

## CANTO 4

1 Rappemi l'alto sonno ne la testa  
 un greve truono, sì ch'io mi riscossi  
 come persona ch'è per forza desta;  
 4 e l'occhio riposato intorno mossi,  
 dritto levato, e fiso riguardai  
 per conoscer lo loco dov' io fossi.  
 7 Vero è che 'n su la proda mi trovai  
 de la valle d'abisso dolorosa  
 10 che 'ntrono accoglie d'infiniti guai.  
 Oscura e profonda era e nebulosa  
 tanto che, per ficcar lo viso a fondo,  
 io non vi discerneva alcuna cosa.  
 13 "Or discendiamo qua giù nel cieco mondo,"  
 cominciò il poeta tutto smorto.  
 "Io sarò primo, e tu sarai secondo."  
 16 E io, che del color mi fui accorto,  
 dissi: "Come verrò, se tu paventi  
 che suoli al mio dubbiare esser conforto?"  
 19 Ed elli a me: "L'angoscia de le genti  
 che son qua giù, nel viso mi dipigne  
 quella pietà che tu per tema senti.  
 22 Andiam, ché la via lunga ne sospigne."  
 Così si mise e così mi fé intrare  
 nel primo cerchio che l'abisso cigne.  
 25 Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,  
 non avea pianto mai che di sospiri  
 che l'aura eterna facevan tremare;  
 28 ciò avvennia di duol senza matiri  
 ch'avean le turbe, ch'eran molte e grandi,  
 d'infanti e di femmine e di viri.

## CANTO 4

*First circle: Limbo—the unbaptized—Virgil's account of the Harrowing of Hell—the ancient poets—the Noble Castle—the illustrious pagans*

1 Breaking the deep sleep within my head, a heavy  
 thunder-clap made me shake myself like one forcibly  
 awakened;  
 4 and I turned my rested eye about, standing erect,  
 and gazed fixedly, to know the place where I might  
 be.  
 7 In truth, I found myself on the brink of the  
 sorrowful valley of the abyss, which gathers in the  
 thundering of infinite woes.  
 10 Dark and deep it was, and so clouded that though  
 I probed with my sight to the bottom I discerned  
 nothing there.  
 13 "Now let us descend down here into the blind  
 world," began the poet, all pale. "I will be first, and  
 you will be second."  
 16 And I, who had perceived his color, said: "How  
 can I come, if you are afraid, who when I have fears  
 have ever brought me strength?"  
 19 And he to me: "The suffering of the peoples who  
 are here below, paints on my face that pity which  
 you perceive as fear.  
 22 Let us go, for the long way urges us." So he put  
 himself, and so he made me enter, into the first circle  
 girding the abyss.  
 25 Here, as far as could be heard, there was no  
 weeping except of sighs which caused the eternal air  
 to tremble;  
 28 these resulted from grief without torture, felt by  
 the crowds, which were many and large, of infants  
 and of women and of men.

31 Lo buon maestro a me: "Tu non dimandi  
che spiriti son questi che tu vedi?  
Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che più andi,  
34 ch'èi non peccaro; e s'elli hanno mercedi  
non basta, perché non ebbèr battesimo,  
37 ch'è porta de la fede che tu credi;  
e s'è' furon dinanzi al cristianesimo,  
non adorar debbiamente a Dio:  
40 e di questi cotai son io medesimo.  
Per tai difetti, non per altro rio,  
semo perduti, e sol di tanto offesi  
43 che senza speme vivemo in disio."  
Gran duol mi prese al cor quando lo 'ntesi,  
46 però che gente di molto valore  
conobbi che 'n quel limbo eran sospesi.  
"Dimmi, maestro mio, dimmi, signore,"  
49 comincià' io per volere esser certo  
di quella fede che vince ogni errore:  
"uscicci mai alcuno, o per suo merito,  
52 o per altrui, che poi fosse beato?"  
E quei, che 'ntese il mio parlar coverto,  
rispuose: "Io era nuovo in questo stato,  
quando ci vidi venire un possente  
55 con segno di vittoria coronato.  
Trasseci l'ombra del primo parente,  
d'Abel suo figlio e quella di Noè,  
58 di Moisé legista e ubidente,  
Abraàm patriarcha e David re,  
Israel con lo padre e co' suoi nati  
61 e con Rachele, per cui tanto fé,  
e altri molti, e feceli beati.  
E vo' che sappi che, dinanzi ad essi,  
64 spiriti umani non eran salvati."  
Non lasciavam l'andar perch' ei dicessi,  
ma passavam la selva tuttavìa,  
67 la selva, dico, di spiriti spessi.  
Non era lunga ancor la nostra via  
di qua dal sonno, quand' io vidi un foco  
ch'emisperio di tenebre vincia.

31 My good master to me: "You do not ask what  
spirits are these you see? Now I wish you to know,  
before you walk further,  
34 that they did not sin; and if they have merits, it is  
not enough, because they did not receive baptism,  
which is the gateway to the faith that you believe.  
37 And if they lived before Christianity, they did not  
adore God as was needful: and of this kind am I  
myself.  
40 Because of such defects, not for any other  
wickedness, we are lost, and only so far harmed that  
without hope we live in desire."  
43 Great sorrow seized my heart when I understood  
him, because I knew that people of great worth were  
suspended in that limbo.  
46 "Tell me, my master, tell me, lord," I began,  
wishing to be assured of that faith which overcomes  
all error:  
49 "has anyone ever gone forth from here, either  
through his own merit or through another, so as to  
become blessed?" And he, who understood my  
veiled speech,  
52 replied: "I was still new in this condition, when I  
saw a powerful one come, crowned with a sign of  
victory.  
55 He led forth from here the shade of our first  
parent, of Abel his son, and that of Noah, of Moses,  
lawgiver and obedient,  
58 Abraham the patriarch and David the king, Israel  
with his father, and his children, and Rachel, for  
whom he did so much,  
61 and many others, and he made them blessed.  
And I would have you know that before them no  
human spirits were saved."  
64 We did not cease walking because he spoke, but  
kept on passing through the wood, the wood, I say,  
of crowding spirits.  
67 Our way had not led far from where I had slept,  
when I saw a fire that overcame a hemisphere of  
shadows.

70 Di lungi n'eravamo ancora un poco,  
 ma non si ch'io non discernessi in parte  
 ch'ortevol gente possedeà quel loco.

73 "O tu ch'onori scienza e arte,  
 questi chi son c'hanno cotanta onranza,  
 che del modo de li altri li diparte?"

76 E quelli a me: "L'onrata nominanza  
 che di lor suona sù ne la tua vita,  
 grazia acquista in ciel che si li avanza."

79 Intanto voce fu per me udita:  
 "Onorate l'altissimo poeta:  
 l'ombra sua toma, ch'era dipartita."

82 Poi che la voce fu restata e queta,  
 vidi quattro grand'ombre a noi venire:  
 sembiant'avevan né trista né lieta.

85 Lo buon maestro cominciò a dire:  
 "Mira colui con quella spada in mano,  
 che vien dinanzi ai tre sì come sire:  
 quelli è Omero, poeta sovrano;  
 l'altro è Orazio satiro che vene;  
 Ovidio è 'l terzo, e l'ultimo Lucano.

91 Però che ciascun meco si convenne  
 nel nome che sonò la voce sola,  
 fannomi onore, e di ciò fanno bene."

94 Così vid' i' adunar la bella scola  
 di quel segnor de l'altissimo canto  
 che sovra li altri com' aquila vola.

97 Da ch'ebber ragionato insieme alquanto,  
 volsersi a me con saltevol cenno,  
 e 'l mio maestro sorrise di tanto;  
 e più d'onore ancora assai mi fenne,  
 ch'è' sì mi fecer de la loro schiera,  
 sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno.

103 Così andammo infino a la lanera,  
 parlando cose che 'l tacere è bello,  
 sì com' era 'l parlar colà dov' era.

106 Venimmo al piè d'un nobile castello,  
 sette volte cerchiato d'alte mura,  
 difeso intorno d'un bel fiumicello.

70 We were still some distance from it, but not so far  
 as to keep me from discerning in part that people worthy  
 to be honored possessed that place.

73 "O you who honor knowledge and art, who are  
 these who receive so much privilege as to be  
 separated from the manner of the others?"

76 And he to me: "The honor with which their names  
 resound up in your life, wins grace in Heaven that  
 thus advances them."

79 Meantime a voice was heard by me: "Honor the  
 highest poet: his shade returns, that had departed."

82 When the voice had ceased and was silent, I saw  
 four great shades coming toward us: their expression  
 was neither sad nor happy.

85 My good master began to speak: "Behold the one  
 with that sword in his hand, coming in front of the  
 other three as if their lord:  
 that is Homer, the supreme poet; the next is  
 Horace the satirist; Ovid is the third, and the last,  
 Lucan.

91 Because they all share with me that name which  
 the single voice pronounced, they do me honor, and  
 in this they do well."

94 So saw I come together the lovely school of that  
 lord of highest song, who soars above the others like  
 an eagle.

97 When they had spoken together for a time they  
 turned to me with sign of greeting, and my master  
 smiled at that;  
 and they did me an even greater honor, for they  
 made me one of their band, so that I was sixth  
 among so much wisdom.

103 Thus we went as far as the light, speaking things  
 of which it is good to be silent now, as it was good  
 to speak them there where I was.

106 We came to the foot of a noble castle, seven times  
 encircled by high walls, defended all around by a  
 lovely little stream.

109 Questo passammo come terra dura;  
per sette porte intrai con questi savi;  
giugnemmo in prato di fresca verdura.  
112 Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,  
di grande autorità ne' loro sembianti:  
parlavan rado, con voci soavi.  
115 Traemmo così da l'un de' canti  
in loco aperto, luminoso e alto,  
sì che veder si potien tutti quanti.  
118 Colà dritto, sovra 'l verde smalto,  
mì fuor mostrati li spiriti magni,  
che del vedere in me stesso m'essalto.  
121 I' vidi Elettra con molti compagni,  
tra ' quai conobbi Etrò ed Enea,  
Cesare armato con li occhi grifagni.  
124 Vidi Cammilla e la Pantesilea;  
da l'altra parte vidi 'l re Latino,  
che con Lavinia sua figlia sedea.  
127 Vidi quel Bruto che cacciò Tarquino,  
Lucrezia, Iulia, Marzia e Corniglia;  
e solo, in parte, vidi 'l Saladino.  
130 Poi ch'innalzai un poco più le ciglia,  
vidi 'l maestro di color che sanno  
seder tra filosofica famiglia.  
133 Tutti lo miran, tutti onor li fanno:  
quivi vid' iò Socrate e Platone,  
che 'nnanzi a li altri più presso li stanno,  
136 Democrito che 'l mondo a caso pone,  
Diogenès, Anassagora e Tale,  
Empedocès, Eracito e Zenone;  
139 e vidi il buono accogitor del quale,  
Diascoride dico; e vidi Orfeo,  
Tullio e Lino e Seneca morale,  
142 Euclide geometra e Tolomeo,  
Ippocrate, Avicenna e Galieno,  
Averois che 'l gran commento feo.  
145 Io non posso ritrar di tutti a pieno,  
però che sì mi caccia il lungo tema  
che molte volte al fatto il dir vien meno.

109 This we passed over like solid ground; through  
seven gates I entered with these sages; we came into  
a meadow of fresh green.  
112 Here were people with slow, grave eyes and great  
authority in their countenances: they spoke seldom,  
and with soft voices.  
115 Therefore we drew to one side, to a place open,  
bright, and high, whence all of them could be seen.  
118 There opposite, on the bright green grass, all the  
great spirits were shown to me, so that I am still  
exalted within myself at the sight.  
121 I saw Electra with many companions, among  
whom I recognized Hector and Aeneas, Caesar in  
armor with hawklike eyes.  
124 I saw Camilla and Pentesilea; on the other side I  
saw King Latinus, who was sitting with Lavinia his  
daughter.  
127 I saw the Brutus who drove Tarquin out, Lucretia,  
Julia, Marcia, and Cornelia; and alone, to the side,  
Saladin.  
130 When I lifted my brow a little higher, I saw the  
master of those who know, sitting among a  
philosophical company.  
133 All gaze at him, all do him honor: there I saw  
Socrates and Plato, standing closer to him, in front of  
the others,  
136 Democritus, who assigns the world to chance,  
Diogenes, Anaxagoras, and Thales, Empedocles,  
Heraclitus, and Zeno;  
139 and I saw the good gatherer of qualities,  
Dioscorides I mean; and I saw Orpheus, Tullius and  
Linus, and Seneca the moralist,  
142 Euclid the geometer and Ptolemy, Hippocrates,  
Avicenna and Galen, Averroës who made the great  
commentary.  
145 I cannot describe them all in full, because my long  
theme so drives me that often the word falls short of the  
fact.

148

La sesta compagnia in due si scema:  
per altra via mi mena il savio duca  
fuor de la queta, ne l'aura che trema.  
E vegno in parte ove non è che luca.

151

148

The company of six is reduced to two: along  
another way my wise leader conducts me out of the  
quiet, into the trembling air.  
And I came to a place there is nothing to give light.

151



1. **the deep sleep:** Echoing 3.136, and recalling also 1.2 and 1.11.
2. **a heavy thunder-clap:** Perhaps the sound of the lightning flash of 3.134. Except for line 67, no further reference is made to either passage.
8. **valley of the abyss:** The expression "pit of the abyss" (the "abyss" is literally the "bottomless") is biblical (Apoc. 9.1-2).
11. **I probed with my sight:** According to Plato, vision results from the joining of light emitted by the eye with external light. Aristotle conclusively refuted this view, as Dante noted in *Convivio* 3.9, but his terminology regularly reflects it.
- 14-21. **all pale . . . you perceive as fear:** Virgil's pity seems restricted to the souls in Limbo. Though it is not fear that causes his pallor here, it does cause it later (see 9.1-3).
24. **the first circle:** The existence of a Limbo (the term means "edge" or "fringe") for unbaptized children and for the faithful waiting for Christ was asserted by the fathers of the Church; Aquinas placed it underground, below Purgatory (also underground) but above Hell itself (*Summa theol.* Suppl., q. 94). Dante's placing unbaptized adults and virtuous pagans there is original with him and contrary to Church doctrine. The best discussion is Padoan 1970.
- 29-30. **the crowds . . . and of men:** There is an echo here of Vergil's description of the dead crowding the shores of Styx (*Aen.* 6.306-8), which Dante also drew on in 3.70-78:
 

matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita  
magnanimum heroum, pueri innuptaque puellae,  
impositaque rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum  
[mothers and men and the bodies reft of life  
of great-souled heroes, boys and unwedded girls,  
youths placed on the pyre before the eyes of their parents]
- 34-42. **they did not sin . . . live in desire:** For Dante, beatitude cannot be earned but is the result of a free gift by God predicated on faith in Christ (strictly speaking, faith itself is a gift of grace), though faith alone, without works, is insufficient (Dante will give numerous instances of late repentants who are

saved, however). "Merits" refers to deserving acquired by works. Virgil may seem to imply that those who lived before Christ were saved if they "adored" God (or "prayed" to him) rightly; in *Paradiso* 19, in a passage about the salvation of a Trojan from the time of the Trojan War, the pilgrim is told that no one has ever been saved without believing in Christ. Dante's theory of salvation, thoroughly orthodox in medieval terms (unlike his Limbo), is set forth in *Paradiso* 7.

