

The *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri

Translated By
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Inferno - Canto 1

In the middle of the journey of our life
I came to myself within a dark wood
where the straight way was lost.

Ah, how hard a thing it is to tell of that wood,
savage and harsh and dense,
the thought of which renews my fear!

So bitter is it that death is hardly more.
But to give account of the good which I found there
I will tell of the other things I noted there.

I cannot rightly tell how I entered there,
I was so full of sleep at that moment
when I left the true way;

but when I had reached the foot of a hill
at the end of that valley
which had pierced my heart with fear

I looked up and saw its shoulders
already clothed with the beams of the planet
that leads men straight on every road.

Then the fear was quieted a little
which had continued in the lake of my heart
during the night I held spent so piteously;

and as he who with labouring breath
has escaped from the deep to the shore
turns to the perilous waters and gazes,

so my mind, which was still in flight,
turned back to look again
at the pass which nearer yet let any go alive.

After I had rested my wearied frame for a little
I took my way again over the desert slope,
keeping always the lower foot firm;

and lo, almost at the beginning of the steep,
a leopard light and very swift,
covered with a spotted hide,

and it did not go from before my face
but so impeded my way
that I turned many times to go back .

The time was the beginning of the morning
and the sun was mounting with those stars
which were with it when Divine Love

first set in motion those fair things,
so that the hour of the day and the sweet season moved me
to good hope of escape from that beast with the gay skin;

but, even so, I was put in fear
by the sight of a lion which appeared to me
and seemed to be coming against me

holding its head high
and furious with hunger
so that the air seemed in dread of it,

and of a she-wolf which appeared in its leanness
to be charged with all cravings
and which has already made many live in wretchedness.

This last put such heaviness on me
by the terror which came forth from its looks
that I lost hope of the ascent;

and like one who rejoices in his gains
and when the time comes that makes him a loser
has all his thoughts turned to sadness and lamentation,

such did the restless beast make me,
coming against me and driving me back
step by step to where the sun is silent.

When I was rushing down to the place below
there appeared before my eyes
one whose voice seemed weak from long silence,

and when I saw him in the great waste,
“Have pity on me, whoever thou art,”
I cried to him, “shade or real man!”

He answered me: “Not man, once I was man,
and my parents were Lombards,
both Mantuan by birth.

I was born *sub Julio*, though late in his time,
and I lived at Rome under the good Augustus,
in the time of the false and lying gods.

I was a poet and sang of that just son of Anchises
who came from Troy
after proud Ilium was burned.

But thou, why art thou returning to such misery?
Why dost thou not climb the delectable mountain
which is the beginner and cause of an happiness?”

“Art thou then that Virgil, that fountain
which pours forth so rich a stream of speech?”
I answered him, my brow covered with shame.

“O glory and light of other poets,
let the long study and the great love
that has made me search thy volume avail me.

Thou art my master and my author.
Thou art he from whom alone I took
the style whose beauty has brought me honour.

See the beast for which I turned;
save me from her, famous sage,
for she sets the pulses trembling in my veins.”

“Thou must take another road,” he replied
when he saw me weeping,
“if thou wouldst escape from this savage place;

for this beast on account of which thou criest
lets no man pass her way,
but hinders them till she takes their life,

and she has a nature so vicious and malignant
that her greedy appetite is never satisfied
and after food she is hungrier than before.

Many are the creatures with which she mates
and there will yet be more, until the hound comes
that shall bring her to miserable death.

He shall not feed on land or pelf
but on wisdom and love and valour,
and his country shall be between Feltro and Feltro;

he shall be salvation to that low-lying Italy
for which the virgin Camilla
and Euryalus and Turnus and Nisus died of their wounds;

he shall hunt her through every city
till he has sent her back to Hell
whence envy first let her loose.

Therefore, considering what is best for thee,
I judge that thou shouldst follow me,
and I shall be thy guide and lead thee hence through an eternal place

where thou shalt hear the despairing shrieks
of the ancient spirits in pain
who each bewail the second death.

Then thou shalt see those who are contented in the fire
because they hope to come, whensoever it may be,
to the tribes of the blest,

to whom if thou wouldst then ascend
there shall be a spirit fitter for that than I;
with her I shall leave thee at my parting.

For the Emperor who holds sway there above
wills not, because I was a rebel to His law,
that I come into His city.

In every part He reigns and there He rules.
There is His city and His lofty seat.
O happy the man He chooses to be there!”

And I answered him: "Poet, I entreat thee
by that God whom thou knewest not
in order that I may escape this evil and worse

lead me where thou hast said,
that I may see Saint Peter's gate
and those thou makest so sorrowful."

Then he set out and I came on behind him.

Inferno - Canto 2

The day was departing and the darkened air
releasing the creatures on the earth
from their labours, and I, alone,

was preparing to endure the conflict
both of the way and of the pity of it,
which memory that doer not err shall recount.

O Muses, O lofty genius, aid me now!
O memory that noted what I saw,
here shall be shown thy worth!

I began: "Poet, who guidest me,
consider my strength, if it is sufficient,
before thou commit me to the hard passage.

Thou tellest of the father of Sylvius
that he went, still subject to corruption,
to the eternal world and was there in the flesh.

But if the Adversary of all evil showed him this favour,
talking account of the high consequence and who
and what he was that should spring from him,

it does not seem unfitting to one that understands;
for in the heaven of the Empyrean he was chosen
to be father of glorious Rome and of her Empire,

and both of these were established – if we
would speak rightly of them – to be the holy place
where sits the successor of the great Peter.

By this journey for which thou honourest him
he heard things which fitted him for his victory
and prepared for the Papal mantle.

Later, the Chosen Vessel went there, that he
might bring thence confirmation of that faith
which is the beginning of the way of salvation.

But I, why should I go there, and who grants it?
I am not Aeneas; I am not Paul.
Neither I nor any man thinks me fit for this,

so that if I commit myself to go
I fear lest my going be folly.
Thou art wise; thou understandest better than I speak.”

And as one who unwills what he willed
and with new thoughts changes his purpose
so that he quite withdraws from what he has begun,

such I became on that dark slope;
for by thinking of it I brought to naught
the enterprise that was so hasty in its beginning.

“If I have rightly understood thy words,”
replied the shade of that great soul
“thy spirit is smitten with cowardice,

which many a time encumbers a man
so that it turns him back from honourable enterprise,
as a mistaken sight a shying beast.

That I may deliver thee from this fear,
I shall tell thee why I came and what I heard
at the time when I first took pity on thee.

I was among those who are in suspense,
and a lady called me, so blessed and so fair
that I begged her to command me.

Her eyes shone brighter than the stars,
and she began to speak to me
with angelic voice in sweet, low tones:

‘O courteous Mantuan soul,
whose fame still endures in the world
and shall endure as long as the world lasts,

my friend, who is no friend of fortune,
is so hindered on his way on the desert slope
that he has turned back for fear,

and from what I have heard of him in Heaven
I fear he may already be so far astray
that I have risen too late to succour him.

Haste then, and with the beauty of thy speech
and whatever is needful for his deliverance
give him such help that I shall be comforted.

I am Beatrice who bid thee go.
I come from the place where I desire to return.
Love moved me and makes me speak.

When I am before my Lord
I will often speak to Him in praise of thee.'
Then she was silent, and I began:

'O lady of virtue, through whom alone
the human kind surpasses everything
within the smallest circle of the heavens,

so grateful to me is thy command that my obedience,
were it given already, is late;
there is no need for more than to declare thy will to me.

But tell me the reason why thou dost not shrink
from descending into this central depth
from the spacious place where thou burnest to return.'

"Since thou wouldst know so deeply,"
she answered me "I shall tell thee shortly
why I do not fear to enter here.

Only those things should be feared
that have power to do us ill, nothing else,
for nothing else is fearful,

and I am made such by God of His grace
that your misery does not touch me
nor a flame of the fires here assail me.

There is a gentle lady in Heaven who is so moved
with pity of that hindrance for which I send thee
that she breaks the stern judgement there on high;

she called Lucy and gave her her behest:
'Thy faithful one is now in need of thee
and I commend him to thee.'

Lucy, enemy of all cruelty,
rose and came to the place where I was seated
beside the ancient Rachel

and said: "Beatrice, true praise of God,
why dost thou not succour him who so loved thee
that for thy sake he left the vulgar herd?"

Hearest thou not his pitiful weeping?
Seest thou not the death which combats him
on the flood that is not less terrible than the sea?"

Never were men on earth so swift
to seek their good or to escape their hurt as I,
after these words were spoken,

to descend here from my blessed seat,
trusting to thy noble speech which honours thyself
and them that have heard it.'

When she had talked with me thus she turned away,
with tears, her shining eyes;
which made me haste the more to come,

and so I came to thee as she wished.
I delivered thee from that beast which deprived thee
of the short way to the beautiful mountain.

What then? Why, why cost thou delay?
Why harbourest such cowardice in thy heart?
Why art thou not bold and free,

when three such blessed ladies
care for thee in the court of Heaven
and my words promise thee so much good?"

As little flowers, bent down and closed
with the chill of night, when the sun brightens them
stand all open on their stems,

such I became with my failing strength,
and so much good courage ran into my heart
that I began as one set free:

“O she compassionate that succoured me,
and thou who of thy courtesy wast quick
to obey the true words she spoke to thee!

Thou hast so disposed my heart with desire
for the journey by thy words
that I have returned to my first intent.

Now go, for but one will is in us both,
thou leader, thou lord and master.”
Thus I spoke to him, and when he set out

I entered on the deep and savage way.

Inferno - Canto 3

THROUGH ME THE WAY INTO THE WOEFUL CITY,
THROUGH ME THE WAY TO THE ETERNAL PAIN,
THROUGH ME THE WAY AMONG THE LOST PEOPLE.

JUSTICE MOVED MY MAKER ON HIGH,
DIVINE POWER MADE ME
AND SUPERB WISDOM AND PRIMAL LOVE;

BEFORE ME NOTHING WAS CREATED BUT ETERNAL THINGS
AND I ENDURE ETERNALLY.
ABANDON EVERY HOPE, YE THAT ENTER.

These words I saw inscribed in dark characters
over a gateway; therefore I said:
“Master, their sense is dreadful to me.”

And he said to me, like one experienced:
“Here must all distrust be left behind,
here must all cowardice be ended;

we are come to the place where I told thee
thou shouldst see the woeful people
who have lost the good of the intellect.”

And when he had laid his hand on mine
with cheerful looks that gave me comfort,
he led me in to the things that are hidden there.

There sighs, lamentations and loud wailings
resounded through the starless air,
so that at first it made me weep;

strange tongues, horrible language, words of pain,
tones of anger, voices loud and hoarse,
and with these the sound of hands,

made a tumult which is whirling always
through that air forever dark,
as sand eddies in a whirlwind.

And I, my head encircled with horror, said:
“Master, what is this I hear, and who are
these people who seem so mastered by their pain?”

And he said to me: “This miserable state
is borne by the wretched souls of those
who lived without disgrace and without praise.

They are mixed with that caitiff choir of the angels
who were not rebels, nor faithful to God,
but were for themselves.

The heavens drove them forth, not to be less fair,
and the depth of Hell does not receive them
lest the wicked have some glory over them.”

And I said: “Master, what is it that is so grievous
to them, making them lament so sorely?”
He replied: “I will tell thee in few words.

They have no hope of death,
and so abject is their blind life
that they are envious of every other lot.

The world suffers no report of them to live.
Pity and justice despise them.
Let us not talk of them; but look thou and pass.”

And I looked and saw a whirling banner
which ran so fast that it seemed
as if it could never make a stand,

and behind it came so long a train of people
that I should never have believed
death had undone so many.

After I had recognized some of them
I saw and knew the shade of him
who from cowardice made the great refusal,

and at once and with certainty I perceived
that this was the worthless crew
that is hateful to God and to His enemies.

Those wretches, who never were alive,
were naked and sorely stung
by hornets and wasps that were there;

these made their faces stream with blood,
which mingled with their tears
and was gathered at their feet by loathsome worms.

And then, directing my sight farther on,
I saw people on the bank of a great river,
so that I said: "Master, now grant me to know

who they are and what law makes them
so eager for the crossing as they seem
by what I discern through the dim light."

And he said to me: "These things
will be plain to thee when we stay our steps
on the sad shore of Acheron."

Then, my eyes bent down with shame,
fearing that my words had displeased him,
I kept from speaking till we reached the river.

