed in a circle like a crown, and it encircled her and turned around her.[160] Par. 23.97 Whatever melody sounds sweetest down here and most draws the soul to itself would seem a cloud that thunders as it is torn apart, compared to the sound of that lyre with which the beautiful sapphire was crowned, by which the brightest heaven is made sap-

159 Polyhymnia is the Muse of sacred song; her sisters are the other Muses.
160 The "lovely flower" and the "living star" are the Virgin Mary.

phire. "I am angelic love, and I circle the high joy that breathes from the womb that was the dwelling of our desire; and I will circle, Lady of Heaven, while you follow your son and make the supreme sphere more divine by entering it." Par. 23.109 Thus the circling melody sealed itself, and all the other lights made the name of Mary ring out. The royal mantle of all the volumes of the world, which is most fervent and most alive in the breath of God and in his ways, had its inner shore so far above us that its appearance, there where I was, did not yet show itself to me. Therefore my eyes did not have the power to follow the crowned flame, which rose up after her offspring.[161] Par. 23.121 And as the infant, after it has taken the milk, stretches out its arms toward its mother because of the love that blazes even outwardly, so each of those white splendors stretched upward with its flame, so that the deep affection they had for Mary was made plain to me. Then they remained there in my sight, singing *Regina coeli* [Queen of Heaven] so sweetly that the delight has never left me.[162] Par. 23.130 Oh, how great is the abundance stored up in those richest coffers, which were good tillers for sowing down here! There they live and rejoice in the treasure that was gained by weeping in the exile of Babylon, where gold was left behind. There, beneath the high Son of God and of Mary, he triumphs in his victory, with the ancient council and with the new, he who holds the keys of such glory.[163]

CANTO 24

Par. 24.1 "O fellowship chosen for the great supper of the blessed Lamb, who feeds you so that your desire is always filled: if by the grace of God this man has a foretaste of what falls from your table before death sets the limit of his time, give heed to his immense longing, and bedew him a little. You drink forever

161 The "royal mantle" is the Primum Mobile, the outermost moving sphere, which encloses all the others.
162 *Regina coeli* is an Easter antiphon addressed to Mary.
163 He who holds the keys is Saint Peter (Matthew 16:19); the ancient and new councils are the saints of the Old and New Testaments.

from the fountain from which comes what he has in mind." Par. 24.10 So Beatrice spoke; and those joyful souls made themselves into spheres around fixed poles, flaming brightly like comets. And as the wheels in the works of a clock turn so that, to one who watches, the first seems at rest and the last seems to fly, so those round dances, dancing differently, swift and slow, let me gauge their riches. Par. 24.19 From the one I noticed as the most beautiful I saw come forth a fire so happy that it left none there of greater brightness. Three times it circled around Beatrice with a song so divine that my imagination cannot repeat it to me. So my pen leaps over it and I do not write it, for our imagination, let alone our speech, is too bright a color for such folds. "O my holy sister, who pray to us so devoutly, by your ardent affection you release me from that beautiful sphere."[164]

EXAMINED ON FAITH

Saint Peter questions Dante on faith, and Dante answers.

Par. 24.31 Then, when the blessed fire had come to rest, it directed toward my lady the breath that spoke as I have told. And she: "O eternal light of the great man to whom our Lord left the keys of this wondrous joy, which he brought down, test this man on points light and grave, as you please, concerning the faith by which you walked upon the sea. Whether he loves well, and hopes well, and believes, is not hidden from you, for you have your sight fixed there where everything is seen depicted.[165] Par. 24.43 But since this kingdom has made its citizens through the true faith, it is good that, to glorify it, he should have his turn to speak of it." As the bachelor arms himself and does not speak until the master puts forward the question—to argue it, not to settle it—so I armed myself with every reason while she was speaking, to be ready for such a questioner and for such a pro-

164 Painters shade the deep folds of drapery with dark colors; Dante's imagination and words are too bright to render such depths.
165 The light is Saint Peter, to whom Christ gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven and who walked on the water toward him (Matthew 14).

fession.[166] Par. 24.52 "Speak, good Christian, declare yourself: what is faith?" At this I raised my brow toward that light from which these words were breathed. Then I turned to Beatrice, and she gave me ready signs that I should pour the water out of my inner fountain. "May the grace that grants me to confess myself to the high chief centurion," I began, "make my thoughts well expressed." And I went on: "As the truthful pen of your dear brother, who with you set Rome on the good path, wrote of it, father, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen; and this seems to me its essence."[167] Par. 24.67 Then I heard: "You understand rightly, if you understand well why he placed it among substances and then among evidences." And I next: "The deep things that grant me the sight of themselves here are so hidden from eyes down there that their existence there lies in belief alone, on which high hope is founded; and therefore it takes on the character of substance. And from this belief we must reason by syllogism, without having any other sight; therefore it holds the character of evidence." Par. 24.79 Then I heard: "If all that is acquired down below through teaching were understood in this way, there would be no room there for a sophist's cleverness." So that kindled love breathed forth. Then it added: "The alloy and the weight of this coin have now been well enough examined; but tell me whether you have it in your purse." And I: "Yes, I have it, so bright and so round that nothing about its stamp leaves me in doubt." Par. 24.88 Next there came forth from the deep light that was shining there: "This precious jewel, on which every virtue is founded—where did it come to you from?" And I: "The abundant rain of the Holy Spirit, poured out over the old parchments and over the new, is a syllogism that has proved it to me so sharply that, compared with it, every demonstration seems blunt to me." Then I heard: "The old and the new propositions that bring you to this con-

166 In medieval university disputations a bachelor argued a question set by the master, who then gave the final determination.

167 The definition is from Hebrews 11:1, then attributed to Saint Paul, Peter's "dear brother." "Chief centurion" renders primipilo, the senior centurion of a Roman legion, a title here for Peter.

clusion—why do you take them for divine speech?" Par. 24.100 And I: "The proof that discloses the truth to me is the works that followed, for which nature never heated iron nor beat an anvil." The answer came to me: "Say, who assures you that those works ever happened? The very thing that is to be proved, and nothing else, swears it to you." "If the world turned to Christianity without miracles," I said, "this one miracle is such that the others are not a hundredth part of it. For you entered the field poor and fasting to sow the good plant that was once a vine and has now become a thornbush." Par. 24.112 When this was finished, the high holy Court resounded through the spheres with a "We praise God" in the melody that is sung up there. And that baron who, examining me, had drawn me so far from branch to branch that we were nearing the last leaves, began again: "The grace that courts your mind has opened your mouth up to this point as it ought to have been opened, so that I approve what has come forth. But now you must state what you believe, and from where it was offered to your belief." Par. 24.124 "O holy father, spirit who now see what you once believed so firmly that you outdid younger feet toward the tomb," I began, "you want me to declare here the form of my ready belief, and you also asked its cause. And I answer: I believe in one God, sole and eternal, who, himself unmoved, moves all the heavens with love and with desire;[168] Par. 24.133 and for this belief I have not only physical and metaphysical proofs. It is also given to me by the truth that rains down from here through Moses, through the prophets and the psalms, through the Gospel, and through you who wrote once the burning Spirit had made you holy. And I believe in three eternal persons, and these I believe to be one essence, so one and so threefold that it allows *sono* [are] and *este* [is] together. With this profound divine state that I now touch upon, the teaching of the Gospel stamps my mind many times over. Par. 24.145 This is the beginning; this is the spark that then widens into a living flame and sparkles in me like a star in heaven." As a lord

168 In John 20 the younger disciple John outran Peter to Christ's empty tomb, but Peter went in first.

who hears something that pleases him embraces his servant as soon as he falls silent, rejoicing at the news, so, blessing me as it sang, the apostolic light at whose command I had spoken circled me three times as soon as I fell silent—so much did I please him with my speech.