35-36. **baptism, which is the gateway:** This is a traditional metaphor; as Dante writes in *Par.* 25.10-11, by baptism he "entered into the faith." See also *Inferno* 19, especially lines 16-21.

39. **and of this kind am I myself:** Virgil identifies himself as one who, living before Christianity, "did not adore God as was needful"; since he has explicitly stated that the souls in Limbo "did not sin" (line 34), his account here really does not explain his statement (1.123) that he was "a rebel" against God's law. This question hovers over Dante's entire portrayal of Virgil (see, with notes, Cantos 8 and 9 and *Purgatorio* 21, 22, and 30).

42. **without hope we live in desire:** They desire the beatific vision of God but cannot hope to reach it; compare with Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1: "you have made us for yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rest in you."

47-50. **assured of that faith . . . to become blessed:** Lines 47-48 can be taken to mean that the pilgrim desires a high degree of certainty or that he desires clarification of his Christian belief. Chiavacci Leonardi suggests that his question reflects Dante's awareness that Christ's descent into Hell (between his death and resurrection) had been made an article of faith only in 1215 (reasserted in 1274); he is obviously asserting it as correct.

52-63. **I was still new . . . no human spirits were saved:** Virgil's account refers to the so-called Harrowing of Hell, narrated in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* (third century A.D.); itself based on scattered biblical passages (e.g., Eph. 4.9) and no doubt founded on earlier beliefs: Christ was supposed to have descended into the underworld, violently breaking down its outer gate (cf. 3.1-12) against the opposition of the devils, and to have led to Heaven in triumph the souls of all those who had believed the prophecies of his future coming. This theme became one of the most widely represented in the Middle Ages, in poems, mosaics, sculptures, paintings, and plays. The Byzantine *anastasis*, the earliest type of pictorial representation of the triumphant Christ, showed him trampling the shattered gates of Hell (and, underneath them, Satan) while taking by the hand Adam at the head of a line of Old Testament figures; good examples are the apse mosaic at Torcello and the internal mosaic at San Marco in Venice (reproduced in Singleton, plate 2).

52. **I was still new:** Vergil died in 19 B.C.; by Dante's reckoning he would have been dead for about fifty-two years when Christ died.

53. **a powerful one:** Vergil does not seem to have recognized Christ as anything more than a man; Augustine (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 48, 1.5) expressed the view that at the Last Judgment the damned would not be able to see Christ's divinity (see the note to 34.115).

54. **crowned . . . victory:** Vergil probably saw a classical laurel wreath rather than the cruciform nimbus, a sign of divinity, which crowns the triumphant Christ in the *anastasis* and later images (see previous note); the line may echo Hebrews 2.9: "But we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor."

59-60. **Israel . . . did so much:** Jacob (named Israel after his struggle with the angel, Gen. 32.28), his father Isaac, his twelve sons (the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel), and his wife Rachel (see the note to 2.100).

69. **a fire . . . shadows:** The hemisphere of light is a symbol both of the enlightenment achieved by classical civilization and of the knowledge (the memory) of the classical world possessed by Dante and his contemporaries (the "honorable mention," or fame, of line 76). Although Dante realized that his time possessed only fragmentary knowledge of antiquity, he could not have foreseen that the generation of Petrarch (1304-1374) and Boccaccio (1308-1375) would double the number of ancient texts accessible to readers and consequently further revolutionize European conceptions of history.

88. **Homer:** Dante had no direct knowledge of Homer or any other Greek poet; his ideas were derived from Aristotle, Cicero, Vergil, and other Latin authors. He apparently knew nothing of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Pindar, or Sappho, to mention only a few (Euripides and several others are mentioned in *Purg.* 22.106-7).

89. **Horace the satirist:** Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 B.C.) was, with Vergil, the leading poet of the Augustan age. Dante refers to the *Ars poetica*, which circulated separately, in *De vulgari eloquentia* 2.4.4 but never mentions the other *Epistles* or the *Odes*.

90. **Ovid . . . Lucan:** Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C.-ca. A.D. 17) and Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (A.D. 39-65). Dante knew all or most of Ovid's works, of which he most frequently cites the *Metamorphoses*; Lucan is the author of the *Pharsalia*, an epic on the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. The only major Latin epic poet omitted here is Statius, whom we meet in Purgatory; Dante does not seem to have known Propertius.

98-105. **they turned to me . . . there where I was:** A transparent autobiographical allegory, referring to Dante's learning the craft of poetry by studying

the ancients and his conviction that he is worthy of their company (no false modesty here).

102. **so that I was sixth:** The phrase seems to echo Ovid's naming of himself as fourth in the line of elegiac poets in *Tristia* 4.10.54: "Fourth of these in the succession of time was I myself." There is, no doubt, a numerical significance in the pilgrim's being sixth; in the *Purgatorio*, with the addition of Statius, he becomes seventh (for the significance in the poem of the number seven, see the notes to *Purgatorio* 17).

106. **a noble castle:** Like the hemisphere of light, this is another symbol of classical civilization, usually identified as the castle of wisdom, the seven walls symbolizing the seven classical virtues (four moral, the so-called cardinal virtues: prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice; three intellectual: understanding, knowledge, and, again, prudence), the seven gates symbolizing the seven liberal arts (the Trivium [triple path], arts of language: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic; and the Quadrivium [fourfold path], sciences of the cosmos: music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy), also inherited from antiquity (see Curtius 1953). The stream is often glossed as representing eloquence; several early commentators take it to refer to worldly temptations which must be shunned for the sake of learning. As the early commentators point out, the green meadow derives from Vergil's Elysian Fields (*Aen.* 6.637-892).

115-17. **Therefore we drew . . . could be seen:** The elevation from which the group contemplate the great souls of antiquity seems to echo the hill from which Aeneas and Anchises see the future heroes of Rome (*Aen.* 6.754-55).

118-20. **There opposite . . . at the sight:** At the autobiographical level of the allegory, the entire episode of the hemisphere of light must of course refer to Dante's reading of classical writers and his acquisition of classical lore. Along with lines 97-102, this is a clear expression of the excitement he felt.

121. **Electra:** Not the daughter of Agamemnon but of Atlas; she was the mother of Dardanus, a founder of Troy (*Aen.* 8.134-35; Dante refers to her again in *Monarchia* 2.3.2). She is appropriately grouped with the Trojans Hector and Aeneas and with Julius Caesar (descended, according to Vergil, from Aeneas).

124-26. **Camilla . . . Lavinia his daughter:** Figures from the *Aeneid* (cf. 1.107-8): Camilla and Penthesilea are virgin warriors; Camilla, an invention of Vergil's, is an ally of the Latins (*Aen.* 7.803-17, 11.648-835), and Penthesilea, the queen of the Amazons, was an ally of Troy according to a Greek tradition mentioned by Vergil (*Aen.* 1.490-93). King Latinus, the king of the Latins, betrothed his daughter to Aeneas before hostilities broke out; from the union of Trojans and Latians sprang the Romans.

**127-29. Brutus . . . Cornelia:** Figures from Roman history, known to Dante from Livy, Lucan, and others. Targuin, according to Roman tradition, was the last of the kings; his son's rape of Lucretia resulted in their expulsion and the founding of the republic, which Dante notes in *Convivio* 4.5.12 as lasting from Brutus, its first consul, to Julius Caesar. Cornelia was Julius Caesar's wife and the mother of Julia, who was married to Pompey the Great. Marcia was the wife of Cato the Younger, whom we meet in *Purgatorio* 1.

**129. Saladdin:** Saladdin (Salah ad-Din, 1137-1193) was the sultan of Egypt who drove the Crusaders entirely out of the Holy Land, except for the fortress of Acre, which fell in Dante's day. Many stories and legends gathered about this impressive figure; Dante mentions him in *Convivio* 4.11.14 as an example of liberality.

**130. When I lifted my brow a little higher:** The heroes of the contemplative life—philosophers, poets, and scientists—are placed higher than those of the active life.

**131. the master of those who know:** Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), widely known simply as "the philosopher," all of whose surviving works had by Dante's time been translated into Latin. One of the most impressive achievements of the Middle Ages was the assimilation and mastery during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of all the works of Aristotle.

**134. Socrates and Plato:** Dante knew Plato only indirectly, mainly through Augustine's adaptation of Neoplatonic lore, except for the incomplete translation of the *Timaeus* by the fourth- or fifth-century Christian bishop Calcidius, who also wrote a commentary on it. Although Dante makes Plato subordinate to Aristotle, the "Aristotle" he knew was more Platonic than not, since, in common with his time, Dante ascribed to him several works by late followers of Plato and read him in a Neoplatonic key.

**136-38. Democritus . . . Zeno:** Diogenes and Zeno Dante had read of in manuals; the others are pre-Socratics discussed by Aristotle in his *Physics* in order to refute their views.

**139. Dioscorides:** The traditional author of the most widely used collection of works on *materia medica*; the qualities referred to are those of plants.

**140-42. Orpheus . . . Seneca:** Orpheus and Linus are legendary poets mentioned in Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*; Tullius is Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-46 B.C.); Seneca the moralist is Lucius Annaeus Seneca the younger (4 B.C.-A.D. 65), also the author of tragedies. Some works by both Cicero and Seneca were known to Dante. The inclusion of poets among philosophers reflects the

Ciceronian tradition of identifying poetry with wisdom, as well as the fact that many of the pre-Socratics wrote in verse.

**142-44. Euclid . . . Averroës:** Scientists and philosophers, all translated into Latin. Euclid's (third century B.C.) *Elements* and *Optics* were widely studied in Dante's time. Ptolemy's (second century A.D.) *Almagest* was the leading astronomical textbook, as his *Tetrabiblos* was the dominant influence in astrology. Hippocrates (fifth century B.C.) was the most famous physician of ancient Greece, to whom works by many authors were ascribed. Galen (second century A.D.) was the founder of experimental medicine; his influence dominated European medicine from the late Middle Ages into the seventeenth century.

Dante treats the Muslim philosophers almost as extensions of Greco-Roman civilization. Avicenna (Ibn-Sina, d. 1036) was the leading Muslim Neoplatonic philosopher and the author of an influential handbook of medicine that Dante probably knew. The Spanish Arab Averroës (Ibn-Rushd, d. 1198), who suffered persecution from the Islamic fundamentalists of his day, was the greatest of the medieval commentators on Aristotle, widely known simply as "the Commentator" (the "great commentary" refers to his commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*); the extent to which Dante accepted his influential doctrine of the unity of the intellect (combated by Aquinas) has been hotly debated.





## CANTO 5

1 Così discesi del cerchio primaio  
giù nel secondo, che men loco cinghia  
e tanto più dolor che punge a guairo.  
4 Stavvi Minòs orribilmente, e ringhia:  
essamina le colpe ne l'intrata;  
7 giudica e manda secondo ch'avvinghia.  
Dico che quando l'anima mal nata  
li vien dinanzi, tutta si confessa;  
e quel conoscitor de le peccata  
10 vede qual loco d'inferno è da essa;  
cignesi con la coda tante volte  
quantunque gradi vuol che giù sia messa.  
13 Sempre dinanzi a lui ne stanno molte;  
vanno a vicenda ciascuna al giudizio,  
dicono e odono e poi son giù volte.  
16 "O tu che vieni al doloroso ospizio,"  
disse Minòs a me quando mi vide,  
19 lasciando l'atto di cotanto offizio,  
"guarda com' entri e di cui tu ti fide:  
non t'inganni l'ampiezza de l'intrate!"  
22 E 'l duca mio a lui: "Perché pur gridi?  
Non impedir lo suo fatale andare:  
vuolsi così colà dove si puote  
ciò che si vuole, e più non dimandare."  
25 Or incomincian le dolenti note  
a farmisi sentire: or son venuto  
là dove molto pianto mi percuote.  
28 Io venni in loco d'ogne luce muto,  
che mugghia come fa mar per tempesta,  
se da contrari venti è combattuto.

## CANTO 5

*Minos—second circle: the lustful—Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta*

1 Thus I descended from the first circle down to the  
second, which encloses a smaller space, but so much  
more suffering that it goads the souls to shriek.  
4 There stands Minos bristling and snarling: he  
examines the soul's guilt at the entrance; he judges  
and passes sentence by how he wraps.  
7 I say that when the ill-born soul comes before  
him, it confesses all; and that connoisseur of sin  
10 sees which is its place in Hell; he girds himself  
with his tail as many times as the levels he wills the  
soul to be sent down.  
13 Always many stand before him; each goes in turn  
to judgment, they speak and hear and are cast into  
the deep.  
16 "O you who come to the dolorous hospice," said  
Minos when he saw me, leaving off the exercise of  
his great office,  
19 "beware how you enter and to whom you entrust  
yourself: be not deceived by the spacious entrance!"  
22 And my leader to him: "Why still cry out?  
Do not impede his going, which is decreed: this is  
willed where what is willed can be done, so ask no  
more."  
25 Now the grief-stricken notes begin to make  
themselves heard; now I have come where much  
weeping assails me.  
28 I came into a place where all light is silent; that  
groans like the sea in a storm, when it is lashed by  
conflicting winds.