And lo, coming towards us in a boat,
an old man, his hair white with age,
crying: "Woe to you, wicked souls,

hope not ever to see the sky.
I come to bring you to the other bank,
into the eternal shades, into fire and frost;

and thou there that art a living soul,
take thyself apart from these that are dead."
But when he saw that I did not go,

he said: "By another way, by other ports,
not here, thou shalt come to the shore and pass.
A lighter vessel must carry thee."

And my Leader: "Charon, do not torment thyself.
It is so willed where will and power are one,
and ask no more."

On that the shaggy jaws of the pilot
of the livid marsh, about whose eyes
were wheels of flame, were quiet.

But those souls, which were weary and naked,
changed colour and gnashed their teeth
as soon as they heard his cruel words;

they blasphemed God and their parents,
the human kind, the place, the time,
and the seed of their begetting and of their birth,

then, weeping bitterly,
they drew all together to the accursed shore
which awaits every man that fears not God.

The demon Charon, with eyes of burning coal,
beckons to them and gathers them all in,
smiting with the oar any that linger.

As in autumn the leaves drop off
one after the other till the branch
sees all its spoils on the ground,

so the wicked seed of Adam
fling themselves from that shore one by one
at the signal, as a falcon at its recall.

Thus they depart over the dark water,
and before they have landed on the other side
a fresh crowd collects again on this.

“My son,” said the courteous Master
“all those that die in the wrath of God
assemble here from every land;

and they are eager to cross the river,
for divine justice so spurs them
that fear turns to desire.

By this way no good spirit ever passes, and therefore
if Charon complains of thee thou canst
well understand now what his speech imports.”

When he had ended, the gloomy plain
shook so violently that the remembrance
of my terror bathes me again with sweat.

The tearful ground gave forth wind
and a red blaze flashed
which overcame all my senses,

and I fell like one that is seized with sleep.

Inferno - Canto 4

A heavy thunder clap
broke the deep sleep in my head
so that I started like one who is waked by force,

and, my eyes being rested,
I stood up and looked about me,
then set my gaze steadily to know where I was.

I found myself in fact on the brink
of the abysmal valley of pain, which resounds
with noise of countless wailings;

it was so dark and deep and full of vapours that,
straining my sight to reach the bottom,
I could make out nothing there.

“Now let us descend into the blind world down there,”
began the Poet, deadly pale;
“I will be first and thou second.”

And I, who noted his colour, said:
“How shall I come if thou art afraid who,
when I am in doubt, art wont to be my strength?”

And he said to me: “The anguish
of the people who are down here paints
my face with that pity thou takest for fear.

Let us go, for the long way urges us.”
So he went on and made me too enter
into the first circle that girds the abyss.

Here, so far as I could tell by listening,
was no lamentation more than sighs
which kept the air forever trembling;

these came from grief without torments
that was borne by the crowds, which were vast,
of men and women and little children.

The good Master said to me: “Dost thou not ask
what spirits are these thou seest?
I would have thee know, then, before thou goest farther,

that they did not sin; but though they have merits
it is not enough, for they had not baptism,
which is the gateway of the faith thou holdest;

and if they were before Christianity
they did not worship God aright,
and of these I am one.

For such defects, and not for any guile,
we are lost, and only so far afflicted
that without hope we live in desire.”

Great grief seized me at the heart when I heard this,
for I knew people of much worth
who were suspended in that Limbo.

“Tell me, my Master, tell me, sir,”
I began, seeking to be assured
of that faith which overcomes every doubt,

“did ever anyone, either by his own merit
or another's, go out hence and come afterwards to bliss?”
And he, who understood my veiled speech, replied:

“I was new in this condition
when I saw a mighty one come here,
crowned with a sign of victory.

He took from among us the shade of our first parent,
of Abel his son, and of Noah, of Moses,
law-giver and obedient,

of the patriarch Abraham, and of King David,
of Israel with his father and his sons and Rachel,
for whom he did so much,

and many others, and he made them blest.
And I would have thee know that before these
no human souls were saved.”

We did not cease to go on for his speaking,
but continued all the time passing through the forest –
for such it seemed – of thronged spirits;

and we had not gone far from where I slept
when I saw a blaze of light
which was enclosed in a hemisphere of darkness.

We were still a short distance from it,
yet not so far but that I partly made out that
an honourable company occupied that place.

“O thou who honourest both science and art,
who are these who have such honour
that it sets them apart from the condition of the rest?”

And he said to me: “Their honourable fame,
which resounds in thy life above,
gains favour in Heaven which thus advances them.”

At that moment I heard a voice:
“Honour the lofty poet!
His shade returns that left us.”

When the voice had paused and there was silence
I saw four great shades coming to us;
their looks were neither sad nor joyful.

The good Master began: “Mark him there
with sword in hand
who comes before the three as their lord;

he is Homer, the sovereign poet.
He that comes next is Horace the moralist,
Ovid is the third, and the last Lucan.

Since each shares with me in the name
the one voice uttered they give me
honourable welcome, and in this do well.”

Thus I saw assemble the noble school
of that lord of loftiest song
who flies like an eagle above the rest.

After they had talked together for a time
they turned to me with a sign of greeting,
and my Master smiled at this;

and then they showed me still greater honour,
for they made me one of their number
so that I was the sixth among those high intelligences.

Thus we went on as far as the light,
talking of things which were fitting for that place
and of which it is well now to be silent.

We came to the foot of a noble castle,
encircled seven times with high walls
and defended round about by a fair stream;

this we passed over as on solid ground
and through seven gateways I entered with these sages.
We came to a meadow of fresh verdure,

where were people with grave and slow-moving eyes
and looks of great authority;
they spoke seldom, with gentle voices.

Then we withdrew on one side to an open space,
bright and high,
so that we could see every one of them.

There before me on the enamelled green
were shown to me the great spirits
by the sight of whom I am uplifted in myself.

I saw Electra with many in her company,
of whom I knew Hector and Aeneas and Caesar,
in arms and with his falcon eyes;

I saw Camilla and Penehesilea on the other side,
and I saw the Latian king,
who sat with his daughter Lavinia;

I saw that Brutus who drove out Tarquin,
Lucrece, Julia, Marcia, and Cornelia;
and, by himself apart, I saw the Saladin.

When I raised my eyes a little higher
I saw the master of them that know
sitting amid a philosophic family,

all of them regarding him and all showing him honour.
There I saw Socrates and Plato
in front of the rest and nearest to him,

Democritus, who ascribes the world to chance,
Diogenes, Anaxagoras, and Thales,
Empedocles, Heraditus, and Zeno;

I saw the skilled collector of simples –
I mean Dioscorides – and I saw Orpheus,
Cicero, Linus, and Seneca the moralist,

Euclid the geometer, and Ptolemy,
Hippocrates, Avicenna, Galen,
and Averroes, him who made the Great Commentary.

I cannot give full account of them all,
for the length of my theme so drives me on
that many times my words come short of the fact.

The company of six falls off to two
and my wise Leader brings me by another way
out of the quiet into the trembling air

and I come to a part where no light shines.

Inferno - Canto 5

Thus I descended from the first circle
down into the second, which bounds a smaller space
and so much more of pain that goads to wailing.

There stands Minos, horrible, snarling,
examines their offenses at the entrance, judges
and despatches them according as he girds himself;

I mean that when the ill-born soul
comes before him it confesses all,
and that discerner of sins

sees what is the place for it in Hell
and encircles himself with his tail as many times
as the grades he will have it sent down.

Always before him is a crowd of them;
they go each in turn to the judgement;
they speak and hear and then are hurled below.

“O thou that comest to the abode of pain,”
Minos said when he saw me,
leaving the business of his great office,

“look how thou enterest and in whom thou trustest;
let not the breadth of the entrance deceive thee.”
And my Leader said to him: “Why dost thou too make an outcry?

Hinder not his fated journey.
It is so willed where will and power are one;
and ask no more.”

Now the notes of pain
begin to reach my ears; now I am come
where great wailing breaks on me.

I came to a place where all light was mute
and where was bellowing as of a sea
in tempest that is beaten by conflicting winds.

The hellish storm, never resting, seizes
and drives the spirits before it;
smiting and whirling them about, it torments them.

When they come before its fury there are shrieks,
weeping and lamentation,
and there they blaspheme the power of God;

and I learned that to such torment
are condemned the carnal sinners
who subject reason to desire.

As in the cold season their wings
bear the starlings along in a broad, dense flock,
so does that blast the wicked spirits.

Hither, thither, downward, upward, it drives them;
no hope ever comforts them,
not to say of rest, but of less pain.

And as the cranes go chanting their lays,
making of themselves a long line in the air,
so I saw approach with long-drawn wailings

shades borne on these battling winds,
so that I said: "Master, who are these people
whom the black air so scourges?"

"The first among those of whom
thou wouldst know," he said to me then,
"was Empress of peoples of many tongues,

who was so corrupted by licentious vice
that she made lust lawful in her law
to take away the scandal into which she was brought;

she is Semiramis, of whom we read
that she succeeded Ninus, being his wife,
and held the land which the Soldan rules.

The next is she that slew herself for love
and broke faith with the ashes of Sychaeus,
and then wanton Cleopatra;

see Helen, for whose sake so many years
of ill revolved; and see the great Achilles,
who fought at the last with love;

see Paris, Tristan, – ” and he showed me
more than a thousand shades, naming them
as he pointed, whom love parted from our life.

When I heard my Teacher name the knights and ladies
of old times, pity came upon me
and I was as one bewildered.

I began: “Poet, I would fain speak
with these two that go together
and seem so light upon the wind.”

And he said to me: “Thou shalt see
when they are nearer us, and do thou entreat them
then by the love that leads them, and they will come.”

As soon as the wind bent their course to us
I raised my voice: “O wearied souls,
come and speak with us, if One forbids it not.”

As doves, summoned by desire,
come with wings poised and motionless
to the sweet nest, borne by their will through the air,

so these left the troop where Dido is,
coming to us through the malignant air;
such force had my loving call

“O living creature gracious and friendly,
who goest through the murky air
visiting us who stained the world with blood,

if the King of the universe were our friend
we would pray to Him for thy peace,
since thou hast pity of our evil plight.

Of that which thou art pleased to hear
and speak we will hear and speak with you
while the wind is quiet, as here it is.

The city where I was born
lies on the shore where the Po,
with the streams that join it, descends to rest.

Love, which is quickly bridled in the gentle heart,
seized this man for the fair form that was taken from me,
and the manner afflicts me still.

Love, which absolves no one beloved from loving,
seized me so strongly with his charm that,
as thou seest, it does not leave me yet.

Love brought us to one death. Caïna waits
for him who quenched our life.”
These words were borne from them to us.

And when I heard these afflicted souls
I bent my head and held it down so long
that at last the Poet said to me: “What are thy thoughts?”

When I answered I began:
“Alas, how many sweet thoughts, how great desire,
brought them to the woeful pass!”

Then I turned to them again to speak and began:
“Francesca, thy torments
make me weep for grief and pity,

but tell me, in the time of your sweet sighing
how and by what occasion did love
grant you to know your uncertain desires?”

And she answered me: “There is no greater pain
than to recall the happy time in misery,
and this thy teacher knows;

but if thou hast so great desire
to know our love's first root,
I shall tell as one may that weeps in telling.

We read one day for pastime of Lancelot,
how love constrained him.
We were alone and had no misgiving.

Many times that reading drew our eyes together
and changed the colour in our faces,
but one point alone it was that mastered us;

when we read that the longed-for smile
was kissed by so great a lover,
he who never shall be parted from me,

all trembling, kissed my mouth.
A Galeotto was the book and he that wrote it;
that day we read in it no farther.”

While the one spirit said this
the other wept so that for pity
I swooned as if in death

and dropped like a dead body.

Inferno - Canto 6

With the return of my mind that was shut off
before the piteous state of the two kinsfolk,
which quite confounded me with grief,

new torments and new souls in torment
I see about me, wherever I move
and turn and set my gaze.

I am in the third circle, of eternal,
accursed rain, cold and heavy,
never changing its measure or its kind;

huge hail, foul water and snow
pour down through the gloomy air,
and the ground that receives it stinks.

Cerberus, a beast fierce and hideous,
with three throats barks like a dog
over the people that are immersed there;

he has red eyes, a beard greasy and black,
a great belly, and clawed hands,
and he scars and flays and rends the spirits.