CANTO 25

Par. 25.1 If it ever comes to pass that the sacred poem, to which both heaven and earth have set their hand, so that it has made me lean for many years, overcomes the cruelty that locks me out of the fair sheepfold where I slept as a lamb, an enemy to the wolves that make war on it, then with another voice, with another fleece, I will return a poet, and at the font of my baptism I will receive the wreath;[169]

SAINT JAMES AND HOPE

Saint James appears and examines Dante on hope.

Par. 25.10 because there I entered into the Faith that makes souls known to God, and later, for its sake, Peter circled my brow in that way. Then a light moved toward us from the sphere from which had come the first fruit that Christ left of his vicars. And my lady, full of gladness, said to me: "Look, look—there is the baron for whose sake people down there visit Galicia."[170] Par. 25.19 Just as when the dove settles beside its companion, and each, circling and murmuring, shows its affection to the other, so I saw one great and glorious prince welcomed by the other, praising the food that feeds them up there. But when their greeting was completed, each of them stopped, silent, *coram me* [before me], so aflame that it overcame my sight. Par. 25.28 Smiling then, Beatrice said: "Illustrious life, by whom the bounty of our basilica was written of, make hope resound at this height. You

169 Dante had been exiled from Florence since 1302. He hopes to be crowned with the poet's laurel in the city's Baptistery of San Giovanni, where he was baptized.
170 The light is the apostle Saint James, whose shrine at Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain, was a great pilgrimage site.

know that you represent it as many times as Jesus gave greater light to the three." "Lift up your head and take heart; for whatever comes up here from the mortal world must ripen in our rays." This comfort came to me from the second fire. At this I raised my eyes to the mountains that had bowed them down before with their excessive weight.[171] Par. 25.40 "Since our Emperor, by his grace, wills that before your death you should come face to face with his counts in his most secret hall, so that, having seen the truth of this court, you may strengthen with it, in yourself and in others, the hope that down there makes people love rightly: say what it is, and how your mind flowers with it, and say from where it came to you." So the second light went on further. And that compassionate one who guided the feathers of my wings to so high a flight anticipated my reply in this way: Par. 25.52 "The Church Militant has no son with more hope, as is written in the Sun that sheds its rays on all our host. Therefore it is granted to him to come from Egypt to Jerusalem to see, before his term of service as a soldier is ended. The other two points, which are asked not for the sake of knowing but so that he may report how much this virtue pleases you, I leave to him. They will not be hard for him, nor an occasion for boasting; so let him answer them, and may the grace of God grant him to do so."[172] Par. 25.64 Like a pupil who follows his teacher, ready and willing, in what he is expert in, so that his worth may be revealed: "Hope," I said, "is a sure expectation of future glory, produced by divine grace and preceding merit. This light comes to me from many stars; but he who was the supreme singer of the supreme leader first distilled it into my heart. 'Let them hope in you,' he says in his song to God, 'who know your name'; and who does not know it, if he has my faith?[173] Par. 25.76 And you distilled it into me with

171 The Letter of James, attributed to the apostle, praises God's generous giving. Peter, James and John were the three disciples whom Jesus singled out, as at the Transfiguration.

172 The Church Militant is the Church on earth. Egypt and Jerusalem, from the Exodus story, stand here for earthly exile and the heavenly city.

173 The definition is that of the theologian Peter Lombard. The "supreme singer" is David, author of the Psalms, quoted here from Psalm 9.

his distilling, in your epistle, so that I am full and pour your rain again upon others." While I was speaking, within the living bosom of that blaze a flash trembled, sudden and repeated, like lightning. Then it breathed: "The love with which I still burn for the virtue that followed me up to the palm and to my leaving the field wants me to breathe again to you, who delight in it; and it pleases me that you should tell what hope promises you."[174] Par. 25.88 And I: "The new scriptures and the old set the mark, and it points this out to me. Of the souls whom God has made his friends, Isaiah says that each will be clothed in its own land with a double garment, and its own land is this sweet life. And your brother, much more fully, where he treats of the white robes, makes this revelation plain to us."[175] Par. 25.97 And first, just as these words ended, *Sperent in te* [Let them hope in you] was heard above us, and all the round dances responded to it. Then among them one light grew so bright that if Cancer had such a crystal, winter would have a month of a single day. And as a joyful maiden rises and goes and joins the dance only to honor the new bride, and not for any wrong motive, so I saw the brightened splendor come to the two, who were turning in a wheel, as befitted their burning love.[176] Par. 25.109 It joined them there in the song and in the measure; and my lady kept her gaze on them, just like a bride, silent and still. "This is he who lay upon the breast of our Pelican, and this one was chosen from the cross for the great office." So my lady spoke; yet her words moved her gaze no more from its attention afterward than before.[177] Par. 25.118 Like someone who stares and strives to see the

174 James was the first apostle to die a martyr (Acts 12:2); the palm is the emblem of martyrdom.
175 Isaiah 61:7; the "double garment" was read as the glory of the soul and of the risen body. The "brother" is John, whose Revelation (7:9) describes the saved in white robes.
176 The constellation Cancer is opposite the sun from about mid-December to mid-January, so a star in it as bright as the sun would turn that month into one unbroken day.
177 This is Saint John, who leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper and to whom Jesus on the cross entrusted his mother. The pelican, believed to feed its young with its own blood, was a symbol of Christ.

sun partly eclipsed, and who by looking becomes unable to see, so did I become before that last fire, while it was said: "Why do you dazzle yourself to see a thing that has no place here? On earth my body is earth, and it will stay there with the others until our number matches the eternal purpose. Only the two lights that rose up are in the blessed cloister with the two robes; and this you shall carry back to your world."[178] Par. 25.130 At this voice the flaming circle fell still, together with the sweet mingling made by the sound of the threefold breath, just as, to end fatigue or avoid danger, the oars that were striking the water all come to rest at the sound of a whistle. Ah, how troubled I was in my mind when I turned to see Beatrice, at being unable to see, though I was near her and in the happy world!

CANTO 26

Par. 26.1 While I was fearful over my quenched sight, from the blazing flame that had quenched it came a breath that made me attentive, saying: "Until you regain the sense of sight that you have used up on me, it is well to make up for it by discourse. Begin, then, and say where your soul is aimed, and be assured that the sight in you is bewildered, not dead. For the lady who leads you through this divine region has in her gaze the power that the hand of Ananias had."[179] Par. 26.13 I said: "At her pleasure, soon or late, may the remedy come to the eyes that were the gates when she entered with the fire with which I always burn. The good that contents this court is the Alpha and O of all the scripture that love reads to me, softly or loud." That same voice that had taken from me my fear of the sudden dazzlement made me eager to speak further, and said: "Truly you must sift it more clearly through a narrower sieve; you must say who aimed your bow at such a target." Par. 26.25 And I: "By philosophical arguments

178 A legend held that John had been taken up bodily into heaven. The only two in heaven with body and soul, the "two robes," are Christ and Mary.
179 Ananias restored the sight of Saint Paul by laying his hands on him (Acts 9:17–18).