31 La bufera infernal, che mai non resta,  
 mena li spirti con la sua rapina;  
 voltando e percotendo li molesta.  
 34 Quando giungon davanti a la ruina,  
 quivi le strida, il compianto, il lamento;  
 bestemmian quivi la virtù divina.  
 37 Intesi ch' a così fatto tormento  
 enno dannati i peccator carnali,  
 che la ragion somettono al talento.  
 40 E come li stormei ne portan l'ali  
 nel freddo tempo, a schiera larga e piena,  
 così quel fiato li spirti mali  
 43 di qua, di là, di giù, di sù li mena;  
 nulla speranza li conforta mai,  
 non che di posa, ma di minor pena.  
 44 E come i gru van cantando lor lai,  
 faccendo in aere di sé lunga triga,  
 così vid' io venir, traendo guai,  
 49 ombre portate da la detta briga;  
 per ch' i' dissi: "Maestro, chi son quelle  
 genti che l'aura nera sì gastiga?"  
 52 "La prima di color di cui novelle  
 tu vuot' saper," mi disse quelli allotta,  
 "fu imperadrice di molte favelle.  
 55 A vizio di lussuria fu sì rotta  
 che libito fé licito in sua legge,  
 per tòrre il biasmo in che era condotta.  
 58 Ell' è Semiramis, di cui si legge  
 che succedette a Nino e fu sua sposa:  
 tenne la terra che 'l Soldan corregge.  
 61 L' altra è colei che s' ancase amorosa,  
 e ruppe fede al cener di Sicheo;  
 64 poi è Cleopatràs lussuriosa.  
 Elena vedi, per cui tanto reo  
 tempo si volse, e vedi 'l grande Achille,  
 che con Amore al fine combatteo.  
 67 Vedi Paris, Tristano"; e più di mille  
 ombre mostrommi e nominommi a dito,  
 ch' Amor di nostra vita dipartille.

31 The infernal whirlwind, which never rests, drives  
 the spirits before its violence; turning and striking, it  
 tortures them.  
 34 When they come before the landslide, there the  
 shrieks, the wailing, the lamenting; there they curse  
 God's power.  
 37 I understood that to this torment were damned  
 the carnal sinners, who subject their reason to their  
 lust.  
 40 And as their wings carry off the startings in the  
 cold season, in large full flocks, so does that breath  
 carry the evil spirits  
 43 here, there, down, up; no hope ever comforts them,  
 not of lessened suffering, much less of rest.  
 46 And as the cranes go singing their lays, making a  
 long line of themselves in the air, so I saw coming  
 toward us, uttering cries,  
 49 shades borne by the aforesaid violence; so I said:  
 "Master, who are those people whom the black wind  
 so chastises?"  
 52 "The first of those about whom you wish to learn,"  
 he said to me then, "was empress over many  
 languages.  
 55 So broken was she to the vice of lust that in her  
 laws she made licit whatever pleased, to lift from  
 herself the blame she had incurred.  
 58 She is Semiramis, of whom we read that she  
 succeeded Ninus and was his wife: she ruled the  
 lands the Sultan governs now.  
 61 The next is she who killed herself for love and  
 broke faith with the ashes of Sichaenus; next is lustful  
 Cleopatra.  
 64 Behold Helen, who brought such evil times, and  
 see the great Achilles, who battled against Love at  
 the end.  
 67 Behold Paris, Tristan"; and more than a thousand  
 shades he showed me, and named them, pointing,  
 whom Love parted from our life.

70 Poscia ch'io ebbi 'l mio dottore udito  
 nomar le donne antiche e ' cavalieri,  
 pietà mi giunse, e fui quasi smarrito.  
 73 I' cominciai: "Poeta, volontieri  
 parlerei a quei due che 'insieme vanno  
 e paion s' al vento esser leggeri."  
 76 Ed elli a me: "Vedrai quando saranno  
 più presso a noi; e tu allor li priega  
 per quello amor che i mena, ed ei verranno."  
 79 Sì tosto come il vento a noi li piega,  
 mossi la voce: "O anime affannate,  
 venite a noi parlar, s'altri nol niega!"  
 82 Quali colombe dal disio chiamate  
 con l'ali alzate e ferme al dolce nido  
 vegnon per l'aere, dal voler portate,  
 85 cotai uscir de la schiera ov' è Dido,  
 a noi venendo per l'aere maligno,  
 sì forte fu l'affettüoso grido.  
 88 "O animal grazioso e benigno  
 che visitando vai per l'aere perso  
 noi che tignemmo il mondo di sanguigno,  
 91 se fosse amico il re de l'universo,  
 noi pregheremmo lui de la tua pace,  
 poi c'hai pietà del nostro mal perverso.  
 94 Di quel che udire e che parlar vi piace,  
 noi udiremo e parleremo a voi,  
 mentre che 'l vento, come fa, ci tace.  
 97 Siede la terra dove nata fui  
 su la marina dove 'l Po discende  
 per aver pace co' seguaci sui.  
 100 Amor, ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende,  
 prese costui de la bella persona  
 che mi fu tolta, e 'l modo ancor m'offende.  
 103 Amor, ch' a nullo amato amar perdona,  
 mi prese del costui piacer sì forte  
 che, come vedi, ancor non m'abbandona.  
 106 Amor condusse noi ad una morte.  
 Caina attende chi a vita ci spense."  
 Queste parole da lor ci fuor porte.

70 After I had heard my teacher name the ancient  
 ladies and knights, pity came upon me, and I was  
 almost lost.  
 73 I began: "Poet, gladly would I speak with those  
 two who go together and seem to be so light upon  
 the wind."  
 76 And he to me: "You will see when they are closer  
 to us; and then beg them by the love that drives  
 them, and they will come."  
 79 As soon as the wind bends them toward us, I sent  
 forth my voice: "O wearied souls, come speak with  
 us, if another does not forbid it!"  
 82 As doves, called by their desire, with wings raised  
 and steady come to their sweet nest through the air,  
 borne by their will,  
 85 so did they emerge from the flock where Dido is,  
 coming to us through the cruel air, so compelling  
 was my deepfelt cry.  
 88 "O gracious and benign living creature who  
 through the black air go visiting us who stained the  
 world blood-red,  
 91 if the king of the universe were friendly we would  
 pray to him for your peace, since you have pity on  
 our twisted pain.  
 94 Of whatever it pleases you to hear and to speak  
 we will listen and speak to you, while the wind is  
 quiet for us, as it is now.  
 97 The city where I was born sits beside the  
 shore where the Po descends to have peace with its  
 followers.  
 100 Love, which is swiftly kindled in the noble heart,  
 seized this one for the lovely person that was taken  
 from me; and the manner still injures me.  
 103 Love, which pardons no one loved from loving in  
 return, seized me for his beauty so strongly that, as  
 you see, it still does not abandon me.  
 106 Love led us on to one death. Caina awaits him  
 who extinguished our life." These words were borne  
 from them to us.

109 Quand' io intesi quell' anime offense,  
china' il viso, e tanto il tenni basso  
fin che 'l poeta mi disse: "Che pense?"  
112 Quando rispuosi, cominciai: "Oh lasso,  
quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio  
menò costoro al doloroso passo!"  
115 Poi mi rivolsi a loro e parla' io,  
e cominciai: "Francesca, i tuoi martiri  
a lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio.  
118 Ma dimmi: al tempo d'i dolci sospiri,  
a che e come concedete Amore  
che conoscesse i dubbiosi disiri?"  
121 E quella a me: "Nessun maggior dolore  
che ricordarsi del tempo felice  
ne la miseria; e ciò sa 'l tuo dottore.  
124 Ma s'a conoscer la prima radice  
del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,  
dirò come colui che piange e dice.  
127 Noi leggevamo un giorno per diletto  
di Lancelotto come amor lo strinse;  
soli eravamo e senza alcun sospetto.  
130 Per più fiate li occhi ci sospinse  
quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;  
ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.  
133 Quando leggemmo il disiato riso  
esser basciato da cotanto amante,  
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,  
136 la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.  
Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:  
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante."  
139 Mentre che l'uno spirito questo disse,  
l'altro piangèa sì che di pietade  
io venni men così com' io morisse,  
142 e caddi come corpo morto cade.

109 When I understood those injured souls, I bent my  
face downward, and I held it down so long that the  
poet said: "What are you pondering?"  
112 When I replied, I began: "Alas, how many sweet  
thoughts, how much yearning led them to the  
grievous pass!"  
115 Then I turned back to them and spoke, and I began:  
"Francesca, your sufferings make me sad and piteous to  
tears.  
118 But tell me: in the time of your sweet sighs, by  
what and how did Love grant you to know your  
dangerous desires?"  
121 And she to me: "There is no greater pain than to  
remember the happy time in wretchedness; and this  
your teacher knows.  
124 But if you have so much desire to know the first  
root of our love, I will do as one who weeps and  
speaks.  
127 We were reading one day, for pleasure, of  
Lancelot, how Love beset him; we were alone and  
without any suspicion.  
130 Many times that reading drove our eyes  
together and turned our faces pale; but one point  
alone was the one that overpowered us.  
133 When we read that the yearned-for smile was  
kissed by so great a lover, he, who will never be  
separated from me,  
136 kissed my mouth all trembling. Galeotto was the  
book and he who wrote it: that day we read there no  
further."  
139 While one spirit said this, the other was weeping  
so that for pity I fainted as if I were dying,  
142 and I fell as a dead body falls.



- 1-3. **Thus . . . shriek:** Limbo is thus identified as the uppermost circle of Hell, although in important respects it is different from all the others. The narrower compass of this second circle is the first indication that Hell is funnel-shaped and that effects of compression and crowding will become increasingly prominent.
4. **There stands Minos:** According to Greco-Roman tradition, Minos, son of Zeus and Europa and king of Crete, and his brother Rhadamanthus became judges in the underworld (cf. *Aen.* 6.566-69). Further references to Cretan legends are found in *Inferno* 12 (the Minotaur, Theseus, and Ariadne) and 14 (the Old Man of Crete), *Purgatorio* 26 (Pasiphaë), and *Paradiso* 13 (Ariadne) (see the note to 12.12).
- 6-12. **by how he wraps . . . wills the soul to be sent down:** In other words, the number of times Minos's tail is wrapped about his body indicates the number of circles the soul must descend to find its permanent place. This representation of the overall structure of Hell associates its successively lower levels with the body. (Michelangelo includes a striking Dantean Minos in his Sistine Chapel *Last Judgment*.)
16. **hospice:** The use of the term for a monastic guesthouse is bitterly sarcastic.
20. **spacious entrance:** See *Mat.* 7.13: "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction."
23. **this is willed where . . . can be done:** The second of Virgil's reproofs of infernal custodians, identical with the first (3.95-96).
25. **Now the grief-stricken notes:** This first region of Hell proper (but second circle) is marked by the onset of the discordant "music" of Hell, the accented dissonances of its grieving souls.
28. **all light is silent:** That is, where all knowledge ceases (cf. 1.60).
- 31-33. **The infernal whirlwind . . . tortures them:** Like many of the punishments in Dante's Hell, the whirlwind is a taking literally of a common metaphor, in this case a figure for the power of passion; note the implication of conflicting impulses in line 30. For the theory of *contrappasso*, see the note to 28.142.
34. **before the landslide:** For this detail, see 12.32 (another canto involving conspicuous references to myths about Crete).
39. **who subject their reason to their lust:** Note the political metaphors: the sovereign function of reason is usurped by desire. *Talento* [talent], Dante's word for "desire" here, originally referred to the unit of weight of silver used in antiquity; see the parable of the talents in *Mat.* 25.14-30. One's desire is thus one's "weight," one's dominant inclination (see Augustine, *Confessions* 13.9.10). The metaphor is maintained throughout the canto. Lust (Latin *luxuria*) was traditionally regarded as the least serious of the seven deadly vices.
- 40-44. **And as their wings . . . down, up:** The first of three bird similes (starlings, cranes, and doves) that track the pilgrim's shifts of attention; starlings and doves were associated in the medieval bestiaries with lust (Ryan 1976).
43. **here, there, down, up:** These directions correspond to the four classical "perturbations" of the spirit (love, hate, fear, and joy) (see the note to 10.58 and cf. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.6).
46. **as the cranes . . . their lays:** Bestiaries familiar to Dante (e.g., the one included in his teacher Brunetto Latini's *Treaso*) compare the formations of migrating cranes to knights in battle lines (Ryan 1976). The emergence of the line of noble lovers (and there is a reference to the medieval vogue of stories of adulterous love in Breton *lais*) suggests that the starlings may represent more plebeian lovers.
54. **empress over many languages:** Semiramis, widow of King Ninus, legendary founder of Babylon and its empire, hence "over many languages." "She made licit whatever pleased" (in the Italian, only a single letter distinguishes *licito* from *licito*, the "pleasing" from the "lawful"), that is, she legalized incest, allegedly because she herself was guilty of it with her son. For these details and for his general knowledge of Semiramis, Dante follows hostile Christian accounts (Augustine's *City of God*, Orosius's *Seven Books against the Pagans*, and Brunetto's *Treaso*).
60. **the lands the Sultan governs now:** In Dante's day, Syria, though not Baghdad, was ruled by the Mameluke Sultans of Egypt.
- 61-62. **she who killed herself for love:** An echo of *Aen.* 4.552: Dido committed suicide when abandoned by Aeneas (see also 6.450-51); she had previously vowed to be faithful to the memory of her husband Sichaenus. Dante could have known from Macrobius that according to ancient tradition Aeneas and Dido lived several hundred years apart and that Dido was legendary for her chastity. Dido's story had both charmed and alarmed Christian moralists since at least the time of Augustine (cf. *Confessions* 1.13).
63. **lustful Cleopatra:** Queen of Egypt, famous for her liaison with Julius Caesar and her marriage with Mark Antony, which led to war between him and

Octavian (later Augustus). As was the custom of the Ptolemies, Cleopatra morganatically married her brother; the theme of incest was introduced with Semiramis.

64. **Behold Helen:** Helen of Troy, wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta, blamed by Homer and Vergil for the Trojan War (cf. *Aen.* 2.567–88; the *Roman de Troie* 28426–33, etc.).

65–66. **great Achilles:** Dante conserves the classical epithet (cf. Statius, *Achilleid* 1.1, "magnanimum" [great-souled]), but the Achilles who fell in love with Polyxena, daughter of Priam, and was thus led to ambush and death was in the foreground in the Middle Ages, thanks to both Latin (Dionys Cretensis, *Dares Phrygius*) and vernacular (*Roman de Troie*) versions of the story.

67. **Paris, Tristan:** Paris, the son of the Trojan king Priam and Helen's abductor, and a single figure from medieval romance—the final position is telling—round out the list of love's victims (seven in number, only the last three are men). Tristan's love affair with Iseult, the wife of his uncle, King Mark, ending with the death of the lovers, was the most famous love story of the Middle Ages. All seven examples involve the subversion of political or military responsibility by adulterous passion.

69. **whom Love parted from our life:** See *Aen.* 6.442: "quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit" [those whom harsh love destroyed with cruel death]; the Sybil is identifying a division of the underworld by its denizens.

71. **ancient ladies and knights:** Such anachronistic description of classical and ancient figures is frequent in Dante's time.