The rain makes them howl like dogs,
and the profane wretches often turn themselves,
of one side making a shelter for the other.

When Cerberus, the great worm, perceived us,
he opened his mouths and showed us the fangs,
not one of his limbs keeping still,

and my Leader spread his hands,
took up earth, and with full fists
threw it into the ravenous gullets.

As the dog that yelps for greed
and becomes quiet when it bites its food,
being all absorbed in struggling to devour it,

such became these foul visages
of the demon Cerberus, who so thunders
at the souls that they would fain be deaf.

We passed over the shades that were beaten down
by the heavy rain, setting our feet
on their emptiness, which seemed real bodies.

They were all lying on the ground,
except one who sat up
as soon as he saw us passing before him.

“O thou who art led through this Hell,”
he said to me, “recall me, if thou canst;
thou wast begun before I was ended.”

And I said to him: “The anguish thou hast
perhaps takes thee from my memory,
so that I do not seem ever to have seen thee;

but tell me who thou art, put in a place
of such misery and under such a penalty that,
if any is greater, none is so loathsome.”

And he said to me: “Thy city,
which is so full of envy that already
the sack runs over, held me within it in the bright life,

when you citizens called me Ciaccio.
For the damning fault of gluttony, as thou seest,
I lie helpless in the rain;

and in my misery I am not alone,
for all these are under the same penalty
for the same fault.” And he said no more.

I answered him: “Ciaccio, thy distress
so weighs on me that it bids me weep.
But tell me, if thou canst,

what the citizens of the divided city shall come to
and whether any there is just,
and tell me the cause of such discord assailing it.”

And he said to me: "After long strife
they shall come to blood and the party of the rustics
shall drive out the other with much offense;

then, by force of one who is now maneuvering,
that party is destined to fall
within three years and the other to prevail,

long holding its head high
and keeping the first under grievous burdens,
for all their tears and shame.

Two men are just and are not heeded there.
Pride, envy and avarice are the three sparks
that have set these hearts on fire."

Here he made an end of his grievous words.
And I said to him: "I would still learn from thee,
and I beg thee to grant me further speech.

Farinata and Tegghiaio, men of such worth,
Jacopo Rusticucci, Arrigo and Mosca
and the rest whose minds were set on well-doing,

tell me where they are and give me knowledge of them;
for I am pressed with a great desire to know whether
they share Heaven's sweetness or the bitterness of Hell."

And he: "They are among the blackest souls
and different faults weigh them down to the depth;
if thou descend so far thou canst see them.

But when thou shalt be in the sweet world
I pray thee bring me to men's memory.
I tell thee no more nor answer thee again."

With that he turned his direct look askance,
gazed at me for a moment, then bent his head
and so dropped to the level of the other blind.

And my Leader said to me: "He wakes no more
till the sounding of the angel's trumpet,
when the adverse Judge shall come;

each shall find again the sad tomb
and take again his flesh and form
and hear that which echoes in eternity.”

So we passed on through the foul mixture
of the shades and the rain with slow steps,
touching a little on the life to come.

I said therefore: “Master, will these torments
increase after the great judgement,
or become less, or continue as fierce as now?”

And he answered me: “Go back to thy science,
which requires that in the measure of a creature's perfection
it feels more both of pleasure and of pain.

Although these people who are accursed
never come to true perfection,
they look to be completer then than now.”

We went round that curving road,
with much more talk than I repeat,
and reached the point where the descent begins.

Here we found Plutus, the great enemy.

Inferno - Canto 7

“Pape Satan, Pape Satan, aleppe!”
began Plutus with clucking voice;
and the gentle Sage, who knew all,

said for my comfort: “Do not let thy fear distress thee,
for with all his power
he shall not hinder us from descending this rock.”

Then he turned back on that bloated visage
and said: “Silence, accursed wolf!
Consume thyself with thy rage within.

Not without cause is his journey to the depth;
it is willed on high,
where Michael avenged the proud adultery.”

As sails swollen with the wind
fall in a heap when the mast snaps,
so fell the cruel beast to the ground.

Then we descended into the fourth hollow,
passing farther down the dismal slope
which ensacks all the evil of the universe.

Ah, Justice of God, who crams together
all the new toils and pains that I saw?
And why does our sin so lay us waste?

As do the waves there above Charybdis,
one breaking against another when they meet,
so must the souls here dance their round.

Here I saw far more people than elsewhere
both on the one side and the other,
with great howls rolling weights by main force of chest;

they clashed together when they met and then at that point
each turned about and rolled his weight back again,
shouting: “Why hoard?” and “Why squander?”

Thus they returned round the gloomy circle
on either hand to the opposite point,
shouting at each other again their taunting chorus;

then, having reached it,
each turned back
by his half circle to the other joust.

And I, whose heart was as if pierced through, said:
“My Master, show me now who are these people and
whether all these tonsured ones on our left were clerics.”

And he said to me: “Every one of them
was so asquint in mind in the first life
that they had no right measure in their spending;

this they bark out plainly enough
when they reach the two points of the circle,
where contrary faults divide them.

These were clerics whose hair does not
cover their heads, both popes and cardinals,
in whom avarice shows its mastery.”

And I said: “Master, among such as these
I ought surely to recognize some
who were defiled with these offenses.”

And he answered me: “Thou harbourest a vain thought;
the undiscerning life that made them foul
now makes them obscure to all discernment.

They shall come forever to the two buttings;
these shall rise from the grave with closed fist,
and these with cropped hair;

ill-giving and ill-keeping have robbed them
of the fair world and set them in this scuffle, —
such as it is, I spend no fair words on it.

Now mayst thou see, my son, the brief mockery
of the wealth committed to fortune,
for which the race of men embroil themselves;

for all the gold that is beneath the moon,
or ever was, could not give rest
to one of these weary souls.”

“Master,” I said to him, “now tell me further,
this fortune thou namest to me, who is she
that holds the world's wealth thus in her clutches?”

And he said to me: “O foolish creatures,
what ignorance is this that besets you!
Now I will have thee feed on my judgement of her.

He whose wisdom transcends all
made the heavens and gave them guides,
so that every part shines to every part,

dispersing the light equally. In the same way
He ordained for worldly splendours
a general minister and guide

who should in due time change vain wealth
from race to race and from one to another blood,
beyond the prevention of human wits,

so that one race rules and another languishes
according to her sentence which is hidden
like the snake in the grass.

Your wisdom cannot strive with her.
She foresees, judges and maintains her kingdom,
as the other heavenly powers do theirs.

Her changes have no respite.
Necessity makes her swift,
so fast men come to take their turn.

This is she who is so reviled by the very men
that should give her praise,
laying on her wrongful blame and ill repute.

But she is blest and does not hear it.
Happy with the other primal creatures
she turns her sphere and rejoices in her bliss.

Now let us descend to greater wretchedness.
Already every star sinks that was rising
when I set out and it is forbidden to stay too long.”

We crossed the circle to the other edge,
past a spring that boils up
and pours over by a trench leading from it,

the water of the blackest purple,
and following its murky waves
we entered the place below by a rough track.

This gloomy stream, when it has reached
the foot of the malign grey slopes,
enters the marsh which is called Styx;

and I, who had stopped to gaze intently,
saw muddy people in that bog,
all naked and with looks of rage.

They were smiting each other not only with the hand
but with head and breast and feet
and tearing each other piecemeal with their teeth.

The good Master said: “Son, thou seest now
the souls of those whom anger overcame;
and I would have thee know for sure also

that there are people under the water who sigh
and make the water bubble on the surface,
as thine eye tells thee wherever it turns.

Fixed in the slime they say: ‘We were sullen
in the sweet air that is gladdened by the sun,
bearing in our hearts a sluggish smoke;

now we are sullen in the black mire.’
This hymn they gurgle in their throat,
for they cannot get the words out plainly.”

Thus we went round a great arc of the filthy pond
between the dry bank and the swamp, our eyes
bent on those that gorged themselves with the mire;

and we came at last to the foot of a tower.

Inferno - Canto 8

Continuing, I have to tell
that long before we were at the foot
of the high tower our eyes rose to its top

on account of two lights which we saw put there
and to which another, so far off
that we could hardly make it out, sent back a signal.

And I turned to the sea of all wisdom and said:
“What does this mean? And that other fire, what
does it answer? And who are they that have made it?”

And he said to me: “Over the foul waves
thou mayst discern already that which we wait for,
if the marsh's fumes do not hide it from thee.”

Never string drove arrow from the bow
that ran so swiftly through the air
as at that moment I saw approaching us

a little boat in charge of a single oarsman,
who cried: 'Now thou art caught,
guilty soul!’

“Phlegyas, Phlegyas, this time thou criest in vain,”
said my Lord, “thou shalt have us
no longer than the passing of the slough.”

Like one that hears of a great fraud practiced on him
and then resents it,
such Phlegyas became in his pent-up rage.

My Leader went down into the boat,
then made me enter after him,
and not until I was in did it seem laden,

and as soon as he and I had embarked
the ancient prow moved off, cutting deeper
into the water than it was wont with others.

While we were running through the stagnant channel
there rose up in front of me one covered with mud
and said: "Who art thou that comest before thy time?"

And I said to him: "If I come I do not stay.
But thou, who art thou that art become so foul?"
He answered: "Thou seest I am one that weeps."

And I to him: "In weeping and in misery,
accursed spirit, remain;
for I know thee, for all thy filth."

Then he reached out to the boat with both hands;
on which the wary Master thrust him off,
saying: "Away there with the other dogs!",

then clasped me with his arms about my neck,
kissed my cheek and said: "Indignant soul,
blessed is the womb that bore thee!

In the world this man was full of arrogance;
no good there is to adorn his memory,
therefore is his shade here furious.

How many above there now account themselves great
kings who shall lie here like swine in the mire,
leaving of themselves horrible dispraises!"

And I said: "Master, I should like well
to see him soused in this broth
before we leave the lake."

And he to me: "Before the shore comes in sight
thou shalt have satisfaction;
in such a wish thou art sure to be gratified."

Soon after I saw such a rending of him
by the muddy crowd that I still give praise
and thanks to God for it; all cried:

"At Filippo Argenti!"
and the passionate Florentine spirit
turned on himself with his teeth.

Here we left him, so of him I have no more to tell;
but on my ears smote a sound of grief,
at which with eyes wide open I looked intently forward.

The good Master said: "Now, my son,
the city draws near which bears the name of Dis,
with its grave citizens and great garrison."

And I said: "Master, already I make out distinctly
its mosques there within the valley,
red as if they had come out of the fire."

And he said to me: "The eternal fire
which burns within them makes them show red,
as thou seest, in this nether Hell."

We got right into the deep moats
entrenching that unhappy city,
whose walls seemed to be of iron,

and when we had first made a wide circuit
we came to a place where the boatman cried loudly:
"Go out here, that is the entrance."

I saw above the gates more than a thousand
of those rained down from Heaven,
who cried angrily: "Who is this that without death

goes through the kingdom of the dead?"
And the Sage my Master made a sign
that he would speak with them apart.

Then they restrained a little their fierce resentment
and said: "Come thou alone, and let him go off
who has dared thus to enter on this kingdom.

Let him return alone on his mad way
and see if he knows it, for thou shalt stay here
who hast been his guide on that dark road."

Judge, reader, if I did not lose heart
at the sound of the accursed words;
for I did not think I should ever return here.

“O my dear Leader, who seven times and more
hast restored my confidence
and drawn me from great peril confronting me,

leave me not” I said, “so undone;
and if going farther is denied us,
let us quickly retrace our steps together.”

And my Liege who had brought me there said to me:
“Do not fear, for none can hinder our passage,
by such an One is it granted us;

but wait for me here and comfort thy weary spirit
and feed it with good hope,
for I will not forsake thee in the nether world.”

He goes away and leaves me there,
the gentle Father, and I remain in doubt,
ay and no contending in my head.

I could not hear what he put before them;
but he was not long there with them
when they all ran in headlong,

and these our adversaries shut the gates
in the face of my Lord, who was left outside
and turned back to me with slow steps.

His eyes were on the ground and his brow
shorn of all boldness and he said between his sighs:
“Who are these to deny me the abodes of pain?”

And to me he said: “Do not thou be dismayed
for my vexation, for I shall prevail in the contest,
whatever is contrived within to hinder us.

This insolence of theirs is not new,
for once they showed it at a less hidden gate,
which still stands without a bolt.

Over it thou sawest the deadly writing,
and already within it one descends the steep
and passes without escort through the circles,

by whom the city shall be opened to us.”