and by the authority that descends from here, such love must imprint itself on me. For the good, as good, kindles love as soon as it is understood, and all the more the more goodness it contains in itself. Therefore toward the essence that has such preeminence that every good found outside it is nothing but a light of its own ray, the mind of everyone who discerns the truth on which this proof is founded must move in loving, more than toward any other. Par. 26.37 This truth is laid out for my intellect by him who shows me the first love of all the eternal substances. It is laid out by the voice of the truthful author, who says to Moses, speaking of himself: 'I will make you see all goodness.' You too lay it out for me, beginning the high proclamation that cries the mystery of this place down there above every other announcement." And I heard: "By human intellect and by the authorities in harmony with it, the highest of your loves looks to God. But say further whether you feel other cords drawing you toward him, so that you declare with how many teeth this love bites you."[180] Par. 26.52 The holy intention of Christ's eagle was not hidden from me; rather, I perceived where he wished to lead my profession. So I began again: "All those bites that can make the heart turn to God have joined together in my charity. For the existence of the world and my own existence, the death that he endured so that I may live, and what every believer hopes for, as I do, together with the living knowledge I spoke of, have drawn me from the sea of crooked love and set me on the shore of the straight.[181] Par. 26.64 The leaves with which the whole garden of the eternal Gardener is in leaf, I love as much as the good that he has bestowed on them." As soon as I fell silent, a most sweet song resounded through the heaven, and my lady said with the others: "Holy, Holy, Holy." And as one is roused from sleep by a piercing light, because the visual spirit runs to meet the brightness that passes from membrane to membrane, and the one

180 "He who shows me the first love" is probably Aristotle, for whom the prime mover moves the heavens as an object of love. God's words to Moses are from Exodus 33:19, and John's "high proclamation" is the opening of his Gospel.
181 The eagle is the traditional emblem of John the Evangelist.

awakened shrinks from what he sees, so bewildered is his sudden waking, until the judging faculty comes to his aid;[182]

ADAM

Adam speaks of his time in Eden, the nature of his sin and the language he spoke.

Par. 26.76 so Beatrice drove every speck from my eyes with the radiance of hers, which shone for more than a thousand miles; so that afterward I saw better than before, and, almost dumbfounded, I asked about a fourth light that I saw with us. And my lady: "Within those rays the first soul that the First Power ever created gazes with love upon its Maker."[183] Par. 26.85 Like the bough that bends its top as the wind passes, and then lifts itself again by its own power, which raises it up, so did I, while she was speaking, in amazement; and then a desire to speak, with which I was burning, gave me back my confidence; and I began: "O fruit, who alone were brought forth already ripe, O ancient father, to whom every bride is both daughter and daughter-in-law, as devoutly as I can I beg you to speak to me; you see my wish, and to hear you sooner I do not say it." Par. 26.97 Sometimes an animal under a covering stirs, so that its feeling must show through the way its wrapping follows its movements; and in the same way the first soul let me see, through its covering, how joyfully it came to please me. Then it breathed out: "Without your telling it to me, I discern your wish better than you discern whatever is most certain to you, because I see it in the truthful mirror that makes itself the likeness of all other things, while nothing makes itself its likeness. Par. 26.109 You wish to hear how long it is since God placed me in the lofty garden where this lady prepared you for so long a stair, and how long it was a delight to my eyes, and the true cause of the great wrath, and the language

182 Medieval optics held that light passed through the layers of the eye to meet the "visual spirit" within; the "judging faculty" is the power that interprets what the senses report.

183 The first soul is Adam.

that I used and that I made. Now, my son, it was not the tasting of the tree that was in itself the cause of so long an exile, but only the overstepping of the bound.[184] Par. 26.118 In the place from which your lady sent forth Virgil, I longed for this assembly through four thousand three hundred and two revolutions of the sun; and I saw it return to all the lights along its path nine hundred and thirty times while I was on earth. The language I spoke was entirely extinct long before the people of Nimrod set themselves to their work that could never be finished; for no product of reason was ever lasting, because human liking renews itself following the heavens. That man speaks is a work of nature; but whether this way or that, nature then leaves you to do as pleases you.[185] Par. 26.133 Before I went down to the anguish of Hell, the Supreme Good, from which comes the joy that swathes me, was called *I* on earth; afterward it was called *El*, and that is fitting, for the usage of mortals is like a leaf on a branch, which goes and another comes. On the mountain that rises highest from the sea I lived, with a life pure and then disgraced, from the first hour to the one that follows the sixth, when the sun changes quadrant."[186]

CANTO 27

Par. 27.1 "Glory to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit," all Paradise began, so that the sweet song made me drunk. What I saw seemed to me a smile of the universe; so that my intoxication entered through hearing and through sight. O joy! O inexpressible gladness! O life entire of love and peace! O wealth secure, without craving! Before my eyes the four torches stood alight, and the one that had come first began to grow more vivid; and

184 The lofty garden is the Earthly Paradise on the summit of Purgatory, where Beatrice met Dante before the ascent.
185 The place is Limbo, where Adam waited 4,302 years for Christ; he had lived 930 years on earth (Genesis 5:5). Nimrod's unfinished work is the Tower of Babel.
186 *I* and *El* are names for God, *El* being Hebrew. Adam's stay in the Earthly Paradise on the mountain of Purgatory thus lasted just over six hours.

in its appearance it became such as Jupiter would become if he and Mars were birds and exchanged feathers.[187]

PETER'S INVECTIVE

Saint Peter denounces the corrupt popes, and the whole heaven turns red.

Par. 27.16 The providence that there assigns each one's turn and office had imposed silence on the blessed choir on every side, when I heard: "If I change color, do not marvel; for as I speak you will see all these change color. He who usurps on earth my place, my place, my place, which is vacant in the presence of the Son of God, has made of my burial ground a sewer of blood and stench, at which the perverse one who fell from up here is appeased down there."[188] Par. 27.28 With that color which the sun, from opposite, paints on a cloud at evening and at morning, I then saw the whole heaven suffused. And like a virtuous woman who remains sure of herself and yet, merely on hearing of another's fault, grows timid, so Beatrice changed her look; and such an eclipse, I believe, there was in heaven when the Supreme Power suffered. Then his words went on, in a voice so changed from itself that his appearance was not more changed:[189] Par. 27.40 "The bride of Christ was not nourished with my blood, and with that of Linus and of Cletus, to be used for the gaining of gold; but to gain this happy life Sixtus and Pius and Calixtus and Urban shed their blood after many tears. It was not our intention that part of the Christian people should sit on the right hand of our successors and part on the other; nor that the keys which were granted to me should become an emblem on a banner fighting against the baptized; nor that I should be the figure on a seal for privileges sold and lying, at which I often blush

187 The four torches are Saint Peter, Saint James, Saint John and Adam; Peter's light turns from the white of Jupiter to the red of Mars.
188 Peter is speaking of Pope Boniface VIII; his burial ground is Rome, where he was martyred.
189 At Christ's Crucifixion darkness covered the land (Luke 23:44–45).

and flash with fire.[190] Par. 27.55 Ravening wolves in shepherd's clothing are seen from up here in all the pastures. O defense of God, why do you still lie idle? Men of Cahors and Gascons are preparing to drink our blood. O good beginning, to what vile end must you fall! But the high providence that with Scipio defended for Rome the glory of the world will soon bring aid, as I conceive. And you, son, who because of your mortal weight will go back down again, open your mouth, and do not hide what I do not hide."[191] Par. 27.67 As our air snows downward in flakes of frozen vapor when the horn of the heavenly Goat is touched by the sun, so I saw the ether adorn itself and snow upward with triumphant vapors, which had made their stay there with us. My sight followed their forms, and followed until the space between, by its great extent, took from it the power of passing further. Therefore the lady, who saw me freed from gazing upward, said to me: "Lower your sight, and see how far you have turned."[192] Par. 27.79 Since the time when I had looked down before, I saw that I had moved through the whole arc that the first climate makes from its middle to its end; so that beyond Cádiz I saw the mad passage of Ulysses, and on this side, nearby, the shore on which Europa became a sweet burden. And more of the site of this little threshing floor would have been revealed to me; but the sun was moving on beneath my feet, more than a sign away.[193]

THE PRIMUM MOBILE

Dante rises to the ninth heaven; Beatrice explains its nature and condemns human greed.