72. **pity came upon me . . . almost lost:** The pilgrim's strong reaction of sympathy begins a process that reaches its climax at the end of the canto. His word for "lost" here, *smarrito*, was used in 1.3 of the straight way.

82–84. **As doves . . . by their will:** For the comparison, see *Aen.* 5.213–17 and 6.190–92, when the doves of Venus guide Aeneas to the golden bough, the key to entering Hades. This is the last of the bird similes, which move toward smaller groups and "nobler" birds and from classical to modern examples (Shoaf [1975] surveys doves in the *Comedy*).

82–84. **called by their desire . . . borne by their will:** Such phrases continue the principle of the whole canto: the wind that drives the soul is the force of desire.

88–108. **O gracious and benign . . . from them to us:** Francesca (she is identified in line 116) begins with a courteous salutation meant to capture the

listener's attention and good will (the *captatio benevolentiae* of classical rhetoric), and the gracious tone is maintained throughout her carefully organized speeches.

90. **stained the world blood-red:** Francesca is alluding to Ovid's tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, residents of Semiramis's Babylon (see *Met.* 4.55–166); Pyramus's blood stains the mulberry first red, then, when it dries, black.

93. **our twisted pain:** The Latin/Italian *pervertere* means literally "to turn in an evil direction."

97–99. **The city . . . with its followers:** Francesca was born in Ravenna, where, during the Middle Ages, one of the branches of the Po entered the Adriatic. She uses the language of pursuit to describe the relation between the Po and its tributaries. Her yearning for peace was evident also in lines 91–92.

100–107. **Love . . . extinguished our life:** Each of these three *terzinas* begins with the word *Love* (anaphora): first of Paolo's love for Francesca (Love "seized" him), then of her love for him (also a "seizing"—note the contrast between Francesca's claim that anyone beloved must love in return and Virgil's parallel but quite different statement in *Purg.* 22.10–12), and last of its result, death (Love "led" them). In each case it is the personified god of love that is made the agent, rather than the human actors. Note the etymological figure in the central *terzina*, *Amor . . . amato . . . amata*.  
Hardt (1973) observed that of the nineteen instances of the word *amor*, *amore* in the *Inferno*, this canto has the central nine (i.e., five precede Canto 5, five follow it), of which these are the central three.

100. **Love, which is swiftly kindled:** Francesca echoes the canzone "Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore" [To the noble heart love always repairs], by the Bolognese poet Guido Guinizelli (d. 1276?), whom Dante admired and called "the sage" (when quoting the same canzone in *Vita nuova* 20) and "my father" (*Purg.* 26.97); he is one of the founders of the "sweet new style" (*dolce stil novo*) proclaimed by Bonagiunta of Lucca in *Purg.* 24.57. For Francesca's words, see especially "Al cor gentil," line 11, "Foco d'amor in gentil cor s'apprende/come vertute in pietra preziosa" [The fire of love is kindled in the noble heart/as is the power in a precious stone]. Francesca's speech is a tissue of allusions to the fashionable poetry of love, including Dante's own early poems.

106. **Love led us on to one death:** In the Italian the first word, *amor*, is included in the last two: *una morte*.

107. **Caina awaits him:** "Caina" is the division of Cocytus—the lowest circle of Hell—assigned to those who murder relatives, named for Cain (*Caino*).

**111. What are you pondering:** The translation emphasizes the etymological force of Italian *pensare* [to think], from Latin *pensum* [a weight of flax to be spun], continuing the series of metaphors of weight. Compare the movements of the pilgrim's head in these lines with those ascribed to the lovers later.

**113. sweet thoughts:** The expression is almost a technical term in the medieval theory of love deriving from Andreas Capellanus and refers to the obsessive presence of the beloved's image in the imagination.

**116. Francesca:** Only here is the identity of this soul revealed; the pilgrim has either recognized her or inferred her identity from her words. It is Francesca da Rimini (her companion, Paolo Malatesta, remains silent), a member of the Polenta family, who ruled Ravenna (her nephew, Guido Novello da Polenta [c. 1270–1333], would be Dante's host in Ravenna at the end of his life); she was married around 1275 to Gianciotto [Lame John] Malatesta, second son of the ruler of Rimini (see 27.6–48 and 28.76–90, with notes). According to Dante's early commentators (the events left no trace in the chronicles), around 1285 Francesca's husband discovered her with his younger brother Paolo and murdered them both. Baccaccio, tireless in seeking out informants about Dante, spent extended periods in Ravenna in the 1340s and '50s and dedicated an eclogue to Guido Novello's successor; in his *Esposizio ni* he gives a lengthy, melodramatic account of the affair which, though unconfirmed by other sources, may have some basis in fact. Among other things, he asserts that Francesca had fallen in love with Paolo, his brother's proxy at the betrothal, mistaking him for her intended husband.

**119. how did Love:** The pilgrim follows Francesca's rhetoric of attributing agency to "Love" rather than to the human actors.

**121. no greater pain:** If Francesca is taken at her word, Dante's visit would involve considerable intensification of her suffering. Despite the apparent nod to Virgil here ("and this your teacher knows"), the commentators cite Boethius, *Consolation* 2.4.3–6. The idea is a commonplace, however (cf. Augustine, *Confessions* 10.14), like its converse, the pleasure of recalling past misery once free of it (e.g., *Aen.* 1.203: "perhaps at some time we will be glad remembering these things") (see the notes to 6.96 and 10.34).

**124. But if you have so much desire:** Compare the beginning of Aeneas's tale of the fall of Troy (*Aen.* 2.10). Again, Francesca draws on lofty literary models.

**127. We were reading:** Paolo and Francesca were reading some version of the *Book of Lancelot of the Lake*, part of a vast early-thirteenth-century prose compilation, the so-called Vulgate Cycle, and specifically the scene where Lancelot, coaxed by his friend and go-between Galehaut, confesses his love to Guinevere and the lovers exchange their first kiss (the scene was often illustrated).

**130. Many times:** Like *volta* [turning, from *volgere*], *fata* [occasion]—from Old French *fate* (or directly from VL \**vicata*, according to DeVoto & Oli, crossed with *fate*, breath)—was for Dante a normal word for "occasion." Whatever the derivation, Dante often seems to associate *fata* with *fate*; here the association contributes strongly to the tension; cf. 10.48.

**130–31. that reading . . . turned our faces pale:** The reading is now made the active agent; note the emphasis on the motions of the head. And see Ovid's *Art of Love* 1.573–74.

**132. one point alone . . . overpowered us:** See the use of the term *punto* in 1.11, 7.32; again, the rhetoric places the agency in something other than the human beings.

**133. the yearned-for smile was kissed:** The use of the passive again avoids naming the agent. In the surviving Old French Lancelot romances, it is invariably Guinevere who kisses Lancelot, not vice versa; so also in the iconographic tradition. For another reference to this scene, see *Par.* 16.14–15 (the "first recorded fault of Guinevere").

**135. who will never be separated from me:** This line is quoted in one of the six ballads by Guido Novello da Polenta (see note to line 116).

**137. Galeotto was the book:** *Galeotto* is the Italian form of *Galehaut*, the name of the knight who, as Lancelot's friend, arranged the meeting with Guinevere (see the note to line 127). Because of the prominence in it of this character, the second third of the *Book of Lancelot of the Lake* was commonly called the *Galehaut*. As Francesca's remark shows, the name had by Dante's time already become current in Italian as a common noun for "go-between"; compare the English word *pander*, originally the name of the character in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

**138. that day we read there no further:** If they had finished reading the Vulgate Cycle, they would have read how Lancelot's and Guinevere's adultery (with Arthur's incest) eventually destroys the entire Arthurian world (the blows by which Arthur and his son Mordred kill each other are recalled in 32.61–62), though the lovers themselves repent and die saintly deaths.

**141–42. for pity I fainted . . . falls:** Given the emphasis on the motions of the head throughout the canto, it seems likely that the pilgrim falls head first (cf. 6.92–93). The pilgrim's pity, which will frequently figure in the rest of Hell, is presented as highly questionable. His symbolic death imitates Francesca's (death-bringing) surrender to passion, just as she and Paolo had imitated the book; like her surrender, it is a response to a text. At the end of Canto 3, the pilgrim had fallen "like one whom sleep is taking."



## CANTO 6

1 Al tornar de la mente, che si chiuse  
dinanzi a la pietà di due cognati,  
che di trestizia tutto mi confuse,  
4 novi tormenti e novi tormentati  
mi veggio intorno come ch'io mi mova  
ch'io mi volga, e come che io guati.  
7 Io sono al terzo cerchio, de la piova  
etterna, maladetta, fredda e greve;  
regola e qualità mai non l'è nova.  
10 Grandine grossa, acqua tinta e neve  
per l'aere tenebroso si riversa;  
pute la terra che questo riceve.  
13 Cerbero, fiera crudele e diversa,  
con tre gole caninamente latra  
sopra la gente che quivi è sommersa.  
16 Li occhi ha vermigli, la barba unta e atra  
e 'l ventre largo, e unghiate le mani;  
graffa li spirti ed iscoia ed isquatra.  
19 Urlar li fa la pioggia come cani;  
de l'un de' lati fanno a l'altro schermo;  
volgonsi spesso i miseri profani.  
22 Quando ci scorse Cerbero, il gran vermo,  
le bocche aperse e mostrocci le sanne;  
non avea membro che tenesse fermo.  
25 E 'l duca mio distese le sue spanne,  
prese la terra, e con piene le pugna  
la gittò dentro a le bramose canne.  
28 Qual è quel cane ch'abbaiando agogna  
e si racqueta poi che 'l pasto morde,  
ché solo a divorarlo intende e pugna,

## CANTO 6

*Third circle: the gluttons—Cerberus—the Florentine Ciaco—civil strife in Florence: causes, prophecy—famous Florentines in Hell—intensity of sufferings after the Last Judgment*

1 When consciousness returned, after closing itself  
up before the pity of the two in-laws, which utterly  
4 confounded me with sadness,  
new torments and new tormented ones I see  
around me wherever I walk, and wherever I turn, and  
7 wherever I look.  
I am in the third circle, with the eternal, cursed,  
cold, and heavy rain; its rule and quality never  
10 change.  
Great hailstones, filthy water, and snow pour  
down through the dark air; the earth stinks that  
13 receives them.  
Cerberus, cruel, monstrous beast, with three  
throats barks doglike over the people submerged  
16 there.  
His eyes are red, his beard greasy and black, his  
belly large, and his hands have talons; he claws the  
19 spirits, flays and quarters them.  
The rain makes them howl like dogs; they make a  
shield for one of their sides with the other; castout  
wretches, they turn over frequently.  
22 When Cerberus, the great worm, caught sight of  
us, he opened his mouths and showed his fangs; not  
one of his members held still.  
25 And my leader opened his hands, took up earth,  
and with both fists full threw it into those ravenous  
pipes.  
28 Like a dog that baying hungers and is silent once  
he bites his food, for he looks and struggles only to  
devour it,



31 cotai si fecer quelle facce lorde  
 de lo demonio Cerbero, che 'ntrona  
 l'anime sì ch'esser vorreber sorde.  
 34 Noi passavam su per l'ombre che adona  
 la greve pioggia, e ponavam le piante  
 sovra lor vanità che par persona.  
 37 Elle giacean per terra tutte quante,  
 fuor d'una ch'a seder si levò, ratto  
 ch'ella ci vide passarsi davante.  
 40 "O tu che se' per questo 'nferno tratto,"  
 mi disse, "riconoscimi, se sai:  
 tu fosti, prima ch'io disfatto, fatto."  
 43 E io a lui: "L'angoscia che tu hai  
 forse ti tira fuor de la mia mente,  
 sì che non par ch'i' ti vedessi mai.  
 46 Ma dimmi chi tu se' che 'n sì dolente  
 loco se' messo e hai sì fatta pena  
 che, s'altra è maggio, nulla è sì spiacente."  
 49 Ed elli a me: "La tua città, ch'è piena  
 d'invidia sì che già trabocca il sacco,  
 seco mi tenne in la vita serena.  
 52 Voi cittadini mi chiamaste Ciacco;  
 per la dannosa colpa de la gola,  
 come tu vedi, a la pioggia mi fiacco.  
 55 E io anima trista non son sola,  
 ché tutte queste a simil pena stanno  
 per simil colpa." E più non fè parola.  
 58 Io li rispuosi: "Ciacco, il tuo affanno  
 mi pesa sì ch'a lagrimar mi 'nvita;  
 ma dimmi, se tu sai, a che verranno  
 61 li cittadin de la città partita;  
 s'alcun v'è giusto; e dimmi la cagione  
 per che l'ha tanta discordia assalta."  
 64 E quelli a me: "Dopo lunga tencione  
 verranno al sangue, e la parte selvaggia  
 caccerà l'altra con molta offensione.  
 67 Poi appresso convien che questa caggia  
 infra tre soli, e che l'altra sommonti  
 con la forza di tal che testè piaggia.

31 so became those filthy snouts of the demon  
 Cerberus, who thunders over the souls so that they  
 wish they were deaf.  
 34 We were passing through the shades that the  
 heavy rain weighs down, and we were placing our  
 soles on their emptiness that seems a human body.  
 37 They were lying on the ground, all of them, save  
 one, who raised himself to sit as soon as he saw us  
 passing before him.  
 40 "O you who are led through this Hell," he said to  
 me, "recognize me if you can: you were made before  
 I was unmade."  
 43 And I to him: "The anguish that you have perhaps  
 drives you from my memory, so that it does not  
 seem I have ever seen you.  
 46 But tell me who you are, who are put here in so  
 painful a place, and have such a punishment that if any  
 is greater, none is so disgusting."  
 49 And he to me: "Your city, which is so full of envy  
 that the sack already overflows, kept me with her  
 during my sunny life.  
 52 You citizens called me Ciacco; because of the  
 damnable sin of the gullet, as you see, I am broken  
 by the rain.  
 55 And I, wretched soul, am not alone, for all these  
 endure similar punishment for similar guilt." And he  
 spoke no further word.  
 58 I replied: "Ciacco, your trouble weighs on me so  
 that it calls me to weep; but tell me, if you know, to  
 what will come  
 61 the citizens of the divided city; if any there is just;  
 and tell me the reason so much discord has assailed  
 it."  
 64 And he to me: "After much quarreling they will come  
 to blood, and the party from the woods will drive  
 out the other with much harm.  
 67 Then later this party must fall within three suns  
 and the other rise, with the power of one who now  
 hugs the shore.