Inferno - Canto 9

That colour which cowardice brought out in me,
seeing my Leader turn back,
the more quickly repressed the change in his.

He stopped attentive as if listening,
for the eye could not reach far
through the dark air and dense fog.

“Yet we must win this fight,” he began,
“or else . . . ! Such help was offered us!
How long it seems till someone comes!”

I saw plainly, as soon as he covered up
his beginning with the words that followed,
that they were different from the first;

but none the less what he said made me afraid,
for I drew out his broken phrases
to a worse meaning than perhaps he meant.

“Does anyone ever descend to this depth
of the dismal hollow from the first circle,
where the only penalty is hope cut off?”

I asked; and he answered:
“It seldom happens that any of us
makes the journey on which I go,

but I was down here once before,
conjured by that fell Erichtho
who recalled shades to their bodies.”

My flesh was not long naked of me
when she made me enter within that wall
to draw forth a spirit from the circle of Judas,

the deepest and darkest place,
farthest from the heaven that encircles all.
Well do I know the way, therefore be reassured.

This marsh exhaling the great stench
goes all round the woeful city,
which we now enter without contention.”

And he said more, but I do not remember it,
for my sight had drawn me wholly
to the lofty tower with the glowing summit,

where all at once were risen erect
three hellish, blood-stained Furies
that had the parts and the bearing of women

and were girt with hydras of bright green,
and for hair they had little serpents
and horned snakes twined about the savage temples.

And he, who knew well the handmaids
of the Queen of everlasting lamentations,
said to me: “See the fierce Erinyes!

That is Megara on the left; she wailing on the right
is Alecto; Tesiphone is in the middle;”
and with that he was silent.

Each was rending her breast with her nails;
they smote themselves with their palms
and cried so loud that I pressed close to the Poet for fear.

“Let Medusa come and we will turn him to stone,”
they all cried, looking down;
“we avenged ill the assault of Theseus.”

“Turn thy back and keep shine eyes shut,
for should the Gorgon show herself
and thou see her there would be no returning above.”

My Master said this and himself turned me round
and, not trusting to my hands,
covered my face with his own also.

Ye that are of good understanding,
note the teaching that is hidden
under the veil of the strange lines.

And now came over the turbid waves
a crashing, fearful sound
that set both shores trembling;

it was like the noise of a wind violent
from conflicting heats which strikes the forest
and with unchecked course

splits the branches, flings them down and carries them
away and, driving the dust before it, goes on in pride
and puts wild beasts and shepherds to flight.

He freed my eyes and said:
“Strain now thy sight over that ancient scum
to the part where the fume is harshest.”

As frogs before their enemy the snake
all vanish through the water
till each squats on the bottom,

so I saw more than a thousand ruined souls
flee before one that passed on foot
over the Styx dry-shod;

he was clearing that gross air from his face,
moving often his left hand in front of him,
and only of that vexation he seemed weary.

Well I perceived that he was one sent from Heaven,
and I turned to the Master, who signed to me
to keep silence and bow down to him.

Ah, how full of indignation he appeared to me!
He came to the gate and with a little wand opened it,
for there was no resistance.

“O outcasts of Heaven, despised race,”
he began on the horrid threshold,
“whence this insolence that harbours in you?”

Why kick against that will
whose end can never be frustrate
and which has many a time increased your pain?

What profits it to butt against the fates?
Your own Cerberus – if you rightly remember –
still bears his chin and throat peeled for this.”

Then he turned back on the filthy way;
and he said not a word to us,
but had the look of one pressed and spurred

by another care than that of those before him.
And we moved our steps towards the city,
secure after the holy words.

We entered in there without dispute;
and I, who was eager to examine the condition
of those held within such a stronghold,

cast my eye round as soon as I was inside,
and I saw on every hand a great plain
full of pain and cruel torment.

Just as at Arles where the Rhone makes a swamp,
and at Pola near Quarnero,
which bounds Italy and bathes its confines,

the graves make the whole place uneven,
so they did here on every side,
except for their more grievous nature here.

For among the tombs were spread flames
by which they were made to glow all over
hotter than is wanted by any craft.

All their lids stood open and such dire lamentations
issued from them as plainly came from people
wretched and suffering.

And I said: “Master, who are these people
buried within these chests
whose groans of pain we hear?”

And he said to me: “Here are the arch-heretics
with their followers of every sect,
and the tombs are laden far more than thou thinkest;

like is buried with like
and the monuments are heated more and less.”
Then, turning to the right, we passed
between the torments and the lofty ramparts.

Inferno - Canto 10

My Master now made his way by a hidden track
between the wall of the city and the torments,
sad I close behind him.

“O thou of loftiest virtue,” I began,
“who leadest me round as thou wilt through
the sinful circles, speak to me and satisfy my desires.

The people that lie within the sepulchres,
may they be seen, for indeed
all the covers are raised and no one keeps guard?”

And he answered me: “All will be shut in
when they return from Jehoshaphat
with the bodies they have left above.

In this part Epicurus and all his followers,
who make the soul die with the body,
have their burial-place;

but, for thy question to me, thou shalt soon
have satisfaction from within there,
and for the desire too about which thou art silent.”

And I said: “Good Leader, I do not keep my heart
hidden from thee except to speak less,
and to that thou hast before now disposed me.”

“O Tuscan who makest thy way alive
through the city of fire and speakest so modestly,
may it please thee to stop at this point:

thy tongue shows thee native
of that noble fatherland
to which I was perhaps too harsh.”

Suddenly this sound issued
from one of the chests,
so that in fear I drew a little closer to my Leader.

And he said to me: "Turn round. What ails thee?
See there Farinata who has risen erect;
from the middle up thou shalt see his full height."

Already I had my eyes fixed on his
and he was lifting up his breast and brow
as if he had great scorn of Hell,

and the bold and ready hands of my Leader
pushed me between the tombs to him, saying:
"Let thy words be fitting."

When I was at the foot of his tomb he looked at me
for a moment, and then, as if in disdain,
asked me: "Who were thy ancestors?"

And I, who was eager to obey, concealed nothing
and made all plain to him;
at which he raised his eyebrows a little,

then said: "They were fierce enemies to me
and to my forebears and to my party,
so that twice over I scattered them."

"If they were driven out," I answered him, "they returned
from every quarter both the first time and the second;
but yours did not rightly learn that art."

Then rose to sight beside him
a shade showing as far as the chin;
I think he had lifted himself on his knees.

He looked round about me as if he had a desire
to see whether someone was with me,
but when his expectation was unquenched

he said, weeping: "If Thou goest through
this blind prison by height of genius,
where is my son and why is he not with thee?"

And I answered him: "I come not of myself;
he that waits yonder is leading me through here,
perhaps to her your Guido held in disdain."

His words and the nature of his punishment
had already told me his name,
so that I replied thus fully.

Suddenly erect, he cried: "How saidst thou,
'he held'? Lives he not still?
Strikes not The sweet light on his eyes?"

When he perceived that I made some delay
before replying he fell back again
and was seen no more.

But that other, the great soul at whose desire
I had stopped, did not change countenance,
nor move his head, nor bend his form.

And continuing the former talk:
"If They have badly learned that art," he said,
"it is worse torment to me than this bed;

but not fifty times shall the face of the lady
who reigns here be rekindled
before thou shalt know for thyself how hard is that art."

And, so mayst thou return some time to the sweet world,
tell me why that people is so pitiless
against my kindred in all its laws."

To which I answered him: "The rout
and the great slaughter that stained the Arbia red
are the cause of such devotions in our temple."

He sighed and shook his head, then said:
"In that I was not alone, nor without cause,
assuredly, would I have moved with the rest;

but there I was alone where all agreed
to make an end of Florence,
the one man to defend her before them all."

"So may your seed some time have rest,
pray loose for me this knot," I begged of him,
"which has here entangled my judgement.

It seems, if I hear aright, that you see beforehand
what time brings with it,
but that in regard to the present it is not so with you.”

“We see, like those with faulty vision,
things at a distance from us,” he said,
“so much light the Sovereign Lord still grants us;

when they draw near or are present our intellect
is wholly at fault and unless others bring us word
we know nothing of your human state.

Thou canst understand, therefore,
that all our knowledge will be dead
from the moment the door of the future is closed.”

Then, being moved with compunction my fault,
I said: “Will you, now, tell him who fell back
that his son is still in the company of the living?”

And let him know that, if I was silent in response
to him before, it is because I was already occupied
with the doubt you have cleared for me.”

And now my Master was recalling me;
with more haste, therefore,
I begged the spirit to tell me who were there with him,

and he said to me: “I lie here with more
than a thousand. Within here is the second Frederick
and the Cardinal, and of the rest I say nothing.”

With that he hid himself, and I turned my steps
to the ancient Poet, thinking over
that saying which seemed hostile to me.

He set out, and then, as we went, he said to me:
“Why art thou so lost in thought?”
And I satisfied his question.

“Keep in thy memory what thou hast heard against
thyself,” the Sage bade me, “but now give heed
to what is here;” and he pointed with his finger.

“When thou art before her sweet radiance
whose fair eyes see all,
thou shalt know from her of thy life's journey.”

Then he turned his feet to the left and leaving the wall
we went towards the centre by a path
that strikes down to a valley from which the stench
even up there was offensive.

Inferno - Canto 11

On the edge of a great steep
made by a circle of huge broken rocks
we came above a more cruel pen,

and here, for the horrible excess of stench
thrown up by the profound abyss,
we drew back behind the cover

of a great vault on which I saw an inscription
that said: "I hold Pope Anastasius,
whom Photinus drew from the straight path."

"We must delay our descent,
that the sense may first get used a little
to the vile breath, and then we shall not heed it."

Thus the Master; and I: "Find some compensation,
that the time may not be lost;"
and he: "Thou shalt see it is my own thought."

"My son," he began then, "within these cliffs
are three lesser circles, one below another,
like those thou art leaving;

all are full of spirits accursed, but, that afterwards
the sight itself may suffice thee,
understand how and why they are confined there.

Every kind of wickedness that gains the hatred
of Heaven has injustice for its end, and every such
end afflicts someone either by force or fraud;

but because fraud is a sin peculiar to man it is
more offensive to God, and for that reason the fraudulent
have their place lower and more pain assails them.

All the first circle is of the violent;
but since violence is done to three persons,
it is formed of three separate rounds.

Force may be used against God, against oneself,
against a neighbour – in themselves, that is,
or in things that are theirs, as I shall make plain to thee.

Violent death and painful wounds are inflicted
on a neighbour, and on his substance
devastations, burnings, and wrongful exactions;

therefore homicides and everyone that wounds in malice,
pillagers and plunderers,
the first round torments them all in different troops.

A man may lay violent hands on himself
or on his own possessions,
and therefore in the second round must repent in vain

whoever robs himself of your world
or gambles away and dissipates his wealth,
lamenting where he should rejoice.

Violence may be done to the Godhead
by denying and blaspheming Him in the heart
and by despising nature and her bounty,

and therefore the smallest round stamps with its seal
both Sodom and Cahors and him
that speaks spitefully in his heart against God.

Fraud, which always stings the conscience,
a man may practice on one who confides in him
or on one who does not so place his confidence;

it is evident that this latter way
destroys simply the bond of love which nature makes,
so that in the next circle

hypocrisy, flatteries, sorceries, falsifications,
theft, and simony, panders, jobbers,
and like filth have their nest.

By the other way both that love which nature makes
is forgotten and that also which is added to it
and which creates a special trust;

therefore in the smallest circle,
at the central point of the universe and seat of Dis,
every traitor is consumed eternally.”

And I said: “Master, thy account is quite clear
thus far and makes very plain the distinctions
in this abyss and among the people it holds;

but tell me, those of the slimy bog,
those the wind drives, those the rain beats on,
and those that encounter with such bitter tongues,

why are they not punished within the red city
if God holds them in His wrath?
And if He does not why are they in such a plight?”

And he said to me: “Why do thy thoughts
wander so from their wont,
or where else is thy mind looking?

Rememberest thou not the words with which
thy *Ethics* expounds the three dispositions
which are against the will of Heaven,

incontinence, malice, and mad brutishness,
and how incontinence offends God less
and incurs less blame?

If thou consider well this teaching
and call to mind who are those
that bear their penalty above outside

thou shalt see clearly why they are separated
from these wicked spirits and why
divine vengeance smites them with less wrath”

“O Sun that healest all troubled sight, so dost thou
satisfy me with the resolving of my doubts that it is
no less grateful to me to question than to know.