Par. 27.88 My enamored mind, which is always courting my lady, burned more than ever to bring my eyes back to her; and if

190 Linus, Cletus, Sixtus I, Pius I, Calixtus I and Urban I were early popes, by tradition martyrs. The two sides are the Guelfs, favored by the popes, and the Ghibellines, opposed by them.

191 Pope John XXII was from Cahors and Pope Clement V from Gascony.

192 The sun is in Capricorn, the Goat, in midwinter.

nature or art ever made baits to catch the eyes so as to possess the mind, in human flesh or in its portraits, all of them gathered together would seem nothing beside the divine delight that shone upon me when I turned to her smiling face. And the power that her look granted me plucked me from the fair nest of Leda and thrust me into the swiftest heaven.[194] Par. 27.100 Its parts, most living and most lofty, are so uniform that I cannot say which of them Beatrice chose as a place for me. But she, who saw my desire, began, smiling so joyfully that God seemed to rejoice in her face: "The nature of the universe, which holds the center still and moves all the rest around it, begins from here as from its starting point; and this heaven has no other where than the divine mind, in which is kindled the love that turns it and the power that it rains down. Par. 27.112 Light and love enclose it in one circle, as it encloses the others, and that girdle only he who girds it understands. Its motion is not measured by another's, but the others are measured by this one, as ten is by its half and its fifth; and how time should have its roots in such a pot and its leaves in the others may now be plain to you. O greed, that so plunges mortals beneath you that none has the power to draw his eyes out of your waves! Par. 27.124 The will blossoms well in men; but the continual rain turns the true plums into blighted ones. Faith and innocence are found only in little children; then each flees before the cheeks are covered. One, while still lisping, keeps the fasts, who later, with his tongue loosed, devours any food under any moon; and another, while lisping, loves and listens to his mother, who later, with full speech, longs to see her buried. Par. 27.136 So, at first sight, the white skin of the fair daughter of him who brings morning and leaves evening turns black. You, so that you may not wonder at it, consider that on earth there is no one who governs; and so the human family goes astray. But before January has wholly left winter behind,

193 The first climate was a band of the inhabited world running from the Ganges to Cádiz. Europa was carried off from the coast of Phoenicia by Jupiter in the form of a bull.

194 The nest of Leda is Gemini, the Twins Castor and Pollux, her sons; the swiftest heaven is the Primum Mobile, the outermost moving sphere.

through that hundredth part which is neglected down there, these high circles shall so roar that the fortune so long awaited shall turn the sterns where the prows are, so that the fleet shall run straight; and true fruit shall come after the flower."[195]

CANTO 28

Par. 28.1 After she who imparadises my mind had laid bare the truth against the present life of wretched mortals, as one who is lit from behind sees in a mirror the flame of a torch before he has it in sight or in thought, and turns to see whether the glass tells him the truth, and sees that it agrees with it as a note with its meter, so my memory recalls that I did, gazing into the beautiful eyes from which Love made the cord to catch me.

THE POINT AND THE NINE CIRCLES

Dante sees God as a point of intense light ringed by nine circles of angels.

Par. 28.13 And as I turned, and my eyes were touched by what appears in that sphere whenever one gazes well into its turning, I saw a point that radiated a light so piercing that the sight it burns upon must close because of its intense sharpness; and whatever star looks smallest from here would seem a moon if placed beside it, as star is placed beside star.[196] Par. 28.22 Perhaps as near as a halo seems to gird the light that paints it, when the vapor that bears it is thickest, at such a distance around the point a circle of fire was whirling so fast that it would have outstripped the motion that most swiftly girds the world; and this was encircled by another, and that by the third, and the third then by the fourth, the fourth by the fifth, and then the fifth by the sixth. Par. 28.31 Above followed the seventh, already spread so wide that the messenger of Juno, made whole, would be too nar-

195 The Julian calendar ran long by roughly a hundredth of a day each year, so January was slowly drifting toward spring; the phrase means, ironically, "long before many centuries pass."

196 The point is God; the nine circles around it are the orders of angels.

row to contain it. So too the eighth and the ninth; and each moved more slowly according as it was further in number from the first; and that one had the clearest flame which was least distant from the pure spark, because, I believe, it shares more of its truth. My lady, who saw me deeply perplexed and anxious, said: "From that point depend heaven and all nature.[197] Par. 28.43 Look at that circle which is most closely joined to it, and know that its moving is so swift because of the burning love by which it is spurred." And I to her: "If the world were arranged in the order I see in those wheels, what is set before me would have satisfied me. But in the world of the senses one can see the spheres more divine the further they are from the center. Par. 28.52 Therefore, if my desire is to reach its end in this wondrous and angelic temple, which has only love and light for its boundary, I must still hear why the copy and the model do not go in the same way; for by myself I contemplate it in vain." "If your fingers are not sufficient for such a knot, it is no wonder, so tight has it grown from never being tried." So spoke my lady; then she said: "Take what I shall tell you, if you would be satisfied, and sharpen your wits upon it. Par. 28.64 The material circles are wide or narrow according to the more or less of power that spreads through all their parts. Greater goodness seeks to work greater blessing; a greater body holds greater blessing, if its parts are equally complete. Therefore this one, which sweeps along with it all the rest of the universe, corresponds to the circle that loves most and knows most. So, if you draw your measure around the power, and not around the appearance of the substances that seem round to you, you will see a wondrous correspondence, of greater to more and of smaller to less, in each heaven with its intelligence."[198] Par. 28.79 As the hemisphere of the air remains splendid and serene when Boreas blows from that cheek from which he is gentlest, so that the murk that before troubled it is purged and dissolved, and the heaven laughs with the beauties of its whole train; so did I, after my lady had furnished me with

197 Juno's messenger is Iris, the rainbow; made whole, it would be a full circle.
198 Each heaven was held to be moved by an order of angels, its "intelligence."