70 Alte terrà lungo tempo le fronti,  
tenendo l'altra sotto gravi pesi,  
come che di ciò pianga o che n'aonti.

73 Giusti son due, e non vi sono intesi;  
superbia, invidia e avarizia sono  
le tre faville c'hanno i cuori accesi."

76 Qui puose fine al lagrimabì suono.  
E io a lui: "Ancor vo' che mi 'nsegni  
e che di più parlar mi facci dono.

79 Farinata e 'l Tegghiaio, che fuor si degni,  
Iacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo e 'l Mosca,  
e li altri ch'à ben far puoser li 'ngegni,  
82 dimmi ove sono e fà ch'io li conosca:  
ché gran disio mi stringe di sавere  
se 'l ciel li addolcia o lo 'nferno li attosca."

85 E quelli: "Ei son tra l'anime più nere;  
diverse colpe giù li grava al fondo:  
se tanto scendi, là i potrai vedere.

88 Ma quando tu sarai nel dolce mondo,  
priegoti ch'a la mente altrui mi rechi:  
più non ti dico e più non ti rispondo."

91 Li diritti occhi torse allora in biechi;  
guardommi un poco e poi chinò la testa:  
caddè con essa a par de li altri ciechi.

94 E 'l duca disse a me: "Più non si desta  
di qua dal suon de l'angelica tromba,  
quando verrà la nimica podestà:  
97 ciascun rivederà la trista tomba,  
ripiglierà sua carne e sua figura,  
udirà quel ch'in eterno rimbomba."

100 Sì trapassammo per sozza mistura  
de l'ombre e de la pioggia, a passi lenti,  
toccando un poco la vita futura:  
103 per ch'io dissi: "Maestro, esti tormenti  
crescerann' ei dopo la gran sentenza,  
o fier minori, o saran sì coccenti?"

106 Ed elli a me: "Ritorna a tua scienza,  
che vuol, quanto la cosa è più perfetta,  
più senta il bene, e così la doglienza.

70 Long will they hold high their brows, keeping the  
others down under heavy weights, no matter how  
they weep or are shamed.

73 Two are just, and no one heeds them; pride, envy,  
and greed are the three sparks that have set hearts  
ablaze."

76 Here he put an end to the tearful sound. And I to  
him: "Again I wish you to instruct me and make me the  
gift of further speech.

79 Farinata and Tegghiaio, who were so worthy,  
Iacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo and Mosca, and the others  
who turned their wits to doing well,  
82 tell me where they are and cause me to know them;  
for great desire urges me to understand if Heaven  
sweetens or Hell poisons them."

85 And he: "They are among the blacker souls;  
And he: "They are among the blacker souls;  
various sins weigh them toward the bottom: if you  
descend so far, you can see them there.

88 But when you are back in the sweet world, I beg  
you, bring me to people's minds: no more do I say  
to you and no more do I answer you."

91 His direct eyes then he twisted into oblique ones;  
he stared at me a little and then bent his head; with  
it he fell level with the other blind ones.

94 And my leader said to me: "Never again will he  
arise this side of the angelic trumpet, when he will  
see the enemy governor:  
97 each will see again his sad tomb, will take again  
his flesh and his shape, will hear what resounds  
eternally."

100 Thus we passed through a filthy mixture of  
shades and rain, with slow steps, touching somewhat  
on the future life:  
103 so I said: "Master, these torments, will they grow  
after the great Judgment, or will they be less, or  
equally hot?"

106 And he to me: "Return to your philosophy, which  
teaches that the more perfect a thing is, the more it  
feels what is good, and the same for pain.

109 Tutto che questa gente maladetta  
in vera perfezion già mai non vada,  
di là più che di qua essere aspetta.”  
112 Noi aggriammo a tondo quella strada,  
parlando più assai ch' i non ridicco;  
venimmo al punto dove si digrada.  
115 Quivi trovammo Pluto, il gran nemico.

109 Even though these cursed people will never enter  
into true perfection, on that side they can expect to  
have more being than on this.”  
112 We followed that path in a curve, speaking much  
more than I recount; we came to the point where it  
descends.  
115 There we found Plutus, the great enemy.



2. **the pity of the two in-laws:** Paolo and Francesca were brother- and sister-in-law, a degree of relation that in the eyes of the Church would have made their relationship incestuous as well as adulterous.

7-12. **I am in the third circle . . . the earth stinks:** The rain, hail, and snow and resulting mud are versions of the food and drink to which the gluttons were addicted: in the last analysis merely versions of the elements earth and water. Dog imagery dominates (lines 14, 19, and 28), but the gluttons wallow like pigs (as in line 52; cf. 8.49) in material implicitly compared to excrement (line 12). Chivacci Leonardi notes a parallel in Wisdom 16.16, where the wicked are said to be punished by "strange waters, and hail, and rain." Gluttony is the second of the seven deadly vices or sins; on their traditional ranking, see *Purg.* 17.115-39, with notes; for their relation to the arrangement of Hell, see the note to 11.70-73.

9. **its rule and quality never change:** The rule is the quantity and direction, the quality is the nature, of what is coming down.

13-32. **Cerberus . . . thunders:** The three-headed dog, in Greek mythology the guardian of the entrance to Hades. Dante is drawing on Vergil's description, *Aen.* 6.417-22:

Cerberus haec ingens latratu regna trifauci  
personat adverso recubans immans in antro.  
Cui vates horrere videns iam colla colubris  
melle soporatum et medicatis frugibus offam  
obicit. Ille fame rabida tria guttura pandens  
corripit obiectam, atque inmania terga resolvit  
fusus humi totoque ingens extenditur antro.

[These regions gigantic Cerberus with his three-throated barking makes resound, lying huge across the path in his den.

When the priestess saw the snakes already beginning to rise around his neck, she threw him a cake drugged with honey and soporific grain. He in his raging hunger opened his three gullets, and seized it as it was thrown, and relaxed his enormous bulk, lying on the ground; enormous, he fills the whole cave.]

The traditional classical interpretation of Cerberus saw him as the earth, devourer of corpses (Servius). Dante makes him into a personification of gluttony and a demon (line 32—a minor devil, like Charon), debasing him and scaling him down, aptly turning the three throats to the account of gluttony and adding other quasi-human details (the greasy beard, large belly, hands) appropriate to it.

Cerberus's thundering over the souls (line 32) and his mauling of them (line 18) have a quasi-political dimension (see the note to lines 91-93).

14, 16, 18. **latra [barks] . . . atra [black] . . . isquatra [quarters]:** The same three rhymes appear in the last of the *rime petrose*, "Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro" (lines 54, 55, and 56), discussed in Durling and Martinez 1990.

20-21. **they make a shield . . . turn over frequently:** An important parallel exists between this description and the characterization of Florence as a sick woman in *Purg.* 6.148-51.

21. **castout wretches:** Dante's term is *profrani* [profane], etymologically referring to those barred from the *janum*, or sanctuary. As Gmelin observes, the sinners here are like drunkards lying in the gutter.

22. **the great worm:** That Cerberus is a worm is appropriate to the gastro-nomic theme, but there is also an association with Satan himself, called the "evil worm that gnaws the world" in 34.108 (see also 6.115, "the great enemy").

36. **their emptiness that seems a human body:** "Human body" translates Dante's *persona* [person]; compare Francesca's use of the term in 5.101. In addition to the vivid visual effect here, the line is a comment on gluttony itself, like line 101.

40-42. **O you . . . I was unmade:** Note the etymological figure in *fatto/disfatto* [made/unmade]. The line can be taken to mean that Ciaccio recognizes the pilgrim; his phrase "if you can" would then refer to his disfigurement. Of course, as Dante's readers knew, and as becomes clear in Canto 16, a Florentine of the upper class was recognizable by his clothes, and the pilgrim's age is obvious.

49-51. **Your city . . . kept me:** Note the implicitly digestive image of the sack. Ciaccio is the first Florentine the pilgrim encounters; these lines introduce the important theme of Florentine political affairs and Dante's involvement in them.

50. **envy:** Compare 1.111, where the devil's envy is made responsible for the she-wolf's presence in the world.

52. **You citizens called me Ciaccio:** Note the repeated emphasis on the theme of the city; *citadino*, used here and in line 61, means "city dweller." Ciaccio is otherwise unknown; the name may be a corruption of French *Jacques* or even of *Cetto*, the nickname for Francesco; it also means "hog."

53. **the damnable sin of the gullet:** Italian *gola* [throat]; from *gula*, the standard medieval Latin term for gluttony.

58-59. **your trouble . . . calls me to weep:** Note the parallel with the pilgrim's words to Francesca (5.116-17), whom the pilgrim also may have recognized (see the note to lines 36-42).

60-63. **but tell me . . . has assailed it:** The pilgrim asks three questions, which are answered in order in lines 64-72, 73, and 74-75, respectively.

61. **the divided city:** The term refers directly to the division of Florence into parties and the dominant role played by violent partisanship, but it also resonates with the Augustinian concept of the two cities (the Earthly and the Heavenly), which coexist in this life (*City of God*, Book 11).

64-72. **After much quarrel . . . they weep or are shamed:** Ciaccio foretells the events of 1300 to 1302. The rival Guelph factions, the Whites ("the party from the woods," to which Dante belonged, so called because its nucleus, the Cerchi family, was originally from a rural area outside Florence) and the Blacks ("the other," led by Corso Donati), rioted violently on May 1, 1300. In June (while Dante was one of the six priors of the city, the chief executive committee), during the temporary dominance of the White party, the troublemakers from both parties were exiled, including Dante's close friend and fellow poet Guido Cavalcanti, a turbulent member of the White faction; in June 1301, all the Black leaders were exiled.

"One who now hugs the shore" refers to Pope Boniface VIII, who for a long time seemed impartial, though he secretly favored the Black faction. In 1301 both sides appealed to him to make peace; he sent Charles of Valois, a brother of the French king, as peacemaker; Charles, after gaining entrance to the city with an armed force, supported the Blacks in their violence against the Whites, many of whom were killed, others fleeing into exile (early November 1301). The Black victory, begun in the spring of 1302, was complete by the fall, thus "within three suns [years]" from the spring of 1300; they dominated Florence during the rest of Dante's lifetime. For the effect of these events on Dante's life, see 10.79-81 and notes.

65. **to blood:** That is, to shedding blood. Note the repetition of *verranno* [they will come] from line 60.

73. **Two are just:** Who Ciaccio/Dante means is never specified (15.61-66 supports the view that Ciaccio refers to Dante as one of the two). The existence in corrupt cities of a small number of "just men" is a biblical motif, as in Gen. 18.23-33 and Ezek. 14.13-14.

74. **pride, envy, and greed:** Note the similar line, again with *invidia* [envy] at the center, at 15.68. There would seem to be an important relation with the three beasts of Canto 1.

79-80. **Farinata . . . Mosca:** All are prominent Florentines of earlier generations. For Farinata degli Uberti, see Canto 10; for Iacopo Rusticucci and Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, see Canto 16; for Mosca, see Canto 28.103-11; Arrigo, presumably Arrigo di Cascia, is not mentioned again.

84. **if Heaven sweetens or Hell poisons:** Note the food metaphors.

91-93. **His direct eyes . . . the other blind ones:** Ciaccio has been looking directly at Dante; now he turns his head away, still looking at Dante, but obliquely, that is, sidelong; then he bows his head, and the rest of his body follows his head downward (cf. the movements of Dante's head in Canto 5). The sidelong gaze is traditionally characteristic of envy (*invidere* [to envy] was traditionally derived from the private prefix *in-* and the verb "to see"; note the blindness mentioned in line 93); compare Ovid's portrait of Envy in *Met.* 2.770-82, especially line 776: "nusquam recta acies" [her eyebeam is never straight]. While speaking with the pilgrim and gazing at him directly, Ciaccio was momentarily restored to community; his weird withdrawal may be in part a comment on the disregard of civic responsibility implicit in gluttony.

96. **the enemy governor:** The *podestà* (usually *podestà*, from Latin *potestas*, *potestatis*) was the chief executive in the medieval Italian city-states, often brought from the outside, usually for six months or a year. Virgil is referring to the Last Judgment and Christ's coming as Judge (once again, as in 4.53-54, without any reference to his divinity) on the basis of Matthew 24-25, the so-called Little Apocalypse.

99. **will hear . . . eternally:** The damned will hear the definitive sentence condemning them to Hell for eternity (Matt. 25.41).

106-9. **Return to your philosophy . . . pain:** "Your philosophy" is equivalent to philosophy as such (cf. the same usage in *Hamlet* 1.5.167), meaning, of course, the current Aristotelianism. The axiom Virgil cites appears in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.4.

109-11. **Even though these cursed people . . . than on this:** For Plato and the Neoplatonic tradition, human nature was complete in the soul; the union with the body was a fall. For Aristotle the soul was the form of the body; he inclined toward mortalism (the doctrine that the soul dies with the body). Since the Bible taught that God created Adam's and Eve's bodies directly, Christians could not accept the Platonic view, for the body must be good in its kind. The medieval adaptation of Aristotle's doctrine was that the nature of human beings is the *union* of the immortal soul with the body (cf. 13.37-39 and notes). Thus only when body and soul are reunited can human beings be complete, or "perfect" in their natures. The accepted view, therefore, was that the sufferings of the damned will be more intense after the Resurrection. The effect on the damned of the ending of time is discussed in 10.58.

115. **Plutus:** We interpret the Italian *Pluto* (which appears in the *Comedy* only here and in 7.2) as referring to the traditional god of riches, Plutus, rather than the god of the underworld, Pluto (also called Dis and Hades), whom Dante identifies with Satan and regularly refers to as Dis or Lucifer. However, Dante was aware of a special association between the two (of which he had read in Cicero and Isidore of Seville), based on gold and silver coming from underground and on the importance of greed as a source of ills. That Plutus is called "the great enemy" (cf. "the great worm," line 22 and note) strengthens the connection.



## CANTO 7

1 "Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!"  
cominciò Pluto con la voce chioccia;  
e quel savio gentil, che tutto seppe,  
4 disse per confortarmi: "Non ti nocchia  
la tua paura; ché poder ch'elli abbia  
non ci torrà lo scender questa roccia."  
7 Poi si rivolse a quella 'nfata labbia  
e disse: "Taci, maladetto lupo!  
consuma dentro te con la tua rabbia.  
10 Non è senza cagion l'andare al cupo:  
vuolsi ne l'alto, là dove Michele  
13 fé la vendetta del superbo strupo."  
Quali dal vento le gonfiate vele  
caggiono avvolte, poi che l'alber fiacca:  
16 tal cadde a terra la fiera crudele.  
Così scendemmo ne la quarta iacca,  
19 pigliando più de la dolente ripa  
che 'l mal de l'universo tutto insacca.  
Ah! giustizia di Dio! tante chi stipa  
22 nove travaglie e pene quant'io viddi?  
e perché nostra colpa si ne scipa?  
Come fa l'onda là sovra Cariddi,  
25 che si frange con quella in cui s'intoppa:  
così convien che qui la gente ridi.  
Qui vid' i' gente più ch'altrove troppa,  
28 e d'una parte e d'altra, con grand' urli,  
voltando pesi per forza di poppa.  
Percotëansi 'ncontro; e poscia pur li  
si rivolgea ciascun, voltando a retro,  
gridando: "Perché teni?" e "Perché burli?"