Turn back again a little,” I said, “to the point
where thou saidst that usury offends
against the Divine Goodness, and loose that knot.”

“Philosophy, for one who understands,”
he said to me, “notes, not in one place only,
how nature takes her course from

the divine mind and its art;
and if thou note well thy *Physics*
thou wilt find, not many pages on,

that your art, as far as it can, follows nature
as the pupil the master,
so that your art is to God, as it were, a grandchild.

By these two, if thou recall to mind Genesis
near the beginning, it behoves mankind
to gain their livelihood and their advancement,

and because the usurer takes another way
he despises nature both in herself and in her follower,
setting his hope elsewhere.

But now follow me, for I would go;
the Fishes are quivering on the horizon
and all the Wain lies over Caurus

and farther on there is the descent of the cliff.”

Inferno - Canto 12

The place where we came for the descent
of the steep was alpine, and besides,
because of what was there, a place every eye would shun.

Like the landslip that struck the flank
of the Adige on this side Trent
on account of earthquake or lack of support,

where from the mountain-top from which
it started to the plain the rocks are so shattered
that they would give some footing for one above,

such was the descent of that ravine;
and on the edge of the broken chasm
was outstretched the infamy of Crete

that was conceived in the pretended cow.
And when he saw us he gnawed himself,
like one that bursts with inward rage.

My Sage cried to him: "Thou thinkest, perhaps,
that the Duke of Athens is here,
who in the world above gave thee thy death.

Get thee gone, beast, for this man
does not come tutored by thy sister,
but is on his way to see your pains."

Like the bull that breaks loose the moment
it has received its mortal stroke
and cannot go on but plunges this way and that,

so I saw the Minotaur do, and my Guide,
perceiving it, cried: "Run to the passage;
it is well thou descend while he is in fury."

So we took our way down that scree of stones,
which often moved under my feet
with the new weight.

I was going on in thought when he said:
“Thou are thinking, perhaps, of this ruined cliff
that is guarded by that bestial rage I quenched just now;

know then that the other time
I came down here into the nether Hell
this rock had not yet fallen.

But surely, if I reckon rightly,
it was a little before he came who carried off
from Dis the great spoil of the highest circle

that the deep, foul valley trembled on every side
so that I thought the universe felt love,
by which, as some believe,

the world has many times been turned to chaos;
and at that moment this ancient rock,
here and elsewhere, was thrown down thus.

But fix thine eyes below,
for the river of blood draws near in which are boiling
those that by violence do injury to others.”

O blind covetousness and foolish anger,
which in the brief life so goad us on and then,
in the eternal, steep us in such misery!

I saw a broad moat bent in a curve
so as to encircle the whole level,
just as my Escort had said,

and between it and the foot of the scarp
ran centaurs in line armed with arrows,
as they were accustomed on earth to follow the chase.

Seeing us coming down they all stopped
and three left the troop with bows and shafts
which they first selected,

and one cried from a distance: “To what torment
do you come, you that descend the slope?
Tell us from there; if not, I draw my bow.”

My Master said: "We will give our answer
to Chiron beside thee there.
Thy will was ever thus hasty, to thy hurt."

Then he touched me and said:
"That is Nessus, who died for the fair Dejanira
and himself avenged himself;

and he in the middle that looks down on his breast
is the great Chiron, who brought up Achilles;
and that other is Pholus, who was so full of anger.

Round the moat they go by thousands,
directing their arrows at any soul that draws itself
out of the blood farther than its guilt allots to it."

We drew near to these agile beasts
and Chiron took a dart and with the notch
put his beard back on his jaws,

and when he had uncovered his great mouth
he said to his companions: "Have you observed
that the one behind moves what he touches?

The feet of the dead are not wont to do so."
And my good Leader, who was now at his breast
where the two natures are joined, replied:

"He is indeed alive and, alone as he is,
I must show him the gloomy valley.
Necessity brings him here, not pleasure.

It was one that left her singing of hallelujahs
who laid on me this new task.
He is no robber, nor I a thievish spirit;

but, by that Power by which I move my steps
on so wild a track, give us one of thy band
whom we may keep beside,

that he may show us where the ford is
and carry this man over on his back,
for he is not a spirit to go through the air."

Chiron bent round on his right breast
and said to Nessus: "Go back and guide them then,
and if you meet another troop make it keep off."

We moved on then with the trusty guide
along the margin of the red boiling,
in which the boiled made piercing shrieks.

I saw people sunk to the eyebrows,
and the great Centaur said: "They are tyrants
who gave their hands to blood and plunder;

here they lament their ruthless crimes.
Here is Alexander and cruel Dionysius,
he that gave woeful years to Sicily;

and that brow with the hair so black is Ezzelino,
and that other that is fair Obizzo of Este,
who was indeed made an end of by his step-son in the world above."

Then I turned to the Poet,
and he said: "Let him be first with thee now
and me second."

A little farther on the Centaur stopped
above a crowd who appeared as far as the throat
issuing from that boiling stream, and he pointed out to us

a shade on one side alone and said:
"That one clove in God's bosom
the heart which still drips on the Thames."

Then I saw people who had the head
and also the whole chest out of the river,
and of these I recognized many.

So, more and more, the blood there became shallow
till it cooked only the feet;
and here was our passage of the moat.

"As on this side thou seest the boiling stream
diminish continually," said the Centaur,
"so I would have thee know

that on the other, more and more,
it deepens its bed till it comes again
to the place where tyranny must groan.

There Divine Justice stings that Attila
who was a scourge on earth,
and Pyrrhus, and Sextus,

and eternally milks the tears, unlocked by the boiling,
from Rinier of Corneto and Rinier Pazzo,
who on the highways made such strife.”

Then he turned back and crossed the ford again.

Inferno - Canto 13

Nessus had not yet reached the other side again
when we set out through a wood
which was not marked by any path.

No green leaves, but of dusky hue;
no smooth boughs, but knotted and warped;
no fruits were there, but poisonous thorns.

No brakes so harsh and dense
have these savage beasts that hate
the tilled lands between the Cecina and Corneto.

Here make their nests the loathsome Harpies
that drove the Trojans from the Strophades
with dismal presage of future ill;

they have wide wings and human necks and faces,
feet clawed and their great bellies feathered,
and they make lamentations on the strange trees.

And the good Master began to speak to me:
Before thou go farther know that thou art in the second
round and shalt be until thou come to the horrible sand;

look well, therefore, and thou shalt see
things which would discredit
my telling of them.”

I heard from every side wailings poured forth
and saw none that made them,
so that, all bewildered, I stopped.

I think he thought I thought
that all these voices among the trunks
came from people who were hiding from us,

so the Master said: “If thou break off
any little branch from one of these trees,
all thy present thoughts will prove mistaken.”

Then I put out my hand a little
and plucked a twig from a great thorn,
and its trunk cried: "Why dost thou tear me?"

And when it had turned dark with blood
it began again: "Why manglest thou me?
Hast thou no spirit of pity?"

We were men and now are turned to stocks;
thy hand might well have been more pitiful
had we been souls of serpents."

As a green brand that is burning
at one end drips from the other
and hisses with the escaping wind,

so from the broken splinter came forth
words and blood together; at which
I let fall the tip and stood as one afraid.

"If he could have believed before;
wounded soul, what he
had never seen but in my lines,

he would not have stretched forth his hand against thee,"
my Sage replied, "but the thing being incredible
made me prompt him to the deed which grieves myself.

But tell him who thou wast, so that, for some amends,
he may revive thy fame in the world above,
where he is permitted to return."

And the trunk said: "Thou so allurest me
with thy gentle speech that I cannot be silent, and let it
not burden you if I am beguiled into talk for a little.

I am he that held both the keys
of Frederick's heart and turned them,
locking and unlocking, so softly

that I kept nearly every other man from his secrets;
and I brought such faithfulness to the glorious office
that I lost for it sleep and strength.

The harlot that never turned her shameless eyes
from Caesar's household,
the common bane and the vice of courts,

inflamed all minds against me,
and those inflamed so inflamed Augustus
that happy honours turned to dismal woes.

My mind, in scornful temper
thinking by dying to escape from scorn,
made me, just, unjust to myself.

By the new roots of this tree I swear to you,
never did I break faith with my lord,
who was so worthy of honour;

and if either of you return to the world
let him establish my memory,
which still lies under the blow that envy gave it.”

The Poet waited a little, then said to me:
“Since he is silent do not miss the chance
but speak if thou wouldst question him further.”

To which I answered him: “Do thou ask him again
of what thou thinkest will satisfy me;
for I cannot, such pity fills my heart.”

He began again therefore: “So may the man
do freely for thee what thou askest of him,
may it please thee, imprisoned spirit,

to tell us further how the soul is bound
in these knots, and tell us, if thou canst,
whether from such members any is ever set free.”

Then the trunk blew hard,
and soon that wind turned into a voice:
“You shall be answered briefly.

When the fierce soul leaves the body
from which it has uprooted itself,
Minos sends it to the seventh depth.

It falls into the wood, not in a place chosen for it
but where fortune flings it.
It sprouts there like a grain of spelt

and rises to a sapling and to a savage tree;
then the Harpies, feeding on its leaves,
cause pain and for the pain an outlet.

Like the rest we shall go for the cast-off flesh we have left,
but not so that any of us will be clothed in it again,
for it is not just that one should have that of which he robs himself.

We shall drag them here
and through the dismal wood our bodies will be hung,
each on the bush of its injurious shade.”

We were still intent on the trunk,
thinking it had more to tell us,
when we were surprised by a noise,

like one aware of the boar and the chase
approaching his post when he hears the beasts
and the crashing of the branches;

and there on our left were two,
naked and scarred and flying so fast
that they broke through every entanglement of the wood.

He in front cried: “Now come, come quickly, death!”,
and the other, who seemed to be falling behind:
“Thy legs were not so nimble,

Lano, at the jousts of the Toppo,”
and, perhaps because breath failed him,
he crouched close in beside a bush.

Behind them the wood was full of black bitches,
ravenous and swift like hounds loosed from the chain;
on him that squatted there

they set their teeth
and tore him apart piecemeal,
then carried off these suffering members.

My Escort then took me by the hand and led me
to the shrub, which was making vain laments
through the bleeding fractures.

“O Giacomo da Sant' Andrea,” it said,
“how has it served thee to make a screen of me?
What blame have I for thy guilty life?”

When the Master stopped over it he said:
“Who wast thou that through so many wounds
blowest forth woeful speech with blood?”

And it said to us: “O souls that have arrived
to see the shameful havoc
that has thus torn my leaves from me,

gather them again at the foot of the wretched bush.
I was of the city that changed for the Baptist
its first patron, who for this

will always afflict it with his art;
and were it not that at the passage of the Arno
there yet remains some semblance of him,

those citizens who afterwards
rebuilt it on the ashes left by Attila,
would have laboured in vain.

I made a gibbet for myself of my house.”

Inferno - Canto 14

Since love of my native place constrained me,
I gathered up the scattered leaves
and restored them to him, who was already hoarse.

Then we came to the boundary
between the second round and the third,
where is seen a fearful device of justice.

To make the new things clear,
I have to tell that we reached a plain
that rejects every plant from its bed;

the doleful wood is a garland round it,
as round the wood the dismal moat.
Here, at the very edge, we stayed our steps.

The ground was a dry,
deep sand, much like
that once trod by the feet of Cato.

O vengeance of God,
how must thou be feared by everyone
who reads what was plain before my eyes!

I saw many herds of naked souls
who were all lamenting most miserably,
and different laws seemed to be laid on them,

some lying supine on the ground,
some sitting all crouched up,
and some moving on continually;

those going about were the greatest number
and those lying in torment fewest
but their tongues most loosed by the pain.

Over all the great sand, falling slowly,
rained down broad flakes of fire,
as of snow in the mountains without wind.

As Alexander, in the torrid Indian parts,
saw flames falling
on his host unbroken to the ground,

for which he had the soil trampled
by his troops to extinguish the vapours better
before they spread,

so the eternal fire was descending there
and the sand was kindled by it
like tinder under the flint, to redouble the pain.

There was no pause in the dance
of the wretched hands, now here, now there,
beating off from them the fresh burning.

I began: "Master, thou who overcomest all things
save the stubborn demons that came out against us
at the entrance of the gate,

who is that great one who seems as if
he did not heed the fire and lies disdainful
and scowling so that the rain seems not to soften him?"