her clear answer, and the truth was seen like a star in heaven. And when her words had ceased, the circles threw out sparks just as molten iron does. Par. 28.91 Every spark followed its blaze; and they were so many that their number ran into thousands beyond the doubling of the chessboard. I heard Hosanna sung from choir to choir to the fixed point that holds them, and will hold them forever, in the *ubi* [where] in which they have always been; and she who saw the doubtful thoughts in my mind said: "The first circles have shown you the Seraphim and the Cherubim. They follow their bonds so swiftly in order to make themselves like the point as much as they can, and they can as much as they are lofty in vision.[199] Par. 28.103 Those other loves that go around them are called Thrones of the divine countenance, because they completed the first triad. And you must know that all have delight in the measure that their sight sinks deep into the truth in which every intellect finds rest. From this one may see how blessedness is founded on the act that sees, not on that which loves, which follows after; and the measure of seeing is merit, which grace and good will bring forth; so it proceeds from grade to grade. Par. 28.115 The second triad, which thus blossoms in this everlasting spring that no nightly Ram despoils, perpetually sings *Osanna* [Hosanna] as birds sing when winter ends, with three melodies, which sound in the three orders of joy of which it is formed. In that hierarchy are the three divinities: first Dominations, and then Virtues; the third order is of Powers. Then in the two next-to-last festive dances Principalities and Archangels circle; the last is all of angelic play. These orders all gaze upward, and below they prevail so that toward God all are drawn and all draw.[200] Par. 28.130 And Dionysius set himself with such desire to contemplate these orders that he named and distinguished them as I do. But Gregory later departed from him; and so, as soon as he opened his eyes in this heaven, he smiled at himself. And if a mortal on earth set forth so secret a truth, I

199 In the old tale, one grain is placed on the first square of the chessboard and doubled on each of the sixty-four squares, yielding an immense number.
200 The Ram (Aries) is seen at night in autumn, when the leaves fall.

would not have you wonder; for he who saw it up here revealed it to him, with much else of the truth about these circles."[201]

CANTO 29

Par. 29.1 When both the children of Latona, covered by the Ram and by the Scales, together make a belt of the horizon, as long as it is from the moment when the zenith holds them in balance until the one and the other, changing hemispheres, slip out of balance from that belt, so long, with her face painted with a smile, was Beatrice silent, gazing fixedly at the point that had overcome me. Then she began: "I tell, I do not ask, what you wish to hear, because I have seen it where every *ubi* [where] and every *quando* [when] is centered.[202] Par. 29.13 Not to gain any good for itself, which cannot be, but so that its splendor, shining back, might say *Subsisto* [I exist]: in its eternity, outside of time, beyond every other bound, as it pleased, the eternal Love opened itself in new loves. Nor before this did it lie as if inert; for neither before nor after did the moving of God upon these waters proceed.[203] Par. 29.22 Form and matter, joined and pure, came forth into a being that had no flaw, like three arrows from a three-stringed bow. And as in glass, in amber, or in crystal a ray shines so that there is no interval between its coming and its being complete, so the threefold work of its Lord rayed forth into its being all at once, without distinction in its beginning. Order and structure were created together with the substances; and those in which pure act was produced were the summit of the world. Par. 29.34 Pure potency held the lowest part; in the middle, potency was bound to act by such a bond that it is never

201 Dionysius the Areopagite, converted by Saint Paul, was thought to have written *On the Celestial Hierarchy*; Pope Gregory the Great ordered the angels differently. The one who saw it "up here" is Saint Paul, caught up into heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2–4).

202 Latona's children are Apollo and Diana, the sun and the moon. When they stand opposite each other on the horizon, one in the Ram and one in the Scales, the balance lasts only an instant.

203 The phrase echoes Genesis 1:2, where the Spirit of God moves over the face of the waters.

unbound. Jerome wrote to you of a long stretch of centuries during which the angels were created before the rest of the world was made; but this truth is written in many places by the writers of the Holy Spirit, and you will see it if you look well. And reason, too, sees it in part, for it would not grant that the movers should remain so long without their perfection.[204] Par. 29.46 Now you know where and when these loves were created, and how; so that three flames in your desire are already quenched. Nor could one, counting, reach twenty as quickly as part of the angels disturbed the substrate of your elements. The other part remained, and began this art which you see, with such delight that it never ceases from circling. The beginning of the fall was the accursed pride of him whom you saw pressed down by all the weights of the world. Par. 29.58 Those you see here were modest in acknowledging that they came from the goodness that had made them ready for such great understanding; and so their sight was exalted by illuminating grace and by their merit, so that they have a full and steadfast will. And I want you not to doubt, but to be certain, that receiving grace is meritorious, in the measure that the heart lies open to it. By now, if my words have been taken in, you can contemplate much about this consistory without other help. Par. 29.70 But because on earth, in your schools, it is taught that the angelic nature is such that it understands and remembers and wills, I will say more, so that you may see in its purity the truth that down there is confused by equivocation in such teaching. These substances, ever since they first rejoiced in the face of God, have never turned their gaze from it, from which nothing is hidden. Therefore their sight is never interrupted by a new object, and therefore they have no need to remember by means of a divided concept.

204 Saint Jerome (c. AD 347–420), translator of the Latin Bible, held that the angels were created countless ages before the material world.

AGAINST VAIN PREACHERS

Beatrice condemns philosophers and preachers who neglect Scripture for showy inventions.

Par. 29.82 So down there men dream while not asleep, believing and not believing that they speak the truth; but in the one there is more guilt and more shame. You down there do not go along a single path when you philosophize, so much does the love of appearances, and the thought of them, carry you away. And even this is borne up here with less indignation than when divine Scripture is set aside, or when it is twisted. No one there thinks how much blood it costs to sow it in the world, and how pleasing is he who humbly draws near to it. Par. 29.94 Everyone strives to make a show, and puts forth his own inventions, and these are expounded at length by the preachers, and the Gospel is silent. One says that at Christ's passion the moon turned back and placed itself in between, so that the light of the sun did not reach down; and others that the light hid itself of its own accord, and so that eclipse answered for the Spaniards and the Indians as well as for the Jews.[205] Par. 29.103 Florence does not have as many Lapos and Bindos as there are fables of this sort shouted each year from the pulpit on every side; so that the little sheep, who do not know, come back from pasture fed on wind, and not seeing their harm does not excuse them. Christ did not say to his first company, 'Go, and preach idle tales to the world,' but gave them a true foundation; and that alone sounded on their lips, so that in fighting to kindle the faith they made shield and lance of the Gospel.[206] Par. 29.115 Now men go out to preach with jokes and buffoonery, and as long as there is a good laugh, the hood swells, and nothing more is asked. But such a bird nests in the tip of the hood that if the common people saw it, they would see what

205 The darkness over the land at Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 27:45) was variously explained by preachers.
206 Lapo and Bindo (short for Jacopo and Ildebrando) were among the commonest names in Florence.

kind of pardon they are trusting in. Because of it such folly has grown on earth that, without proof from any testimony, people would flock to every promise. Par. 29.124 On this Saint Anthony's pig grows fat, and others too who are far more pigs, paying with money that bears no stamp. But since we have digressed enough, turn your eyes back now to the straight road, so that the way may be shortened along with the time. This nature mounts so far in number, rank upon rank, that there was never speech or mortal concept that could reach so far. And if you look at what is revealed by Daniel, you will see that in his thousands no definite number is disclosed.[207] Par. 29.136 The first light, which shines through all of it, is received in it in as many ways as there are splendors with which it joins itself. Therefore, since love follows the act that conceives, the sweetness of love glows hotter or cooler in it in different ways. See now the height and the breadth of the eternal worth, since it has made itself so many mirrors in which it is broken up, remaining one in itself as before."