## CANTO 7

*Fourth circle: the avaricious and the prodigal—Plutus—Virgil on Fortune—fifth circle: the angry and sullen—Sisyx—the tower*

1 "Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!" began Plutus  
with his clucking voice; and that noble sage, who  
4 knew all things,  
said, to strengthen me, "Let not your fear harm  
7 you; for whatever power he may have shall not  
prevent us from going down this cliff."  
Then he turned back to that swollen face and  
10 said: "Silence, cursed wolf! consume yourself with  
your rage within.  
Not without cause is our descent to the depths: it  
13 is willed on high, where Michael avenged the proud  
onslaught."  
As when sails swollen by the wind fall tangled,  
16 when the mast gives way: so did that cruel beast fall  
to earth.  
So we descended into the fourth pit, taking in  
19 more of the sorrowing bank that bags all the evil of  
the universe.  
Ah, justice of God! who stuffs in so many strange  
22 travails and punishments as I saw? and why does  
our own guilt so destroy us?  
As the waves do there above Charybdis, breaking  
25 over each other as they collide: so the people here  
must dance their round.  
Here I saw people more numerous than before, on  
28 one side and the other, with great cries rolling  
weights by the force of their chests.  
They would collide, and then right there each one,  
reversing directions, would look back, crying: "Why  
do you hold?" and "Why do you toss?"

31 Così tornavan per lo cerchio tetro  
 da ogne mano a l'opposito punto,  
 gridandosi anche loro ontoso metro;  
 34 poi si volgea ciascun, quand' era giunto  
 per lo suo mezzo cerchio a l'altra giostra.  
 E io, ch'avea lo cor quasi compunto,  
 37 dissi: "Maestro mio, or mi dimostra  
 che gente è questa, e se tutti fuor cherci  
 questi chercuti a la sinistra nostra."  
 40 Ed elli a me: "Tutti quanti fuor guerci  
 sì de la mente in la vita primaia  
 che con misura nullo spendio ferci.  
 43 Assai la voce lor chiaro l'abbaia,  
 quando vegnono a' due punti del cerchio  
 dove colpa contraria li dispaia.  
 46 Questi fuor cherci, che non han coperchio  
 piloso al capo, e papi e cardinali,  
 in cui usa avarizia il suo soperchio."  
 49 E io: "Maestro, tra questi cotali  
 dove' io ben riconoscere alcuni  
 che furo inmondi di cotesti mali."  
 52 Ed elli a me: "Vano pensiero aduni:  
 la sconoscente via che i fè sozzi  
 ad ogne conoscenza or li fa bruti.  
 55 In eterno verranno a li due cozzi;  
 questi resurgeranno del sepulcro  
 col pugno chiuso, e questi coi crin mozzi.  
 58 Mal dare e mal tener lo mondo pulcro  
 ha tolto loro, e posti a questa zuffa:  
 qual ella sia, parole non ci appulcro.  
 61 Or puoi, figliuol, veder la corta buffa  
 di ben che son commessi a la Fortuna,  
 per che l'umana gente si rabuffa:  
 64 ché tutto l'oro ch'è sotto la luna  
 e che già fu, di quest' anime stanche  
 non potrebbe farne posare una."  
 67 "Maestro mio," diss' io, "or mi di anche:  
 questa Fortuna di che tu mi tocche,  
 che è, che i ben del mondo ha sì tra branche?"

31 Thus they would return around the dark circle on  
 either hand to the point opposite, again shouting at  
 each other their shameful meter;  
 34 then each would turn back, once he had arrived  
 through his half-circle to the other jousting. And  
 I, my heart almost pierced through,  
 37 said: "Master, now explain to me what people this  
 is, and if these tonsured ones to our left were all  
 clerics."  
 40 And he to me: "Every one of them was so cross-  
 eyed of mind in the first life, that no measure  
 governed their spending.  
 43 Very clearly do their voices bay it out, when they  
 come to the two points of the circle where their  
 opposing faults disjoin them.  
 46 These were clerics, who have no hairy covering to  
 their heads, and popes and cardinals, in whom  
 avarice does its worst."  
 49 And I: "Master, among this last kind, I should  
 certainly be able to recognize some who were soiled  
 with those ills."  
 52 And he to me: "You are gathering empty thought:  
 the undiscerning life that befouled them makes them  
 dark now to all recognition.  
 55 For eternity they will come to the two buttings:  
 these will rise from the tomb with closed fists, these  
 with hair cut short.  
 58 Bad giving and bad keeping has deprived them of  
 the lovely world and set them to this scuffling:  
 whatever it is, I prettyfy no words for it.  
 61 Now you can see, my son, the brief mockery of  
 the goods that are committed to Fortune, for which  
 the human race so squabbles:  
 64 for all the gold that is under the moon and that  
 ever was, could not give rest to even one of these  
 weary souls."  
 67 "My master," said I, "now tell me also: this  
 Fortune that you touch on here, what is it, that has  
 the goods of the world so in its clutches?"

70 E quelli a me: "Oh creature sciocche,  
 quanta ignoranza è quella che v'offende!  
 Or vo' che tu mia sentenza ne 'mbocche.  
 73 Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende  
 fece li cieli, e diè lor chi conduce  
 sì ch'ogne parte ad ogne parte splende,  
 76 distribuendo igualmente la luce.  
 Similmente a li splendor mondani  
 ordinò general ministra e duce  
 79 che permutasse a tempo li ben vani  
 di gente in gente e d'uno in altro sangue,  
 oltre la difension d'i senni umani;  
 82 per ch'una gente impera e l'altra langue,  
 seguendo lo giudicio di costei,  
 che è occulto come in erba l'anguè.  
 85 Vostro saver non ha contasto a lei;  
 questa provvede, giudica, e persegue  
 suo regno come il loro li altri dèi.  
 88 Le sue permutazion non hanno triegue;  
 necessità la fa esser veloce,  
 sì spesso vien chi vicenda consegue.  
 91 Quest' è colei ch'è tanto posta in croce  
 pur da color che le dovrien dar lode,  
 dandole biasmo a torto e mala voce;  
 94 ma ella s'è beata e ciò non ode;  
 con l'altre prime creature lieta  
 volge sua spera e beata si gode.  
 97 Or discendiamo omai a maggior pietà:  
 già ogni stella cade che saliva  
 100 quand' io mi mossi, e 'l troppo star si vieta."  
 Noi ricidemmo il cerchio a l'altra riva  
 103 sovvr' una fonte che bolle e riversa  
 per un fossato che da lei deriva.  
 L'acqua era buia assai più che persa;  
 e noi, in compagnia de l'onde bige,  
 106 intrammo giù per una via diversa.  
 In la palude va c'ha nome Stige  
 questo tristo ruscel, quand'è disceso  
 al piè de le maligne piagge grige.

70 And he to me: "O foolish creatures, how great is  
 the ignorance that injures you! Now I would have  
 you drink in my judgment.  
 73 He whose wisdom transcends all things fashioned  
 the heavens, and he gave them governors who see that  
 every part shines to every other part,  
 76 distributing the light equally. Similarly, for  
 worldly splendors he ordained a general minister and  
 leader  
 79 who would transfer from time to time the empty  
 goods from one people to another, from one family  
 to another, beyond any human wisdom's power to  
 prevent;  
 82 therefore one people rules and another languishes,  
 according to her judgment, that is hidden, like the  
 snake in grass.  
 85 Your knowledge cannot resist her; she foresees,  
 judges, and carries out her rule as the other gods do  
 theirs.  
 88 Her permutations know no truce; necessity makes  
 her swift, so thick come those who must have their  
 turns.  
 91 This is she who is so crucified even by those who  
 should give her praise, wrongly blaming and  
 speaking ill of her;  
 94 but she is blessed in herself and does not listen:  
 with the other first creatures, she gladly turns her  
 sphere and rejoices in her blessedness.  
 97 But now let us go down to even greater pity:  
 already every star is falling that was rising when I  
 set out, and too long a stay is forbidden."  
 100 We cut across the circle to the other shore, beside  
 a spring that boils and spills into a ditch leading away  
 from it.  
 103 The water was much darker than purple; and we,  
 beside the murky wave, entered a strange, descending path.  
 106 Into the swamp called Styx goes this sad stream,  
 when it has come down to the foot of the evil grey  
 slopes.



1. *Pape Satan . . . aleppe*: This line has been much discussed. It is clearly intended to convey an impression of incomprehensibility and is connected with the idea of Hell as Babel. However, the early commentators agree in taking *pape* as an interjection expressing surprise (Latin, *papa*) and *aleppe* as the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; they disagree on whether *aleppe* is to be taken as equivalent to "alas," or as meaning "first" (thus "God"). There may also be a mordant allusion, in the cry of *pape*, to the avarice of the popes (Latin, *papa, papa*), explicitly attacked later in this canto and elsewhere. The name Satan occurs nowhere else in the *Comedy*.
2. *Plutus*: The name is discussed in the note to 6.115.
8. *curse* *wolf*: The line establishes a special connection between avarice (or, more broadly, cupidity) and the she-wolf of Canto 1 (see especially lines 94–102). See also *Purg.* 20.10, where the she-wolf is explicitly identified as a symbol of avarice.
11. *willed on high*: Virgil's formula defeats Plutus, as it silenced Charon and Minos. Here the claim of a providential reason for the pilgrim's passage is the first hint of a main theme of the canto, the relation of Fortune and Providence, which becomes explicit in lines 73–96.
12. *Michael . . . proud onslaught*: The archangel Michael was traditionally the commander of the angelic host that expelled the rebel angels (cf. 3.7 and note).
- 13–15. *As when sails . . . to earth*: Plutus is being compared to a dismayed vessel in danger of shipwreck. For the Middle Ages, shipwreck was an instance of the *Fortuna maris*, the fortune of the sea. Although associated with avarice, Plutus's puffed-up appearance ("swollen face," line 6) and rabid behavior also suggest pride and wrath. For Dante's scheme of sins in Cantos 5–8, see the note to lines 73–96.
18. *bags*: "Bagging" is of course suitable to the greedy. Compare the words of the simoniac Pope Nicholas III at 19.72: "I pocketed . . . myself down here." Clerics, proverbial for their avarice, are conspicuous in many medieval visual representations of Hell, such as Giotto's *Last Judgment* in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padova (ca. 1306), which it is conceivable Dante helped plan: he was in the vicinity at what may have been the appropriate time.
- 22–25. *As the waves . . . dance their round*: Like Ulysses, Aeneas must sail near the whirlpool Charybdis and the monster Scylla: part-human, part-wolf,

and part-dolphin. Ancient and medieval authorities located them in the Strait of Messina between Italy and Sicily (*Aen.* 3.420–23):

Dextrum Scylla latus, laevum implacata Charybdis  
obsidet, argue imo barathri ter gurgite vastos  
sorbet in abruptum fluctus rursusque sub auras  
erigit alternos, et sidera verberat unda.

[On the right side Scylla, on the left implacable Charybdis threatens and three times into the deep whirl of the abyss it suddenly sucks a great flood and again into the air spews it forth, and the wave lashes the stars.]

Dante's simile compares the collision of the avaricious (on the left) with the prodigal (on the right) to that of the currents in the strait. The two phases of Charybdis's cycle ("sucks into . . . spews forth," emphasized also in Ovid's descriptions in *Met.* 7.63 and 13.730) are reflected again in the contrasting reproaches of line 30, discussed in the note to line 32.

The concept of virtue as a middle path between extremes was early identified in Homer's paired dangers; the identification of Charybdis with avarice/prodigality became proverbial. Dante's conception depends on the fourth book of Aristotle's *Ethics*, where liberality, a virtue, is explained as the mean between tightfistedness and prodigality. Although Canto 7 implies the Aristotelian view of virtue as a mean (discussed by Dante in *Convivio* 4.17.5–7), this does not seem true of Cantos 5, 6, and 8, on lechery, gluttony, and wrath.

24. *dance their round*: Dante's word for "round" is *rida*, a round dance in which the dancers go in a circle but also weave in and out.

25. *people more numerous*: That the avaricious are multitudinous is proverbial; see *Aen.* 6.610–11:

aut qui divitiis soli incubuere repetitis  
nec partem posuere suis, quae maxima turba est.

[or those who, having found wealth, crouched over it  
nor shared any with relatives, which is the largest crowd.]

27. *rolling weights*: See *Aen.* 6.616: "saxum ingens volvunt alii" [others roll a huge rock], an allusion to the myth of Sisyphus, condemned for his robberies to roll a rock up a hill, only to have it endlessly roll back down.

33. *shameful meter*: The use of *metro* [meter], referring to verse—measured speech—sarcastically alludes to the lack of measure (i.e., moderation) inherent in avarice and prodigality.

36. **my heart almost pierced through:** Note the close parallel with 1.15.

39. **toussured ones to our left:** All the avaricious the pilgrim sees are members of the clergy. The term *clericus* originally meant "chosen by lot," and Dante seems to be ironically referring to the dominance of Fortune as well as to the fact that the *clerici* [clerics] are *clerici* [toussured]; compare "no hairy covering" in line 45: the shaving of a portion of the head signified the renunciation of worldly desires.

40–42. **so cross-eyed . . . their spending:** These terms, like "undiscerning" in line 52, imply that the avaricious and prodigal failed to discern the "mean," the "right measure" between extremes (see the note to lines 22–25). One notes the recurrence of the *in-vidia* [non-seeing] theme (see the note to 6.91–93).

47. **popes:** In Italian, *papi* (see line 1, with note).

57. **these with hair cut short:** By the same logic as clerical tonsure, the shearing of the prodigals suggests mortification of the indulgence implied by abundant hair. The closed but empty fist and the shorn forelock suggest abortive economic transactions: the greedy can no longer seize, the lavish no longer proffer. Compare Dante, "Doglia mi reca ne lo core ardire," lines 83–84, an attack on avarice: "you have gathered and hoarded with both hands that which so quickly slips from your grasp" (tr. Foster and Boyde).

58. **Bad giving and bad keeping:** See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.1.1121a: "prodigality and meanness are excesses and deficiencies, and in two things: in giving and in taking."