And he himself, who had perceived
that I was asking my Leader about him, cried:
"What I was living, that am I dead.

Though Jove wear out his smith from whom
in rage he seized the keen bolt with which,
the last day, I was smitten –

though he wear out the rest by turns
at the black smithy in Mongibello,
shouting" "Help, help, good Vulcan!"

as once on the field of Phlegra,
and hurl his shafts at me with all his force,
he should not so have the joy of vengeance."

Then my Leader spoke with such force
as I had not heard him use before:
"Ah, Capaneus, in that thy pride

is unquenched thou art punished the more;
no torment but thy own raving
would be pain to match thy fury.”

Then he turned to me again with gentler look
and said: “That was one of the seven kings
who laid siege to Thebes and held, and seems to hold

God in disdain and seems to esteem Him lightly;
but his own revilings, as I told him,
most fittingly adorn his breast.

Come now after me, and watch still
not to put thy feet on the scorching sand
but keep them always close to the wood.”

In silence we came to where there gushes forth
from the wood a little stream
whose redness makes me shudder yet.

As issues from the Bulicame a rivulet
which the sinful women then divide among them,
so this took its way down across the sand;

its bed and both its banks were of stone,
with the margins alongside,
from which I perceived that the passage was there.

“In all the rest that I have shown thee
since we entered by the gate
whose threshold is denied to none

nothing has been given to thy eyes of such note
as this stream here,
which quenches all the flames above it.”

These were my Leader's words,
so that I begged him to grant me
the food for which he had granted me the appetite.

“In mid-sea lies a waste land named Crete,”
he said then, “under whose king
The world once was pure.

A mountain is there, once glad
with leaves and waters, which was called Ida;
now it is deserted like a thing outworn.

Rhea chose it once as the trusty cradle of her child,
and there, to conceal him better when he cried,
she made them raise an uproar.

Within the mountain stands a great old man,
who keeps his back turned to Damietta
and gazes on Rome as on his mirror;

his head is fashioned of fine gold,
his breast and arms are pure silver,
then to the fork he is of brass,

and from there down all of choice iron
except that the right foot is baked clay,
and he rests more on this than on the other.

Every part except the gold is cleft by a fissure
that drips with tears, which gather and
force their way down through the cavern there,

then take their course from rock to rock into this depth.
They form Acheron and Styx and Phlegethon,
then, going down by this narrow channel

to where there is no more descent,
they form Cocytus, and what kind of pond that is
thou shalt see, so that here I do not speak of it.”

And I said to him: “If the stream here
flows down thus from our world,
why does it appear to us only at this boundary?”

And he to me: “Thou knowest that the place is round,
and although thou hast come far,
always to the left in the descent to the bottom,

thou hast not yet gone round the whole circle;
so that if anything new appears to us
it need not bring wonder to thy face.”

And I again: "Master, where are Phlegethon and Lethe,"
for about the one thou art silent and the other,
thou sayest, comes from this rain of tears?"

"I am pleased indeed with all thy questions,"
he replied, "but the boiling of the red water
might well have solved one thou askest.

Lethe thou shalt see, but there beyond this abyss
where the souls go to bathe themselves
when their repented guilt is removed."

Then he said: "Now it is time to go on from the wood;
see that thou follow behind me.
The margins, which are not on fire, make a path
and above them all the flames are quenched."

Inferno - Canto 15

Now one of the hard margins bears us on and the vapour
from the stream makes a shade above so that
it shelters the water and the banks from the fire.

As the Flemings between Wissant and Bruges,
fearing the flood rushing in on them,
make their bulwark to drive back the sea,

and as the Paduans do along the Brenta
to protect their towns and castles
before Chiarentana feels the heat,

these were made of the same fashion,
except that the builder, whoever he was,
made them neither so high nor so broad.

Already we had got so far from the wood
that I should not have seen where it was
if I had turned backward,

when we met a troop of souls
who were coming alongside the bank,
and each looked at us as men look

at one another under a new moon at dusk,
and they puckered their brows on us
like an old tailor on the eye of his needle.

Eyed thus by that company,
I was recognized by one who took me by the hem
and cried: "How marvellous!"

And I, when he reached out his arm to me,
fixed my eyes on his baked looks
so that the scorched features did not keep

my mind from recognizing him and,
bending my face to his, I answered:
"Are you here, Ser Brunetto?"

And he: "O my son, let it not displease thee
if Brunetto Latini turn back with thee a little
and let the train go on."

I said to him: "With all my heart I beg it of you,
and if you wish me to sit with you I will,
if it please him here with whom I go."

"O son," he said, "whoever of this flock stops
one moment lies afterwards for a hundred years
without shielding himself when the fire strikes him.

Go on, therefore; I shall come at thy skirt
and later rejoin my band
who go mourning their eternal loss."

I durst not descend from the track to go on his level,
but I kept my head bent down
as one that walks with reverence,

and he began: "What chance or destiny
brings thee down here before thy last day,
and who is this that shows the way?"

"Up above there in the bright life,"
I answered him, "before my age was at the full,"
I lost my way in a valley.

Only yesterday morning I turned my back on it.
He appeared to me when I was returning to it
and by this road he leads me home."

And he said to me: "If thou follow thy star
thou canst not fail of a glorious haven,
if I discerned rightly in the fair life,

and had I not died too soon,
seeing heaven so gracious to thee
I would have strengthened thee in thy work.

But that thankless and malignant folk
which came down of old from Fiesole
and still keeps something of the mountain and the rock"

shall become, for thy well-doing, thine enemy, –
and with reason, for among the bitter sorbs
it is not natural the sweet fig should come to fruit.

Old fame in the world calls them blind,
a people avaricious, envious and proud;
see thou cleanse thyself from their ways.

Thy fortune holds for thee such honour
that the one party and the other shall be ravenous
against thee, but the grass shall be far from the goat.

Let the Fiesolan beasts make fodder of themselves
and not touch the plant –
if on their dung-heap any yet springs up –

in which there lives again the holy seed
of those Romans who remained there
when it became the nest of such wickedness.”

“Were all my prayers fulfilled,”
I answered him, “you had not yet
been banished from humanity;

for in my memory is fixed, and now goes to my heart,
the dear and kind paternal image of you
when many a time in the world

you taught me how man makes himself immortal;
and how much I am grateful for it my tongue,
while I live, must needs declare.

That which you tell of my course
I write and keep with another text for comment
by a lady who will know, if I reach her.

This much I would have plain to you, that,
so my conscience do not chide me,
I am ready for Fortune as she wills.

Such earnest of my lot is not new to my ears.
Turn Fortune her wheel then
as she list and the clown his mattock!”

On that my Master turned his head backward
on the right and looked at me, then said:
“He is a good listener who takes note.”

None the less I continued talking with Ser Brunetto
and asked him who of his companions
were of most note and dignity.

And he said to me: “Of some it is well to know;
of the rest it will be more creditable to be silent,
for the time would not serve for so much talk.

Know in a word that they were all clerks
and great and famous scholars,
defiled in the world by one and the same sin.

Priscian goes on with that wretched crowd,
and Francesco d'Accorso;
and if thou hast a craving for such scurf,

him thou mightst see there that was translated
by the Servant of the Servants from the Arno
to the Bacchiglione, where he left his sin-strained nerves.

I would say more, but I cannot go farther
talking with thee, for I see there
a new cloud rising from the sand;

people are coming with whom I must not be.
Let my *Treasure*, in which I yet live,
be commended to thee; and I ask no more.”

Then he turned about and seemed like one of those
that run for the green cloth in the field at Verona,
and he seemed

not the loser among them, but the winner.

Inferno - Canto 16

I was already at a point where the resounding
of the water that fell into the next circle
was heard like the hum of beehives,

when three shades set out together
running from a crowd
which was passing under the rain of fierce torment.

They came towards us, each crying:
“Stop thou, who by thy dress
seemest to be one from our degenerate city.”

Ah me, what wounds old and new I saw
in their members, burnt in by the flames!
It grieves me still only to remember them.

My Teacher listened to their cries,
then tuned his face to me and said:
“Wait, to these we must show courtesy,

and were it not for the fire
which the nature of the place discharges I would say
that haste is more fitting for thee than for them.”

As soon as we stopped they resumed their former pace,
and when they reached us
all three made a wheel of themselves

as champions are used to do, naked and oiled,
watching their advantage for a grip
before the exchange of thrusts and blows;

and thus wheeling each kept directing his face
towards me, so that they had both their neck
and their feet in continual movement.

And one began: “If the misery of this sandy place
and our aspect blackened and hairless
bring us and our petitions into contempt,

may our fame incline thy mind
to tell us who thou art that thus securely
movest living feet through Hell.

He in whose steps thou seest me tread,
though he goes naked and peeled,
was of greater station than thou thinkest;

he was grandson of the good Gualdrada,
Guido Guerra by name, and in his life
he did much with counsel and with sword.

The other, pressing the sand behind me,
is Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, whose voice
should have been heeded in the world above;

and I who am put with them in torment
was Jacopo Rusticacci, and truly my savage wife,
more than all else, has wrought me ill.”

Had I been sheltered from the fire
I would have thrown myself down among them
and I think my Teacher would have suffered it;

but since I should have been burnt and baked,
fear overcame my goodwill
which made me eager to embrace them.

Then I began: “Not contempt, but grief,
your condition fixed within me so deep
that it will be long before it wholly leaves me,

as soon as the words of my lord
here made me think
that such men as you were coming.

I am of your city, and your deeds and honoured names
I have always recounted
and heard with affection.

I am leaving the gall and going on for the sweet fruits
promised me by my truthful Leader;
but first I must go down to the centre.”

“So may the soul long direct thy members
and thy fame shine after thee,”
he replied in turn,

“tell us if courtesy and valour
abide in our city as they did,
or if they are quite gone from it;

for Guglielmo Borsiere, who has been a short time
in pain with us and goes yonder with our company,
afflicts us greatly with his words.”

“The new people and the sudden gains
have begot in thee, Florence, arrogance and excess
so that already thou weepst for it!”

This I cried with lifted face;
and the three, taking it for answer,
looked at each other as men stare on hearing the truth.

“If other times it costs thee as little to satisfy others,”
they all replied, “happy art thou,
speaking thus at thy pleasure.

Therefore if thou escape from these dark regions
and return to see again the beauty of the stars,
when it will rejoice thee to say ‘I was there,’

do thou speak of us to men.”
Then they broke the wheel and in their flight
their nimble legs seemed wings;

an Amen could not have been said
so quickly as they vanished.
It seemed good to the Master, therefore, to go on.

I followed him, and we had gone only a little way
when the sound of the water was so near
that we could scarcely have heard each other speak.

As that river which is the first
to hold its own course from Monte Vesio eastward
on the left slope of the Apennines –

called the Acquacheta above,
before it pours into its lower bed
and loses that name at Forli –

reverberates there over San Benedetto dell'Alpe
by falling at one bound
where there might well have been a thousand;

thus, down a precipitous bank,
we found that dark water resounding
so that before long it would have stunned our ears.

I had a cord girt about me,
with which I once thought to take the leopard
with the painted skin.

After I had loosed it from me completely
as my Leader bade,
I passed it to him coiled and knotted together;

then, swinging round on his right side,
he flung it some distance out from the edge
down into the depth of the abyss.

“Surely,” I said within myself, “something strange
must answer the strange signal
which the Master so follows with his eye.”

Ah, how careful men should be
with those who not only see the deed
but look with understanding into the thoughts!

He said to me: “Soon will come up
what I look for and what thy mind dreams of;
soon it must be discovered to thy sight.”

A man should always close his lips, as far as he can,
to the truth that has the face of a lie,
since without fault it brings him shame,

but here I cannot be silent; and by the strains
of this Comedy – so may they not fail
of lasting favour – I swear to thee, reader,

that I saw come swimming up
through that gross and murky air
a figure amazing to the stoutest heart,

even as he returns who goes down some time
to loose the anchor that is caught on a reef
or something else hid in the sea,

stretching upward and drawing in his feet.

Inferno - Canto 17 - Sinclair

“Lo, the beast with the pointed tail,
that passes mountains and breaks through walls
and arms! Lo, he that infects all the world!”

Thus my Leader began to speak to me,
and he beckoned him to come ashore
near the end of the stony causeway;

and that foul image of fraud
came on and landed his head and chest,
but did not draw his tail on to the bank.