CANTO 30

Par. 30.1 Perhaps six thousand miles away from us the sixth hour is blazing, and this world already tilts its shadow almost to a level bed, when the middle of the sky, deep above us, begins to change so that a star here and there ceases to be seen down at this depth; and as the brightest handmaid of the sun comes on further, so the sky closes, light after light, even to the most beautiful;[208] Par. 30.10 not otherwise the triumph that plays forever around the point that overcame me, seeming enclosed by what it encloses, little by little faded from my sight; so that seeing nothing, and love, compelled me to turn my eyes to Beatrice. If

207 The Antonine friars' pigs were fed by the faithful as a pious duty, and the friars raised alms with spurious pardons, "money without stamp" meaning counterfeit coin. Daniel 7:10 numbers the angels in "thousand thousands."
208 Dawn is described: when it is noon some six thousand miles to the east, the earth's shadow lies almost flat and the stars fade one by one before the dawn, the sun's handmaid.

all that has been said of her up to here were gathered into a single praise, it would be too little to serve this turn. The beauty I saw goes beyond all measure, not only beyond us; indeed I believe that only its Maker enjoys it wholly. Par. 30.22 At this pass I concede myself defeated, more than ever comic or tragic poet was overcome by any point of his theme. For like the sun in the eye that trembles most, so the memory of the sweet smile robs my mind of its very self. From the first day that I saw her face in this life until this sight, my following her in song has never been cut off; but now my pursuit must cease from following her beauty further in poetry, as every artist must at his utmost. Par. 30.34 Such as I leave her to a greater heralding than that of my trumpet, which is bringing its arduous matter to its close, she, with the bearing and voice of a guide unencumbered, began again: "We have come out from the greatest body into the heaven that is pure light: light of the intellect, full of love; love of the true good, full of joy; joy that transcends every sweetness. Here you will see the one and the other army of Paradise, and the one in those aspects you will see at the final judgment."[209] Par. 30.46 As a sudden flash of lightning scatters the spirits of sight, so that it deprives the eye of the power to see even the strongest objects, so a living light shone all around me and left me swathed in such a veil of its brightness that nothing appeared to me. "The Love that quiets this heaven always welcomes into itself with such a greeting, to make the candle ready for its flame."

THE RIVER OF LIGHT

In the Empyrean Dante drinks from a river of light, which becomes a circle.

Par. 30.55 No sooner had these brief words entered into me than I understood that I was rising above my own power; and I was rekindled with a new sight, such that no light is so pure that my

209 The "greatest body" is the Primum Mobile, the outermost and largest material sphere; beyond it lies the Empyrean, the heaven of pure light.

eyes could not have withstood it. And I saw light in the form of a river, tawny with splendor, between two banks painted with a marvelous spring. Out of this torrent came living sparks, and on every side they settled into the flowers, like rubies set in gold. Par. 30.67 Then, as if intoxicated by the fragrances, they plunged back into the wondrous flood, and if one went in, another came out. "The high desire that now inflames and urges you to have knowledge of what you see pleases me the more, the more it swells. But you must drink of this water before so great a thirst in you can be quenched." So said to me the sun of my eyes. Par. 30.76 And she added: "The river, and the topazes that go in and come out, and the laughter of the grasses are shadowy prefaces of their truth. Not that these things are unripe in themselves; but the defect is on your side, for you do not yet have sight so lofty." No infant rushes so suddenly with its face toward the milk, if it wakes much later than its habit, as I did, to make still better mirrors of my eyes, bending down to the stream that flows forth so that one may be bettered in it. Par. 30.88 And as soon as the eaves of my eyelids drank of it, it seemed to me that from its length it had become round. Then, like people who have been wearing masks, who seem other than before if they strip off the semblance not their own in which they were hidden, so the flowers and the sparks changed before me into greater festivity, so that I saw both the courts of heaven made manifest. Par. 30.97 O splendor of God, through which I saw the high triumph of the true kingdom, give me power to tell how I saw it. There is a light up there that makes the Creator visible to that creature who finds its peace only in seeing him; and it spreads out in a circular shape so far that its circumference would be too wide a belt for the sun. Its whole appearance is made of a ray reflected from the summit of the Primum Mobile, which draws from it life and power.

THE HEAVENLY ROSE

The blessed appear as the petals of an immense white rose.

Par. 30.109 And as a hillside mirrors itself in the water at its foot, as if to see itself adorned, when it is rich in greenery and flowers, so, rising above the light all around, I saw mirrored in more than a thousand tiers all of us who have returned up there. And if the lowest rank gathers so great a light within itself, how vast is the breadth of this rose in its outermost petals? Par. 30.118 My sight did not lose itself in the breadth and the height, but took in the whole quantity and quality of that joy. There, near and far neither add nor take away; for where God governs without intermediary, natural law has no bearing. Into the yellow of the eternal rose, which opens out, rises in tiers, and breathes forth a fragrance of praise to the sun that makes an everlasting spring, Beatrice drew me, like one who is silent and wants to speak, and said: "Look how great is the gathering of the white robes! Par. 30.130 See how wide our city circles! See our seats so filled that few people are now still awaited here. In that great seat on which you keep your eyes because of the crown already placed above it, before you dine at this wedding feast, shall sit the soul, imperial down on earth, of the lofty Henry, who will come to set Italy straight before she is ready.[210] Par. 30.139 The blind greed that bewitches you has made you like the little child who is dying of hunger and drives away the nurse. And at that time the prefect of the divine court will be one who, openly and covertly, will not walk the same road with him. But not for long after will God suffer him in the holy office; for he will be thrust down where Simon Magus is for his deserts, and will make the one from Anagni go further down."[211]

210 Henry VII of Luxembourg, crowned emperor in AD 1312, came to Italy in 1310 to restore imperial authority and died in 1313; Dante placed great hopes in him.
211 The prefect is Pope Clement V, who outwardly supported Henry VII while secretly opposing him, and died in 1314. He will join the simoniac popes of Inferno 19, pushing down Boniface VIII, "the one from Anagni."

CANTO 31

Par. 31.1 In the form, then, of a white rose the holy army showed itself to me, which Christ in his own blood made his bride. But the other, which as it flies sees and sings the glory of him who fills it with love, and the goodness that made it so great, like a swarm of bees that at one moment plunges into the flowers and at another returns to where its work is turned to sweetness, was descending into the great flower adorned with so many petals, and from there rising again to where its love forever dwells. Par. 31.13 Their faces were all of living flame, and their wings of gold, and the rest so white that no snow ever reaches such a degree. When they descended into the flower, from tier to tier they shared out the peace and the ardor that they gained as they fanned their sides. Nor did so great a flying multitude, coming between the flower and what was above, block the sight or the splendor; for the divine light penetrates the universe according to its worthiness, so that nothing can stand in its way. Par. 31.25 This secure and joyful kingdom, thronged with people ancient and new, had its gaze and its love all turned toward one mark. O threefold light, which, sparkling to their sight in a single star, so satisfies them, look down here upon our storm! If the peoples from the north, coming from a region that is covered every day by Helice, wheeling with her son whom she delights in, were struck with amazement on seeing Rome and her lofty works, when the Lateran rose above all mortal things;[212] Par. 31.37 I, who had come to the divine from the human, to the eternal from time, and from Florence to a people just and sound, with what amazement must I have been filled! Truly, between that and the joy, it was my pleasure to hear nothing and to remain mute. And like a pilgrim who refreshes himself gazing around in the temple of his vow, and already hopes to tell again how it is, so,

212 Helice (Callisto) was turned into the Great Bear and her son Arcas into a neighboring constellation, so the far north lies always beneath them. The Lateran palace, seat of the popes, stands here for the grandeur of Rome.

traveling through the living light, I led my eyes along the tiers, now up, now down, and now circling round again.

SAINT BERNARD

Dante turns to ask Beatrice a question and finds Saint Bernard in her place.