64. **for all the gold . . . the moon:** The universe beneath the sphere of the moon (the sublunar) is the domain of mutable riches and honors (see the note to 2.78). The goddess Fortuna (discussed in the note to lines 73–96) and the ever-changing moon were commonly associated, and this passage and *Par.* 16.82–83 associate Fortune's wheel (see line 96) with the lunar sphere (Figure 1). The passage reflects Boethius, *Consolation* 2.2.1–14.

64–66. **all the gold . . . weary souls:** On God as the natural object of human desire, see 4.42, with note.

69. **its clutches:** The pejorative term for Fortune's grip sets off Virgil's exposition of Fortune as the instrument of Providence. Reference to Fortune's "claws" (*branchie*) may be an echo of Fortune-as-Scylla.

72. **drink in my judgment:** Virgil offers the milk of elementary knowledge, like that given when Philosophy instructs Boethius about Fortune (*Consolation* 1.2.2).

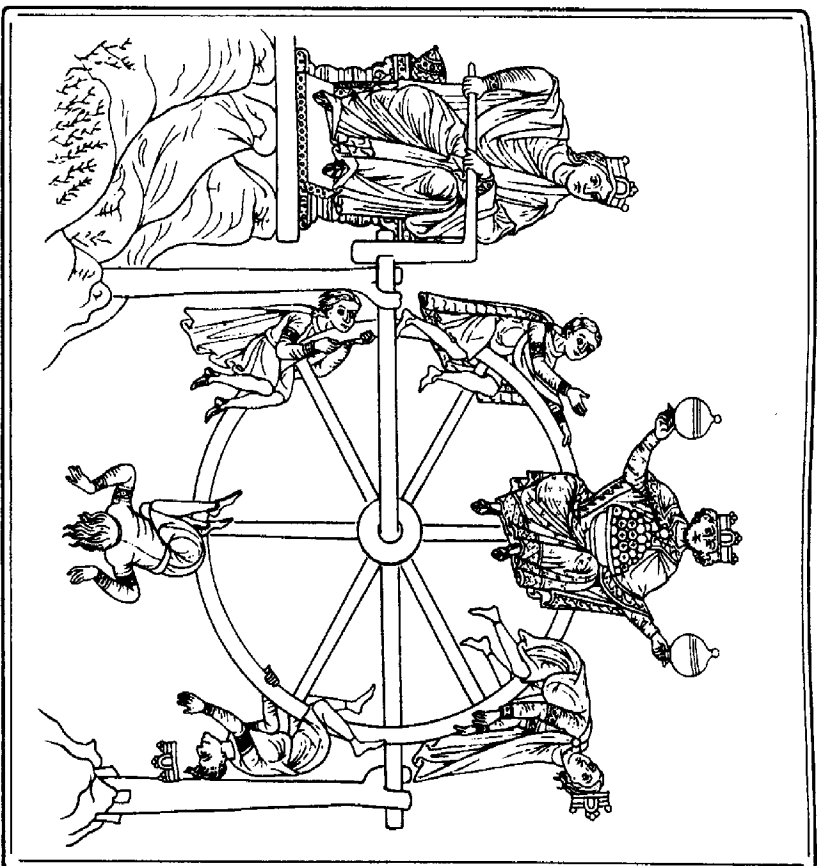


Figure 1. Fortune and her wheel. (Based on a drawing in Hildegard of Bingen's *Liber Scivias*)

73–96. **He whose wisdom . . . rejoices in her blessedness:** Virgil's account of Fortune rests on the analogy between earthly wealth and power ("splendors" in that they make people illustrious) and the bright heavenly bodies, whose influence governs all natural change. As the heavenly spheres are governed by the angels, so "worldly splendors" are governed by Fortune. The analogy implies a seriously intended parallel between the structure of society and that of the universe, supported by the many references in the canto to the cycles and circles that characterize the movement of the heavens as Dante understood them. Despite human condemnation of Fortune, her work is providential: there is no discontinuity between apparent chance and divine order (see Aquinas on Providence: *Summa theol.* 1a, q. 22, a. 2–3; *Summa contra gentiles* 3.94). Virgil's condensed account draws on Boethius's in *Consolation* 4.6, where Philosophy explains the divine causality of seemingly random events. Appearing just before the passage to the second subdivision of Hell (see Cantos 8–9), the cosmic order revealed in Virgil's speech also reflects the order of the poem thus far. Fortune's power is

implicit in the circles of the Iustitii and the gluttonous; the Trojan War, remembered in 5.64-65, was for the Middle Ages perhaps the most frequently cited instance of Fortune's domination in history (cf. 30.13-15); while the alternating rule of parties in Florence (cf. 6.67-69: one party rising, the other falling) exemplifies the shifting of power among groups. But the sequence of Cantos 5, 6, and 7 is also one of growing scope: the domestic tragedy of Francesca in Canto 5 is followed in Canto 6 by civic disturbances in Florence, and in Canto 7 by the universal pattern by which Fortune distributes good and ill to the world.

**74. governors:** These are the angels, identified in medieval thought with the intelligences Aristotle saw as governing the celestial spheres. Aquinas (*Summa contra gentiles* 3.80) notes that the principalities, an angelic order, are especially charged with transferring political domination among peoples (Gemelin).

**84. like the snake in grass:** See Vergil's *Ecllogues* 3.93, where a "snake lurks in the grass," threatening pastoral tranquility.

**87. the other gods:** For Dante's references to the angels (or "intelligences") as "gods," see *Purg.* 32.8 and *Par.* 28.121; he explains the usage in *Convivio* 2.4.4-6.

**90. so thick come those . . . their turns:** Compare 5.13-14 (the souls before Minos).

**91. she who is so crucified:** The complaint against Fortune is a medieval commonplace; see Boethius, *Consolation* 2.1.26, 2.2.29-31, 2.m.1.5-6, and Dante's *Convivio* 4.11.6-9, where Fortune's gifts are said to take no account of merit.

**96. turns her sphere:** Usually referred to as a wheel, the "sphere" is important for the analogy with the heavenly intelligences. The chief source for the image of Fortune's wheel (the rotating heavens are often called a wheel) is Boethius; see *Consolation* 2.1.60-62: "Can you really try to stop the momentum of her flying wheel?" and 2.2.29-31: "For this is my strength, this game I continually play: I turn my wheel in swift cycles, I enjoy shifting the lowest to the highest, the highest to the lowest." Manuscripts of the *Consolation* had a rich tradition of illustrations of such images (Courcelle 1967).

**98. every star is falling that was rising:** The reference to the whirling of the outermost visible cosmic wheel closes Virgil's account of Fortune as a celestial minister on a cosmic note that contrasts strongly with the violent half-circles of the avaricious and prodigal. See also the conclusion to Canto 11.

**105. the swamp called Styx:** Servius, on *Aen.* 6.323, notes that the name of the Styx means "sorrow" (*tristitia*). Macrobius interprets it as "whatever immerses

human souls in the gulf of hatreds"; these allegories are discussed in Additional Note 2.

**116. those whom anger vanquished:** The phrase recalls the self-defeating wrath of Pluto, the monster of avarice, at the beginning of the canto.

**123. the fumes of sullenness:** Whether Dante wished to subdivide the angry into two groups, those "whom anger vanquished" and the passively angry (or sullen), or whether the second group represent another category of deadly sin, the slothful (referred to in Italian as *accidiosi*, here translated "sullen"), has caused much disagreement. We incline to the view of Russo (1967), in which the unifying category of the fifth circle is *tristitia* [sorrow, grief], which is a passion that includes as its "effects" pride, envy, wrath, and *accidia* or sloth. See the discussion of incontinence in the notes to 11.70-75.

**125-26. This hymn they gurgle in their throats:** A final reference to singing, "music," and distorted language.

**130. at the last:** The canto ends with a word of finality; we are approaching one of the principal divisions of Hell (see 11.70-90).



## CANTO 8

1 Io dico, seguitando, ch' assai prima  
 che noi fossimo al piè de l'alta torre,  
 li occhi nostri n'andar suso a la cima  
 4 per due fiammette che i vedemmo porre,  
 e un'altra da lungi render cenno  
 tanto ch' a pena il potea l'occhio tòrre.  
 7 E io mi volsi al mar di tutto 'l senno;  
 dissi: "Questo che dice? e che risponde  
 quell'altro foco? e chi son quei che 'l fenno?"  
 10 Ed elli a me: "Su per le sucide onde  
 già scorgere puoi quello che s'aspetta,  
 se 'l fummo del pantan nol ti nasconde."  
 13 Corda non pinse mai da sé saetta  
 che sì corresse via per l'aere snella,  
 com' io vidi una nave piccioletta  
 16 venir per l'acqua verso noi in quella,  
 sotto 'l governo d'un sol galeoto,  
 che gridava: "Or se' giunta, anima fella!"  
 19 "Flegiàs, Flegiàs, tu gridi a vòto,"  
 disse lo mio signore, "a questa volta:  
 più non ci avrai che sol passando il loto."  
 22 Qual è colui che grande inganno ascolta  
 che li sia fatto e poi se ne rammarca,  
 fecesi Flegiàs ne l'ira accolta.  
 25 Lo duca mio discese ne la barca  
 e poi mi fece intrare appresso lui;  
 e sol quand' io fui dentro parve carca.  
 28 Tosto che 'l duca e io nel legno fui,  
 segando se ne va l'antica prora  
 de l'acqua più che non suol con altrui.

## CANTO 8

*Signals—Phlegyas and his boat—crossing Styx—Filippo Argenti—the walls of Dis—the gate of Dis—the devils—parley—Virgil excluded*

1 I say, continuing, that well before we reached the  
 foot of the high tower, our eyes went up to its  
 4 summit  
 because of two small flames we saw placed there,  
 and another replying from so far away that the  
 eye could hardly seize it.  
 7 And I turned toward the sea of all wisdom; I said:  
 "What does this one say? and what does that other  
 fire answer? and who are those doing this?"  
 10 And he to me: "Over the slimy waves you can  
 already make out what they are waiting for, if the  
 fumes of the swamp do not hide it."  
 13 A bowstring never propelled an arrow to fly  
 through the air so swiftly as a little boat I saw  
 16 come toward us in that instant over the water,  
 governed by a single oarsman, who was shouting:  
 19 "Now you are caught, wricked soul!"  
 "Phlegyas, Phlegyas, you are shouting uselessly,"  
 22 said my lord, "this time; you will have us no longer  
 than passing over the bog."  
 As one who hears of a great deception done to  
 him and then mutters of it, so became Phlegyas in  
 25 his contained anger.  
 My leader stepped down into the boat and then  
 had me enter after him; and only when I was aboard  
 did it seem laden.  
 28 As soon as my leader and I were in the bark, the  
 ancient prow set forth, cutting more of the water  
 than it does with others.

31 Mentre noi corravam la morta gora,  
dinanzi mi si fece un pien di fango,  
e disse: "Chi se' tu che vieni anzi ora?"

34 E io a lui: "S'i' vegno, non rimango;  
ma tu chi se', che si se' fatto brutto?"

37 Rispuose: "Vedi che son un che piango."  
E io a lui: "Con piangere e con lutto,  
spirito maladetto, ti rimani;  
ch'i' ti conosco, ancor sie lordo tutto."

40 Allor distese al legno ambo le mani;  
per che 'l maestro accorto lo sospinse,  
dicendo: "Via costà con li altri caniti!"

43 Lo collo poi con le braccia mi cinse;  
basciommi 'l volto e disse: "Alma sdegnosa,  
benedetta colei che 'n te s'incinse!

46 Quei fu al mondo persona orgogliosa;  
bontà non è che sua memoria fregi:  
così s'è l'ombra sua qui furiosa.

49 Quanti si tegnon or là sù gran regi  
che qui staranno come porci in brago,  
di sé lasciando orribili dispregi!"

52 E io: "Maestro, molto sarei vago  
di vederlo attuffare in questa broda  
prima che noi uscissimo del lago."

55 Ed elli a me: "Avante che la proda  
ti si lasci veder, tu sarai sazio:  
di tal disio convien che tu goda."

58 Dopo ciò poco vid' io quello strazio  
far di costui a le fangose genti,  
che Dio ancor ne lodo e ne ringrazio.

61 Tutti gridavano: "A Filippo Argentiti!"  
e 'l fiorentino spirito bizzarro  
in sé medesimo si volvea co' denti.

64 Quivi il lasciammo, che più non ne narro;  
ma ne l'orecchie mi percosse un duolo,  
perch'io avante l'occhio intento sbarro.

67 Lo buon maestro disse: "Omài, figliuolo,  
s'appressa la città c'ha nome Dite,  
coi gravi citadin, col grande stuolo."

31 While we were coursing the dead channel, before  
me rose up one covered with mud, who said: "Who  
are you, who come before your hour?"

34 And I to him: "If I come, I do not remain, but who  
are you, who have become so foul?" He replied:  
"You see that I am one who weeps."

37 And I to him: "With weeping and mourning,  
cursed spirit, now remain; for I recognize you,  
though you are filthy all over."

40 Then he stretched out toward the boat both his  
hands; but my master, alert, pushed him off, saying:  
"Away, over there with the other dogs!"

43 My neck then with his arm he embraced; he  
kissed my face and said: "Disdainful soul, blessed be  
she who was pregnant with you!

46 In the world he was a person filled with pride;  
there is no act of goodness to adorn his memory:  
therefore his shade is so furious here.

49 How many consider themselves great kings up  
above, who here will be like pigs in the mire, leaving  
behind horrible dispraise of themselves!"

52 And I: "Master, much would I desire to see him  
ducked in this broth before we leave the lake."

55 And he to me: "Before the shore lets itself be seen,  
you will be satisfied: it is fitting that such a desire  
be fulfilled."

58 A little later I saw him torn apart by those muddy  
people in such a way that I still praise God and  
thank him for it.

61 All were crying: "At Filippo Argentiti!" and the wild  
Florentine spirit turned on himself with his teeth.

64 There we left him, I tell no more of him; for my  
ears were now struck by a shrieking that made me  
open wide my eyes, intent on what lay ahead.

67 My good master said: "Now, my son, we approach  
the city whose name is Dite, with the weighty citizens,  
the great host."