His face was the face of a just man,
so gracious was its outward aspect,
and all the rest was a serpent's trunk;

he had two paws, hairy to the armpits,
and the back and breast and both the flanks
were painted with knots and circlets –

Tartars or Turks never made stuffs with more colours
in ground and embroidery,
nor were such webs laid by Arachne on the loom.

As boats sometimes lie at the shore,
part in the water and part on land,
and as there among the German gluttons

the beaver settles itself to take its prey,
so the vile brute lay on the rim
that bounds the great sand with stone.

All his tail was quivering in the void,
twisting upwards the poisonous fork
that armed the point like a scorpion's.

My Leader said: “Now we must bend
our way a little, as far as that malignant beast
that couches there.”

We descended, therefore, on our right
and went ten paces along the edge,
so as to keep well away from the sand and the flames;

and when we reached him
I saw people beyond sitting on the sand,
near where it falls away.

Here the Master said to me:
“That thou mayst carry away full experience
of this round, go and see their condition.

Let thy talk there be brief. Till thou return
I will speak with this creature
that he may lend us his strong shoulders.”

So I went by myself still farther
along the extreme edge of that seventh circle
to where the unhappy folk were seated.

Through the eyes their pain was bursting forth; on one side
and the other they defended themselves with their hands,
sometimes from the flames, sometimes from the burning soil,

like dogs in summer that ply,
now snout, now paw,
when they are bitten by fleas or gnats or gad-flies.

When I set my eyes on the faces
of some on whom the grievous fire was falling,
I did not know one of them;

but I observed that from the neck of each
hung a pouch of a certain colour and device,
and on these they seemed to feast their eyes.

And when I came among them,
looking about, I saw, azure on a yellow purse,
the face and form of a lion;

then continuing my inspection,
I saw another, blood-red,
which showed a goose whiter than butter.

And one that had a sow azure and gravid
stamped on his white wallet said to me:
“What dost thou in this pit?”

Take thyself off, and, since thou art still in life,
know that my townsman, Vitaliano,
will sit here on my left.

Among these Florentines I am of Padua;
many a time they din my ears, shouting:
“Let the sovereign knight come,

who will bring the pouch with the three goats!”
Then he writhed his mouth and thrust out his tongue,
like an ox that licks its nose,

and I, fearing lest a longer stay should anger him
who had warned me to make it short,
turned back from the weary souls.

I found my Leader already mounted
on the croup of the savage brute,
and he said to me: “Now be strong and bold.

The descent henceforth is by such stairs as this.
Mount in front, for I wish to be between
that the tail may not harm thee.”

As one so near the shivering-fit of the quartan
that his nails are already blue
and he trembles all over at the mere sight of shade,

such I became at these words of his;
but shame threatened me,
which makes a servant brave before a good master,

and I settled myself on those great shoulders.
I wished to say, but the voice did not come as I thought,
“See that thou embrace me!”

But he who succoured me another time
in another peril clasped me in his arms
as soon as I mounted and supported me,

then said: "Geryon, now move;
let the circles be wide and the descent slow;
remember the new burden thou hast."

As the bark backs out little by little from its place,
so Geryon drew out thence and,
when he felt himself quite clear, turned his tail

where his breast had been and,
stretching it out, moved it like an eel
and gathered in the air with his paws.

No greater fear, I think, had Phaeton
when he let go the reins
and the sky was scorched as it shows still,

nor wretched Icarus when he felt his sides
losing their wings by the melting wax and his father
cried to him: "Thou takest the wrong way,"

than was mine when I saw
that I was in the air on every side
and saw everything lost to sight except the beast.

He goes swimming slowly on, wheeling and descending,
but I am not conscious of it except for the wind
blowing in my face and from below.

I heard now on our right the torrent
making a hideous roar below us,
at which I stretched forth my head and looked down;

then I was more afraid for the dismounting,
for I saw fires and heard wailings,
so that I cowered back all trembling.

And I saw there – for I had not seen it before –
our descent and circling by the great torments
that drew near on every side.

As the falcon that has been long on the wing
and without sight of lure or bird
makes the falconer cry: "Alack, thou stoopest!"

descends weary, with a hundred wheels,
to where it set out swiftly, and alights,
angry and sullen, at a distance from its master,

so Geryon set us down at the bottom,
close to the foot of the jagged rock,
and, relieved of our weight,

vanished like an arrow from the string.

Inferno - Canto 18

There is a place in Hell called Malebolge,
all stone of iron colour
like the wall that goes round it.

Right in the middle of the baleful space
yawns a pit of great breadth and depth,
of whose structure I shall tell in its own place,

so that the belt left between the pit
and the high rocky bank is round,
and its bottom is divided into ten valleys.

As, where successive moats encircle a castle
to guard its walls, the space they occupy
presents a ground-plan,

such was the design these made there;
and as such fortresses have bridges
from their thresholds to the outside bank,

so from the base of the rock ran ridges
that struck across the dikes and ditches as far as the pit,
which cuts them short and gathers them in.

In this place we found ourselves,
dropped from Geryon's back,
and the Poet held to the left and I came on behind.

On our right hand I saw new anguish,
new torments and new scourgers,
for with these the first ditch was full.

The sinners at the bottom were naked.
On this side of the middle they came facing us,
and on the other along with us but with greater strides –

just as on account of the great throng
in the year of the Jubilee the Romans
took measures for the people to pass over the bridge,

so that all on the one side of it faced towards the Castle
and went to Saint Peter's
and on the other they went towards the Mount.

On this side and on that along the gloomy rock
I saw horned demons with great whips
lashing them cruelly behind.

Ah, how they made them lift their heels
at the first strokes! Truly none waited
for the second or the third.

While I was going on my eyes were met
by one of them, and I said quickly:
“Of him there I once saw enough;”

so that I held back my steps to make him out
and my gentle Leader stopped with me
and gave me leave to go back a little.

And that scourged soul thought to conceal himself,
lowering his face; but to little purpose, for I said:
“Thou casting thy eyes on the ground,

if the features thou bearest do not deceive me,
art Venedico Caccianemico.
But what brings thee into such a biting pickle?”

And he answered me: “Unwillingly I tell it;
but thy plain speech,
which makes me remember the old world, compels me.

It was I who brought Ghisolabella
to do the will of the Marquis,
however the vile story is told.

And I am not the only Bolognese lamenting here;
in truth this place is so full of them
that not so many tongues

have learned to say ‘sipa’ between the Savena and the Reno,
and if thou wouldst have evidence and confirmation of this,
recall to mind our avaricious hearts.”

While he was speaking a demon smote him
with his scourge and said:
“Off, pander! here are no women to coin.”

I rejoined my Escort;
then, with a few steps,
we came to where a ridge went out from the bank.

This we ascended without difficulty
and turning to the right on its crags
we left these eternal circlings.

When we were at the place where it yawns beneath
to give passage to those under the lash
the Leader said: “Stop, and let the sight

of these other ill-born souls fall on thee,
whose faces thou hast not yet seen
because they were going our way.”

From the ancient bridge we looked at
the train coming towards us on the other side,
driven with whips like the first;

and the good Master, without my asking,
said to me: “Look at that great one coming,
who for all his pain does not seem to shed a tear.

How kingly is his aspect still!
He is Jason, who by courage and craft
bereft the men of Colchis of the Fleece.

He passed by the isle of Lemnos
when the bold and pitiless women
had given all their men to death,

and there with tokens and fair words
he beguiled Hypsipyle,
the maid who before had beguiled all the rest.

He left her there pregnant and forlorn.
Such guilt condemns him to such torment,
and Medea too is avenged.

With him go all who deceive in like fashion,
and let this suffice for knowledge
of the first valley and of those it holds in its jaws.”

We were now at the place where the narrow track
cut across the second dike
and makes of that the abutment to another arch.

Here we heard people moaning in the next ditch,
puffing with their snouts
and smiting themselves with their palms.

The banks were crusted by the exhalation
from below with a mould that sticks on them
and is repugnant to eyes and nose,

and the bottom is so hollowed out that there is no place
from which to see it except by mounting
to the crown of the arch, where the ridge overhangs most.

We went there, and thence in the moat below
I saw people plunged in a filth
which seemed to have come from human privies,

and searching down there with my eyes
I saw one with his head so befouled with ordure
that it did not appear whether he was layman or cleric.

He shouted at me: “Why lookest thou
so greedily at me more
than at the others in their filth?”

And I answered: “Because, if I remember rightly, I saw thee once
with dry hair, and thou art Alessio Interminei of Lucca;
therefore I eye thee more than all the rest.”

Then he, beating on his crown:
“Down here my flatteries have sunk me
with which my tongue was never cloyed.”

After that the Leader said to me:
“Try to thrust thy head a little farther forward,
so as to get a right view of the face

of that foul and dishevelled drab
who is scratching herself there with her filthy nails
and is now squatting, now standing up.

It is Thais, the whore who answered her lover
when he said: "Have I much favour with thee?",
"Nay, beyond measure!"

And with that let our sight be satisfied.

Inferno - Canto 19

Ah, Simon Magus,
and you his wretched followers,
who, rapacious,

prostitute for gold and silver the things of God which
should be brides of righteousness, now must the trumpet
sound for you, for your place is in the third pouch.

We were now at the next tomb
and had climbed to thee part of the ridge
which hangs right over the middle of the ditch.

O Wisdom Supreme, how great is the art
Thou showest, in Heaven, on earth, and in the evil world,
and how justly does Thy power dispense!

I saw along the sides and on the bottom
the livid stone full of holes
all of one size, and each was round.

They seemed to me of a width not more or less
than those that were made in my beautiful Saint John
as fonts for baptism,

one of which, not many years ago, I broke
for one that was drowning in it –
and to this I set my seal, to clear the mind of everyone.

From the mouth of each
projected the feet of a sinner and the legs
as far as the calf, and the rest was inside;

all of them had both soles on fire, from which
their joints writhed with such violence
that they would have snapped withies or ropes.

As flame on oily things moves
only over the outer surface,
so it did there from the heels to the toes.

“Who is that one, Master, that writhes
in his torment more than any of his fellows,” I said,
“and is licked by a redder flame?”

And he answered me: “If thou wilt have me
carry thee down there by that more sloping bank,
thou shalt know from himself of him and of his misdeeds.”

And I: “All is well for me that is thy pleasure.
Thou art my Lord and knowest that I depart
not from thy will; thou knowest too what I do not speak.”

Then we came on to the fourth dike,
turned and descended on our left
down to the pitted and narrow bottom,

and the good Master did not set me down
from his haunch till he brought me
to the hole of him that so lamented with his shanks.

“Whoever thou art,” I began, “unhappy soul
that art held upside down,
planted like a post, if thou art able, speak.”

I stood there, like the friar that shrives
the treacherous assassin who after being fixed
calls him back so that he delays his death,”

and he cried: “Standest thou there already,
standest thou there already, Boniface?
By several years the writing lied to me.

Art thou so soon sated with these gains
for which thou didst not fear to take by guile
the Lady Beautiful and then to do her outrage?”

I became like those that stand as if mocked,
not comprehending the reply made to them,
and know not what to answer;

then Virgil said: “Tell him quickly,
‘I am not he, I am not he thou thinkest;’”
and I answered as I was bidden.

At that the spirit twisted his feet together,
then, sighing and with lamenting voice,
he said to me: "What dost thou want with me then?"

If to know who I am concerns thee so much
that thou hast come down the bank for it,
know that I was invested with the great mantle;

but in truth I was a son of the she-bear,
so greedy to advance the whelps that above
I pursed my gains, and here myself."

Beneath my head are dragged the others
who went before me in simony,
flattened through the fissures of the rock,

and down there I shall fall in my turn
when he comes for whom I took thee
when I put my hasty question.

But longer already is the time I have roasted my feet
and stood thus inverted
than he shall stay planted with his feet red;

for after him shall come a lawless shepherd
from the west of yet fouler deeds,
one fit to cover both him and me.

He shall be a new Jason, like him we read of
in the Maccabecs, and as with that one his king
dealt softly, so shall he that rules France do with him."

I do not know if on that I was overbold
when all my answer to him was in this strain:
"Pray tell me now; how much treasure

did our Lord require of Saint Peter
before He gave the keys into his charge?
Surely He asked nothing but 'Follow me,'

nor did Peter or the others take gold or silver
from Matthias when he was chosen
for the place lost by the guilty soul.