Par. 31.49 I saw faces that moved to charity, adorned with another's light and with their own smile, and gestures graced with every dignity. My gaze had already taken in the general form of Paradise as a whole, and had not yet fixed my sight on any part of it; and I turned with rekindled desire to ask my lady about things on which my mind was in suspense. I intended one thing, and something else answered me: I thought to see Beatrice, and I saw an old man clothed like the glorious people.[213] Par. 31.61 His eyes and cheeks were suffused with kindly joy, and his bearing was loving, as befits a tender father. And at once I said: "Where is she?" And he: "To bring your desire to its end, Beatrice moved me from my place; and if you look up into the third circle from the highest rank, you will see her again on the throne her merits have allotted her." Par. 31.70 Without answering, I lifted up my eyes and saw her making herself a crown as she reflected from herself the eternal rays. No mortal eye, however deep it sinks into the sea, is as far from the highest region where the thunder sounds as my sight there was from Beatrice; but that made no difference to me, for her image came down to me unmixed with anything in between. Par. 31.79 "O lady, in whom my hope is strong, and who for my salvation endured to leave your footprints in Hell: for all the many things that I have seen, I recognize that the grace and the power come from your might and from your goodness. You have drawn me from slavery to freedom by all those paths, by all the means that you had the power to use for it.[214] Par. 31.88 Guard your magnificence in me, so that my soul,

213 The old man is Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), the Cistercian abbot and mystic famed for his devotion to the Virgin; he names himself at line 102.
214 Beatrice came down to Limbo to send Virgil to Dante's aid (Inferno 2).

which you have made whole, may be pleasing to you when it is loosed from the body." So I prayed; and she, so far away as she seemed, smiled and looked at me; then she turned back to the eternal fountain. And the holy elder said: "So that you may complete your journey perfectly, for which prayer and holy love sent me, fly with your eyes through this garden; for seeing it will better prepare your gaze to climb through the divine ray. Par. 31.100 And the Queen of heaven, for whom I burn wholly with love, will grant us every grace, because I am her faithful Bernard." As is one who comes, perhaps from Croatia, to see our Veronica, and because of its ancient fame cannot gaze his fill, but says in his thoughts, as long as it is shown: "My Lord Jesus Christ, true God, was this, then, what your face looked like?" so was I as I gazed on the living charity of him who in this world, in contemplation, tasted of that peace.[215]

MARY IN GLORY

Bernard shows Dante the Virgin Mary enthroned at the top of the rose.

Par. 31.112 "Son of grace," he began, "you will not come to know this joyful state by keeping your eyes only down here at the bottom; but look at the circles up to the most remote, until you see the Queen seated, to whom this realm is subject and devoted." I lifted my eyes; and as in the morning the eastern parts of the horizon outshine the part where the sun goes down, so, as if going with my eyes from valley to mountain, I saw a part at the farthest edge surpass in light all the rest of the rim. Par. 31.124 And as there where we await the chariot pole that Phaethon drove so badly the sky blazes brightest, and on this side and that the light grows faint, so that peaceful oriflamme glowed most vividly at its center, and on every side its flame grew weaker in equal measure. And at that center, with wings outspread, I saw more than a thousand angels rejoicing, each distinct both in bright-

215 The Veronica was the cloth believed to bear the imprint of Christ's face, shown to pilgrims at Saint Peter's in Rome.

ness and in art.[216] Par. 31.133 There, at their games and at their songs, I saw smiling a beauty that was joy in the eyes of all the other saints. And if I had as much wealth in speech as in imagining, I would not dare to attempt the least part of its delight. Bernard, when he saw my eyes fixed and intent upon the object of his own burning warmth, turned his own to her with such affection that he made mine more ardent to gaze again.

CANTO 32

Par. 32.1 Absorbed in his delight, that contemplative freely took up the office of teacher, and began these holy words: "The wound that Mary closed and anointed, she who sits so beautiful at her feet is the one who opened it and pierced it. In the order made by the third row of seats, below her, sits Rachel with Beatrice, as you see.[217] Par. 32.10 Sarah, Rebecca, Judith, and she who was great-grandmother of the singer who, in sorrow for his sin, said *Miserere mei* [Have mercy on me]: you can see them thus descending from tier to tier, as I, calling each by her own name, go down through the rose from petal to petal. And from the seventh row downward, just as down to it, Hebrew women follow one another, parting all the tresses of the flower; for, according to the way in which faith looked to Christ, these are the wall by which the sacred stairs are divided.[218] Par. 32.22 On this side, where the flower is mature in all its petals, are seated those who believed in Christ to come. On the other side, where the semicircles are broken by empty spaces, are those who turned their faces to Christ already come. And as on this side the glorious seat of the Lady of heaven, and the other seats below it, make so great a division, so, opposite, does that of the great John, who,

216 Phaethon, son of the Sun, lost control of his father's chariot, so the brightest point is where the sun is about to rise. The oriflamme was the golden-red battle banner of the kings of France.

217 The wound is the sin of the Fall; the woman at Mary's feet who opened it is Eve.

218 The great-grandmother is Ruth; the singer is David, held to have written Psalm 51 in remorse for his sin with Bathsheba.

ever holy, endured the desert and martyrdom, and then Hell for two years;[219] Par. 32.34 and below him Francis, Benedict and Augustine were allotted thus to divide, and others, down to here, from circle to circle. Now marvel at the high providence of God, for both aspects of the faith will fill this garden equally. And know that from the row that cuts midway across the two divisions downward, they are seated through no merit of their own, but through that of others, under certain conditions; for all these are spirits released from the body before they had the true power of choice. Par. 32.46 You can clearly perceive this by their faces, and also by their childish voices, if you look at them well and listen to them. Now you are in doubt, and in doubting you are silent; but I will loosen for you the strong bond in which your subtle thoughts bind you. Within the breadth of this kingdom no point of chance can have a place, any more than sadness or thirst or hunger can; for whatever you see is established by eternal law, so that here the ring fits the finger exactly. Par. 32.58 And therefore these people, hastened to true life, are not *sine causa* [without cause] more and less excellent here among themselves. The King, through whom this kingdom rests in such love and in such delight that no will dares to wish for more, creating all minds in his own glad sight, endows them with grace diversely, as he pleases; and here let the effect suffice. And this is shown to you expressly and clearly in Holy Scripture, in those twins who were stirred to anger within their mother.[220] Par. 32.70 Therefore, according to the color of the hair of such grace, the highest light must fittingly crown them. So, without merit from their conduct, they are placed in different ranks, differing only in their first keenness of sight. In the early ages, indeed, the faith of their parents alone was enough, along with innocence, to gain salvation; after those first ages were completed, males had to acquire strength for their innocent wings through cir-

219 John the Baptist died about two years before Christ, and so waited that long in Limbo.

220 Jacob and Esau, who struggled in Rebecca's womb (Genesis 25); Esau was born red and hairy, hence the "color of the hair" that follows.