70 E io: "Maestro, già le sue meschite  
là entro certe ne la valle cerno,  
verniglie come se di foco uscite  
73 fossero." Ed ei mi disse: "Il foco eterno  
ch'entro l'affoca le dimostra rosse,  
76 come tu vedi in questo basso inferno."  
Noi pur giugnemmo dentro a l'alte fosse  
che vallan quella terra sconsolata;  
79 le mura mi parean che ferro fosse.  
Non senza prima far grande aggrata,  
venimmo in parte dove il nocchier forte  
82 "Usciteci," gridò: "qui è l'intrata."  
Io vidi più di mille in su le porte  
da ciel piovuti, che stizzosamente  
85 dicean: "Chi è costui che senza morte  
va per lo regno de la morta gente?"  
E l' savio mio maestro fece segno  
di voler parlar loro segretamente.  
88 Allor chiusero un poco il gran disdegno  
e disser: "Vien tu solo, e quei sen vada  
che si arditò intrò per questo regno.  
91 Sol si ritorni per la folle strada:  
pruovi, se sa; ché tu qui rimarrai,  
che li ha' iscorta sì buia contrada."  
94 Pensa, lettore, se io mi sconfortai  
nel suon de le parole maladette,  
ché non credetti ritornarci mai.  
97 "O caro duca mio, che più di sette  
volte m'hai sicurtà renduta e tratto  
d'alto periglio che 'ncontra mi stette,  
100 non mi lasciar," diss' io, "così disfatto;  
e se 'l passar più oltre ci è negato,  
ritroviam l'orme nostre insieme ratto."  
103 E quel signor che lì m'avea menato  
mi disse: "Non temer, ché 'l nostro passo  
non ci può tòrre alcun: da tal n'è dato.  
106 Ma qui m'attendi, e lo spirito lasso  
conforta e ciba di speranza buona,  
ch'i' non ti lascerò nel mondo basso."

70 And I: "Master, already I discern its mosques there  
clearly within the moat, as red as if they had just  
come out of the fire."  
73 And he said to me: "The eternal fire that burns  
within it makes them glow red, as you see in this lower  
Hell."  
76 Now we arrived within the deep moats that  
fortify that unconsoled city; the walls seemed to me  
to be of iron.  
79 Not without first making a large circle did we  
reach a place where the pilot loudly cried: "Get out.  
Here is the entrance."  
82 At the gate I saw more than a thousand that had  
rained down from Heaven, who were saying angrily:  
"Who is he there, that without death  
85 goes through the kingdom of the dead?" And my  
wise master made a sign that he wished to speak  
with them secretly.  
88 Then they restrained somewhat their great disdain  
and said: "You come alone, and send him away, who  
so boldly entered this kingdom.  
91 Let him return alone along his foolhardy path; let  
him try if he can; for you will remain here, who have  
escorted him across so dark a territory."  
94 Think, reader, if I became weak at the sound of  
those cursed words, for I did not believe I would  
ever return here.  
97 "O my dear leader, who more than seven times  
have kept me safe and saved me from deep peril that  
stood against me,  
100 do not leave me," I said, "so undone; and if  
passing further is denied us, let us retrace our  
footsteps quickly together."  
103 And that lord who had led me there, said: "Do not  
fear, for our passage no one can prevent, it is granted  
by such a one.  
106 But here await me, and strengthen your weary  
spirit, feeding it with good hope, for I will not leave  
you in the underworld."

109 Così sen va, e quivi m'abbandona  
 lo dolce padre, e io rimagno in forse,  
 ché s'è e no nel capo mi tenciona.  
 112 Udir non poti quello ch' a lor porse;  
 ma ei non stette là con essi guari,  
 che ciascun dentro a pruova si ricorse.  
 115 Chiuser la porta que' nostri avversari  
 nel petto al mio signor, che fuor rimase  
 e rivolsesi a me con passi rari.  
 118 Li occhi a la terra e le ciglia avea rase  
 d'ogne baldanza, e dicea né sospiri:  
 "Chi m'ha negate le dolenti case?"  
 121 E a me disse: "Tu, perch' io m'adiri,  
 non sbigottir, ch'io vincerò la prova,  
 qual ch' a la difension dentro s'aggiri.  
 124 Questa lor tracotanza non è nova,  
 ché già l'usaro a men segreta porta,  
 la qual senza serrame ancor si trova:  
 127 sovr' essa vedestù la scritta morta.  
 E già di qua da lei discende l'erta,  
 passando per li cerchi senza scorta,  
 130 tal che per lui ne fìa la terra aperta."

109 Thus my sweet father goes off and abandons me  
 there, and I remain in doubt, for "yes" and "no"  
 quarrel in my head.  
 112 I could not hear what he proffered them; but he  
 hardly stood with them there, before they vied to run  
 back inside.  
 115 They closed the gate, those adversaries of ours, in  
 my lord's face, who remained outside and turned  
 back to me with slow steps.  
 118 His eyes were on the ground, his brow shorn of  
 all boldness, and he was saying, as he sighed: "Who  
 has denied me the sorrowing houses?"  
 121 And to me he said: "You, though I am angered, do  
 not be dismayed, for I will overcome this test,  
 however they scurry about inside to prevent it.  
 124 This overweening of theirs is not new; they used it  
 once before at a less secret gate, which still cannot be  
 barred:  
 127 above it you saw the dead writing. And already,  
 on this side of it, there comes down the slope,  
 passing through the circles without a guide,  
 130 such a one that by him the city will be opened to  
 us."



## NOTES

1. **I say, continuing, that well before:** The unusual "continuing" and the return to a narrative moment logically earlier than the end of the previous canto (7.130) have occasioned comment. Padoan (1993) argues that they are evidence that the first seven cantos of the *Inferno* had already been published (ca. 1315; see 3.95–96 with note) and therefore could no longer be revised.

According to Boccaccio's *Esposizioni* and his biographies of Dante, Dante had written the first seven cantos of the poem before his exile but had left the manuscript behind in Florence, receiving it again only a number of years later. There is no other evidence for this idea, however, and it is extremely unlikely, on the evidence of Dante's other works, that the *Comedy* was begun before 1306. An interruption at some later date may of course have taken place.

4–6. **two small flames . . . hardly seize it:** As will become clear later in the canto, the devils consider themselves still in a state of war, driven back into their city walls, with outposts like this tower in the surrounding countryside (like that surrounding an Italian city–state).

17. **a single oarsman:** Dante's term is *galeoto* (from *galea*, galley), literally a slave rowing in a galley, not the same word as *Galeotto* in 5.137 (see note). There is no further reference to the boat's means of locomotion.

18. **Now you are caught, wicked soul:** Phlegyas is presumably addressing the pilgrim, whom he mistakes for a soul condemned to the Styx.

19. **Phlegyas:** A figure in Greek mythology, a king of Thessaly who avenged his daughter's rape by Apollo by burning the god's temple at Delphi; Vergil makes him an exemplary figure (*Aen.* 6.618–20):

Phlegyasque miserimus omnis  
admonet et magna testatur voce per umbras:  
discite iustitiam moniti et non temnere divos.

[And most wretched Phlegyas  
warns all and testifies with a great voice through the shadows:  
Learn justice being warned, and not to contemn the gods.]

Dante associated Phlegyas's name with the Greek root *phleg-*, which he knew from Servius and elsewhere to refer to fire (as in the the name of the river Phlegethon, in Greek the present participle of a verb "to burn").

27. **only when I was aboard . . . laden:** Only the pilgrim has a body to weight the boat. The incident derives from Aeneas's crossing the Styx in Charon's boat (*Aen.* 6.412–16):

Simul accipit alveo  
ingenitem Aenean. Gemmit sub pondere cumba  
sutilis et multam accipit rimosa paludem.  
Tandem trans fluvium incoluntis vatemque virumque  
informi limo glaucaque exponit in ulva.

[At once he accepts into his boat  
the gigantic Aeneas. The bark groans with the weight,  
being sewn together, and admits through its rifts much of the swamp.  
Finally beyond the river he deposits unharmed both the prophetess and  
the hero  
on the gray shore with its shapeless mud.]

29–30. **cutting more . . . with others:** It is lower in the water because of the pilgrim's weight. Compare *Aen.* 5.2, of sailing: "fluctusque atros Aquilone secabat" [he cut the dark flood before the north wind].

32–51. **before me rose up one . . . horrible dispraise of themselves:** The episode of Filippo Argenti (he is named in line 61) is the subject of a famous painting by the French painter Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), *Dante and Virgil Crossing the Styx*, now in the Louvre.

36. **You see that I am one who weeps:** The line echoes a sonnet by Guido Cavalcanti, "Vedete ch'i' son un che vo piangendo" [You see that I am one who go weeping]; like Filippo Argenti, Cavalcanti was notoriously quarrelsome.

43–45. **My neck then . . . pregnant with you:** Virgil's enthusiasm for the pilgrim's violent anger against Filippo Argenti seems to assert the difference between a justified anger against sin and the anger and sullenness punished here. Still, a major theme of the journey through Hell is that the pilgrim usually shares in the sin he is contemplating, at least in the sense of having the potentiality for it within himself (the most striking instance so far is in Canto 5).

A further peculiarity of these lines is that they seem to be the only reference in the entire poem to Dante's mother and clearly, if somewhat diffusely, echo the "Ave Maria": "Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb . . ." (cf. Luke 1.28).



61. **Filippo Argenti:** This was a Florentine, according to Boccaccio a member of the Adimari family (Black partisans denounced by Dante in *Par.* 16.115–20), who was so arrogant that he had his horse shod with silver, hence his surname; in *Decameron* 9.8 Boccaccio relates an incident involving his temper. Nothing more is known about the man, though several early commentators relate that his brother gained possession of some of Dante's property when it was confiscated.

63. **turned on himself with his teeth:** Like the souls in 7.114.

65. **shrieking:** Dante hears the shrieking from within the City of Dis; in *Aen.* 6.557–61, Aeneas and the Sybil hear cries, blows, and rattling chains from inside the walls of Dis (see the note to line 68).

68. **the city whose name is Dis:** Dante's division of Hell into two main parts (upper and lower Hell; cf. line 74) derives from Vergil's. Within the "walls of Dis" (*moenia Dis* [*Aen.* 6.541, 548–49]), which Aeneas and the Sybil do not enter, lies the pit of Tartarus, where the worst criminals and rebels against the gods are punished, described to Aeneas by the Sybil (*Aen.* 6.562–627). For the name *Dis*, see the note to 6.115.

69. **the weighty citizens, the great host:** The devils, angels fallen from Heaven (*Apoc.* 12.7–9), still continuing the war.

70. **mosques:** Dante is repeating the common medieval Christian slander that Islam was a form of devil worship and that the characteristic architecture of the mosque and minaret was inspired by the devils.

77. **that unconsolable city:** See 3.1, "THE GRIEVING CITY," with note.

78. **the walls seemed . . . of iron:** So Vergil says of the gate of the walls of Dis: *Aen.* 6.554 (*ferrea turris*, iron tower) and *Aen.* 6.630–31 (spoken by the Sybil):

Cycloppum educta caminis  
moenia conspicio atque adverso fornice portas . . . .

[I discern the walls brought forth from the Cyclops's furnaces  
and the gates with their projecting vaults. . . .]

82–117. **I saw more than a thousand . . . with slow steps:** This initial phase of the exciting episode of Virgil's being blocked at the city of Dis (the entire episode takes up most of Cantos 8 and 9), in addition to emphasizing the obstinacy characteristic of the devils and of the sins of malice punished within the city (see 11.22–66), is also a comment on the fact that in the *Aeneid* Aeneas and the Sybil may not enter there. The Sybil's explanation for this is that no virtuous person may cross its threshold. Virgil is blocked here because, in Dante's view, this is where Vergil was blocked in life, as the sixth book of the *Aeneid* shows (see the note to 9.38–42); the question of the relevance of this episode to Virgil's damnation is discussed in the notes to *Purgatorio* 22.

What the Sybil tells Aeneas in *Aen.* 6.553–54, that "not even the power of the heaven dwellers can beat down in war" the gates of Dis, is untrue for the Christian Dante. In the context of the entire *Inferno*, Dante is establishing an important difference between Vergil's imperfect knowledge of the underworld and his own Christian reliance on God, which enables the believer, with God's help, to confront the lowest depths of evil, including Satan himself; see Romans 8.38–39:

For I am confident that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Compare Matt. 16.18:

Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.

87. **he wished to speak with them secretly:** Discussed in the note on lines 118–23.

90. **so boldly . . . his foolhardy path:** The devils' phrases echo the dialogue about the pilgrim's fears in Canto 2 (cf. 2.35 *folle*, and 2.123 *ardire*), as they perhaps know.

94–96. **Think, reader . . . ever return here:** The first apostrophe of the reader in the poem, signaling the importance of the episode. Gemelin pointed out that there are seven such apostrophes in each cantica. The others in the *Inferno* are 9.61–63, 16.127–30, 20.19–22, 22.118, 25.46–48, and 34.22–24. The present

episode is the only one in the *Inferno* to have two such heightenings of tone (here and at 9.61–63) (see the notes to 9.61–63 and 34.22–24).

**96. I did not believe:** The phrase is obviously not to be taken in the strong sense of despair, the utter loss of faith and hope, which would in itself constitute damnation, but in a state of doubt. The possibility of despair may, however, be the ultimate threat of the Medusa (9.52–63).

**97. more than seven times:** This is a biblical turn of phrase, but the statement is accurate, as the reader can verify.

**115. adversaries:** "Adversary" is the literal meaning of the Greek *diabolos* [devil], literally, one who throws (something) against one or opposes one; the shutting of the gate is a literal enactment of the root idea of the term.

**116. in my lord's face:** The Italian *nel petto al mio signor* means literally "in (or against) my lord's breast," helping suggest the significance of the walls of Dis in the overall body analogy discussed in Additional Note 2.

**118–22. His eyes were on the ground . . . I will overcome this test:** Virgil's discouragement and his repeated references to himself ("Who has denied me," line 120; "I will overcome this test," line 122) suggest that he has been overconfident, has supposed that his own strength would be sufficient to overcome the rebellious devils here, as it had been with Charon, Pluto, and others.

**124–26. This overweening . . . still cannot be barred:** A reference to the resistance of the devils to the Harrowing of Hell by Christ (see the notes to 4.52–63), of which this episode in its entirety is a figural reenactment (see Musa 1974).

**127. the dead writing:** The writing proclaiming death (i.e., damnation) in 3.1–9. At the beginning of the *Purgatorio*, the *Inferno* will be referred to as "la morta poesi" [dead poetry]. Note the connection between "Abandon every hope, you who enter" and the present episode.

**128–30. already, on this side of it . . . the city will be opened to us:** Virgil's thought has moved from his own defeat here to the Harrowing of Hell—that is, from his human helplessness to a chief instance of God's om-

nipotence—and he suddenly has what can only be called a visionary moment: he *knows*, perhaps *sees*, that the one who will open the city (the next canto will show this to be an angel) is already some distance within the outer gate. Virgil's knowledge is discussed further in the notes to 9.7–9, 38–42, 61–63, and 10.100–108.