cumcision. Par. 32.82 But after the time of grace had come, without perfect baptism in Christ such innocence was held back down below. Now look upon the face that most resembles Christ, for its brightness alone can prepare you to see Christ." I saw raining down on her such gladness, borne in the holy minds created to fly across that height, that nothing I had seen before had held me suspended in such wonder, or shown me so great a likeness of God.[221] Par. 32.94 And that love which had first descended there, singing *Ave Maria, gratia plena* [Hail Mary, full of grace], spread out its wings before her. The blessed court answered the divine song from every side, so that every face grew more serene. "O holy father, who for my sake endure to be down here, leaving the sweet place where you sit by eternal lot, which is that angel who with such delight looks into the eyes of our Queen, so in love that he seems on fire?" Par. 32.106 So I turned once more to the teaching of him who drew beauty from Mary as the morning star does from the sun. And he said to me: "Boldness and grace, as much as there can be in angel or in soul, are all in him, and we would have it so, because he is the one who carried the palm down to Mary when the Son of God chose to take on the burden of our flesh.[222] Par. 32.115 But now come with your eyes, as I go on speaking, and note the great patricians of this most just and devout empire. Those two who sit up there most blessed, through being nearest to the Empress, are as it were two roots of this rose. He who is next to her on the left is the father through whose bold tasting the human race tastes so much bitterness. On the right you see that ancient father of holy Church to whom Christ entrusted the keys of this lovely flower.[223] Par. 32.127 And he who, before he died, saw all the hard times of the fair bride who was won with the lance and with the nails sits beside him; and beside the other rests that guide under whom the people lived on manna, ungrateful, fickle and rebellious. Opposite Peter you see Anne sitting, so content to gaze at her daughter that she does

221 Down below: in Limbo, where unbaptized infants remain.
222 The angel is Gabriel, who announced to Mary that she would bear Christ.
223 The father on the left is Adam; the ancient father on the right is Saint Peter.

not move her eyes as she sings *Osanna* [Hosanna]. And opposite the greatest father of a family sits Lucy, who moved your lady when you were bending your brows to rush down to ruin.[224] Par. 32.139 But because the time of your sleeping vision is fleeing, we will stop here, like a good tailor who cuts the gown according to the cloth he has; and we will direct our eyes to the first Love, so that, looking toward him, you may penetrate as far as is possible into his radiance. But truly, lest perhaps you fall back while beating your wings and thinking to advance, grace must be obtained by praying, grace from her who can help you; and you, follow me with your affection, so that your heart does not stray from my words." And he began this holy prayer.

CANTO 33

Par. 33.1 "Virgin Mother, daughter of your Son, humble and exalted more than any creature, fixed goal of the eternal counsel, you are she who so ennobled human nature that its Maker did not disdain to make himself its creature. In your womb was rekindled the love by whose warmth, in the eternal peace, this flower has thus come to bloom. Here you are for us a noonday torch of charity, and below, among mortals, you are a living fountain of hope. Par. 33.13 Lady, you are so great and of such power that whoever wants grace and does not turn to you would have his desire fly without wings. Your kindness not only helps the one who asks, but many times freely runs ahead of the asking. In you is mercy, in you pity, in you magnificence, in you is gathered whatever goodness there is in any creature. Par. 33.22 Now this man, who from the lowest pit of the universe up to here has seen the lives of spirits one by one, begs you, by grace, for such power that he may lift himself with his eyes higher toward the final salvation. And I, who never burned for my own vision more than I burn for his, offer you all my prayers, and pray that

224 The seer of the Church's trials is Saint John, author of Revelation; the guide is Moses; Anne is Mary's mother. The "greatest father of a family" is Adam, and Lucy is the saint who sent Beatrice to Virgil (Inferno 2).

they may not fall short, that with your prayers you may scatter for him every cloud of his mortality, so that the highest joy may be unfolded to him. Par. 33.34 I pray you further, Queen, who can do whatever you will, that after so great a vision you keep his affections sound. Let your protection overcome his human impulses: see Beatrice, with how many of the blessed, clasping their hands to you in support of my prayers!" The eyes beloved and revered by God, fixed on the one who prayed, showed us how welcome devout prayers are to her. Then they turned to the eternal light, into which, we must not believe, any creature's eye can enter so clearly.

THE VISION OF GOD

Dante's sight enters the eternal light, where speech and memory fail.

Par. 33.46 And I, who was drawing near to the end of all desires, as I was meant to, brought the ardor of my longing to its end within me. Bernard was signaling to me, and smiling, for me to look upward; but I was already of myself such as he wished; for my sight, becoming pure, was entering more and more through the ray of the high light which in itself is true. Par. 33.55 From then on my seeing was greater than our speech, which gives way before such a sight, and memory gives way before such excess. As is one who sees in a dream, and after the dream the feeling it impressed remains, and the rest does not come back to the mind, so am I, for my vision almost wholly fades, and yet there still distills in my heart the sweetness that was born of it. Par. 33.64 So the snow loses its imprint in the sun; so, in the wind, on the light leaves, the Sibyl's oracle was lost. O highest light, who rise so far above mortal thoughts, lend again to my mind a little of what you seemed, and make my tongue so powerful that it may leave just a single spark of your glory to the people to come; for by returning somewhat to my memory, and by sounding a little in these verses, more of your victory will be conceived.[225] Par. 33.76

225 The Sibyl of Cumae wrote her prophecies on leaves, which the wind scattered (Virgil, *Aeneid* 3 and 6).

I believe, from the keenness of the living ray that I endured, that I would have been lost if my eyes had been turned away from it. And I remember that because of this I was bolder to sustain it, until I joined my gaze with the infinite power. O abundant grace, by which I presumed to fix my sight through the eternal light so far that I consumed my vision there! Par. 33.85 In its depth I saw gathered within, bound with love into one volume, what is scattered like loose pages throughout the universe: substances and accidents and their relations, as though fused together in such a way that what I speak of is but a simple light. The universal form of this knot I believe I saw, because, in saying this, I feel my joy grow wider. A single moment is a greater oblivion to me than twenty-five centuries have been to the enterprise that made Neptune marvel at the shadow of the Argo.[226] Par. 33.97 So my mind, wholly suspended, was gazing, fixed, motionless and intent, and was ever more kindled by gazing. In that light one becomes such that it is impossible one could ever consent to turn from it to any other sight; for the good, which is the object of the will, is all gathered in it, and outside it that is defective which there is perfect. Now my speech will fall shorter, even for what I remember, than that of an infant who still bathes his tongue at the breast.

THREE CIRCLES

Dante sees the Trinity as three circles and, within one of them, a human image.

Par. 33.109 Not because there was more than a single appearance in the living light at which I gazed, which is always just as it was before; but through my sight, which grew stronger in me as I looked, one single appearance, as I changed, was transforming itself for me. In the deep and clear substance of the high light there appeared to me three circles of three colors and of one

226 The Argo, Jason's ship, was held to be the first ever built, and Neptune marveled at its shadow on the sea; Dante places that voyage some twenty-five centuries before his own time.

extent; and one seemed reflected by the other, as rainbow by rainbow, and the third seemed a fire breathed forth equally from the one and from the other. Par. 33.121 O how scant speech is, and how feeble, beside my conception! And this, beside what I saw, is such that it is not enough to call it little. O eternal light, who alone abide in yourself, alone understand yourself, and, understood by yourself and understanding yourself, love and smile! That circling which, thus conceived, appeared in you as reflected light, when my eyes had gazed around it for a while, seemed to me painted within, in its own very color, with our image, so that my sight was wholly set upon it. Par. 33.133 As is the geometer who sets himself wholly to measure the circle, and cannot find, by thinking, the principle he needs, so was I at that new sight: I wished to see how the image conformed to the circle and how it has its place there; but my own wings were not equal to that, except that my mind was struck by a flash of light in which its wish was fulfilled. Here power failed the high imagination; but already my desire and my *velle* [will] were turned, like a wheel that is evenly moved, by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.[227]

227 The geometer is trying to "square the circle," to find a square equal in area to a given circle, a problem long sought and never solved.