Stay there then, for thou art rightly punished,
and look well to the ill-got gain
that made thee bold against Charles.

And were it not that reverence for the supreme keys
which thou didst hold in the glad life
still forbids it to me,

I should use yet harder words;
for your avarice afflicts the world,
trampling on the good and exalting the wicked.

You shepherds it was the Evangelist had in mind
when she that sitteth upon the waters was seen by him
committing fornication with the kings,

she that was born with the seven heads
and had her strength from the ten horns
so long as her bridegroom took pleasure in virtue.

You have made you a god of gold and silver,
and what is there between you and the idolaters
but that they worship one and you a hundred?

Ah, Constantine, to how much evil gave birth,
not thy conversion,
but that dower the first rich Father had from thee!"

And while I sang this song to him,
whether bitten by anger or conscience
he kicked out hard with both feet.

I believe indeed it pleased my Leader,
he listened all the time with so satisfied a look
to the words of truth I uttered.

He took me, therefore, in both his arms
and when he had me right up on his breast
remounted by the way he had come down,

and he did not tire of holding me close to him
but carried me up to the summit of the arch
that crosses from the fourth dike to the fifth.

Here he gently set down his burden,
gently for the ruggedness and steepness of the ridge,
which would be a hard passage for goats.

From it another valley was disclosed to me.

Inferno - Canto 20

Of new pain I must make verses
and find matter for the twentieth canto
of the first book, which is of those in the depths.

I was now wholly set on looking
into the bottom disclosed there,
which was bathed with tears of anguish,

and I saw people along the great circular valley
coming, silent and weeping,
at the pace made by the litanies in this world.

As my sight went lower on them,
each seemed to be strangely twisted
between the chin and the beginning of the chest,

for the face was turned towards the loins
and they had to come backwards,
since seeing forward was denied them.

Perhaps some time by stroke of palsy
a man has been thus twisted right round,
but I have not seen it nor believe it possible.

So God grant thee, reader,
to gather fruit of thy reading,
think now for thyself how I could keep my cheeks dry

when I saw close at hand our form
so contorted that the tears from the eyes
bathed the buttocks at the cleft.

I wept indeed, leaning on one of the rocks
of the rugged ridge, so that my Escort said to me:
“Art thou too as witless as the rest?”

Here pity lives when it is quite dead.
Who is more guilty than he that makes
the divine counsel subject to his will?

Raise, raise thy head and see him for whom the earth
opened before the eyes of the Thebans,
so that they all shouted: "Where art thou rushing to,

Amphiaraus? Why dost thou quit the fight?"
And he did not stop in his plunge into the depth
as far as Minos, who seizes everyone.

Look how he has made a breast of his shoulders;
because he would see too far ahead
he looks behind and makes his way backwards.

See Tiresias, who changed semblance
when from male he turned female,
being transformed in every member,

and must strike the two twined serpents again
with his staff before he could resume
his manly plumes.

He that backs up to the other's belly is Aruns,
who in the hills of Luni,
where the Carrarese that live below till the ground,

had a cave among the white marbles for his dwelling;
looking from it at the stars and the sea
his prospect was without bound.

And she that covers her breasts,
which thou dost not see, with her loose tresses
and has on that side all her hairy parts

was Manto, who searched through many lands,
then settled in the place where I was born;
and on this I would have thee hear me for a little.

After her father had parted from life
and the city of Bacchus was enslaved,
she went for a long time about the world.

Above in fair Italy, at the foot of the mountains
that bound Germany over Tyrol,
lies a lake which is called Benaco.

By a thousand springs and more, I suppose,
Apennino is bathed between Garda and Val Camonica
by the water that settles in the lake there,

and in the middle of it is a spot where the pastors
of Trent and Brescia and Verona,
if they went that way, might give their blessing.

Peschiera, a strong and beautiful fortress
to confront the Brescians and the Bergamese,
lies at the lowest point of the surrounding shore,

and there all that cannot remain
in the bosom of Benaco must fall and becomes
a river flowing down through green pastures.

As soon as the water starts to run it is called
no longer Benaco, but Mincio,
as far as Governolo where it falls into the Po,

and after a short course it comes to a level
where it spreads and makes a marsh
that is sometimes noisome in summer.

Passing that way, the cruel virgin saw land
in the middle of the fen,
untilled and without inhabitants;

there, to avoid all human intercourse,
she stopped with her minions to ply her arts
and lived and left there her empty body.

Afterwards the people that were scattered round about
gathered on that spot, which was strong
because of the bog it had on every side,

and they built the city over those dead bones,
and from her who first chose the place
called it Mantua, without other augury.

Once the people within it were more numerous,
before the folly of Casalodi
was tricked by Pinamonte.

I charge thee, therefore, that if ever
thou hear of another origin of my city
thou let no false tale pervert the truth.”

And I said: “Master, thy account is so sure
for me and so holds my confidence
that any other would be for me dead embers.

But tell me of the people that are passing,
if thou see any who are worthy of note,
for to that alone my mind reverts.”

Then he said to me: “He that from his cheeks
spreads his beard over his swarthy shoulders
was augur when Greece was left so empty of males

that scarcely any remained for the cradles,
and with Calchas he gave the moment
for cutting the first cable in Aulis.

Eurypylus was his name, and thus my high tragedy
sings of him in a certain passage –
as thou knowest well, who knowest it altogether.

That other, so spare in the flanks,
was Michael Scot,
who assuredly knew the game of magic frauds.

See Guido Bonatti; see Asdente,
who now would fain have given his mind
to the leather and the thread, but repents too late.

See the wretched women who gave up the needle,
the shuttle, and the distaff and turned fortune-tellers;
they wrought spells with herbs and images.

But come now, for Cain with his thorns
already holds the confines of both hemispheres
and touches the waves below Seville,

and already last night the moon was round.
Thou must remember it well, for it helped thee
sometimes in the depth of the wood.”

While he talked thus with me we went on our way.

Inferno - Canto 21

Thus from bridge to bridge,
talking of other things of which
my Comedy is not concerned to sing,

we came on and reached the summit,
when we stopped to see the nest fissure of Malebolge
and the next vain tears; and I saw it strangely dark.

As in the Arsenal of the Venetians
they boil the viscous pitch in winter
to caulk their unsound ships –

for they cannot sail them, and instead
one builds himself a new ship and another
plugs the ribs of his that has made many voyages,

one hammers at the prow and another at the stern,
this tins makes oars, that one twists ropes,
another patches jib and mainsail;

so, not by fire but by divine art,
a thick tar was boiling below there
which stuck to the bank on every side.

I saw it, but saw in it nothing but the bubbles
raised by the boiling and the whole swelling up
and settling together again.

While I was gazing fixedly down there,
my Leader, saying: “Beware, beware!”,
drew me to him from where I stood;

then I turned like one that is eager
to see what he must escape
and is unmanned with sudden fear

and while looking does not stay his flight,
and I saw behind us a black devil
come running up the ridge.

Ah, how savage was his aspect
and how fierce he seemed to me in his action,
with open wings and light on his feet!

His shoulder, which was sharp and high,
was laden with both thighs of a sinner
and he held him clutched by the tendons of his feet.

He spoke from our bridge: "You Malebranche,"
here is one of the Ancients of Santa Zita;
put him under, while I go back for more to that city,

which is well stocked with them.
Every man there is a barrator, all but Bonturo;
there *No* is made *Ay* for cash."

He flung him down and turned back
on the flinty ridge, and never
was unleashed mastiff in such haste to follow the thief.

The sinner plunged in and rose again doubled up,
but the demons that were covered by the bridge cried:
"The Holy Face is not here for thee."

Here the swimming is not like that in the Serchio;
so, unless thou wouldst taste of our hooks,
do not come out above the pitch."

Then they caught at him with more than a hundred gaffs
and said: "Thou must dance here
under cover and pilfer out of sight, if thou canst."

Just so cooks make their scullions
plunge the meat down into the cauldrons
with their forks that it may not float.

The good Master said to me: "That thou mayst not
be seen to be here, crouch down behind a rock
that may give thee some shelter,

and for any outrage that may be offered to me
do not thou be afraid, for I know about things here
and was in a fray of the kind another time."

Then he went on past the head of the bridge,
and as soon as he came on to the sixth bank
he had need to show a bold front.

With the fury and uproar of dogs
that rush out on a mendicant
who suddenly begs where he stops

these rushed out from under the bridge
and turned all their hooks against him.
But he cried: "Let there be no mischief from any of you.

Before you catch me with your forks
one of you come forward and hear me;
then consult about hooking me."

All cried: "Let Malacoda go." So one moved,
the rest standing still, and came to him, saying:
"What good will it do him?"

"Thinkest thou, Malacoda," said my Master,
"thou seest me come here secure thus far
against all your defences

without Divine Will and propitious fate?
Let us pass, for it is willed in Heaven
that I show another this savage way."

Then his insolence was so fallen
that he let the fork drop at his feet and said to the rest:
"He must not be touched then."

And my Leader said to me: "Thou that sittest
crouching down among the rocks of the bridge,
it is safe now for thee to come back to me."

And on that I rose and came to him quickly,
and the devils all pushed forward
so that I feared for their keeping of the compact;

thus I once saw the soldiers that marched out
of Caprona under treaty afraid
at seeing themselves among so many enemies.

I drew near my Leader, pressing close to him,
and did not turn my eyes from their looks,
which were not pleasant;

and they lowered their prongs, one saying:
“Wilt thou that I touch him on the rump?”
and another answering: “Ay, let him have it.”

But that demon who held speech with my Leader
turned round sharply and said:
“Hold, hold, Scarmiglione!”

Then he said to us: “To go farther by this ridge
is not possible, for the sixth arch
lies all broken up at the bottom,

but if it is still your pleasure to go on
make your way along this rocky dike;
there is another ridge near which gives a passage.

Yesterday, five hours later than now,
completed a thousand, two hundred and sixty-six years
since the road here was broken.”

I am sending that way some of my company here,
to look if any is out taking the air.
Go with them, for they will not molest you.

Come forward, Alichino and Calcabrina,”
he went on, “and thou Cagnazzo,
and let Barbariccia direct the squad;

let Libicocco come too, and Draghignazzo,
Ciriatto with the tusks, and Graffiacane,
and Farfarello, and mad Rubicante.

Scout round the boiling tar.
Let these be safe as far as the next ridge
that goes unbroken all the way over the dens.”

“Ah me, Master,” I said, “what is that I see?
Pray, if thou know the way, let us go alone
without escort; for on my part I want none.

If thou art as wary as thou art wont,
dost thou not see them grinding their teeth
and threatening mischief to us with their brows?"

And he said to me: "I will not have thee fearful.
Let them go on grinding as they please,
for they do it on account of the boiled wretches."

They wheeled round by the dike on the left;
but first each pressed his tongue between his teeth
at their leader for a signal

and he made a trumpet of his rear.

Inferno - Canto 22

I have seen before now horsemen move camp,
and open the attack,
and make their muster, and at times go off in flight;

I have seen scouts over your land, Aretines;
and I have seen the movements of raiding-parties,
dash of tournaments and running of jousts,

now with trumpets and now with bells,
with drums and with castle signals
and devices our own and foreign;

and never yet have I seen horsemen move
at so strange a bugle, nor footmen,
nor ship sailing by mark of land or star.

We went with the ten demons;
savage company indeed, but “in church
with saints and with guzzlers in the tavern.”

My attention was all on the pitch,
to see every feature of the moat
and of the people that were burning in it.

Like dolphins when with their arching back
they give sailors a sign
to take measures for saving their ship,

so from time to time one of the sinners
would show his back to ease his pain
and hide it again quicker than a lightning-flash;

and as frogs lie in a ditch at the water's edge
with only the muzzle out so as to hide
their feet and the rest of their bulk,

the sinners were lying all about,
but as soon as Barbariccia came near
they drew back under the boiling.

I saw – and my heart yet shudders at it –
one linger thus, as it chanced
when one frog remains and another dives,

and Graffiacane, who was just opposite him,
hooked him by the tarry locks and drew him up,
so that he seemed to me an otter.

I already knew the names of all of them,
I had noted them so well when they were chosen
and then observed what they called each other.

“See thou get thy claws on him, Rubicante,
and take the skin off him,”
the accursed creatures shouted all together;

and I said: “My Master, pray learn, if thou canst,
who is the hapless wretch
that has fallen into the hands of his enemies.”

My Leader went beside him and asked him
whence he was, and he replied:
“I was born in the Kingdom of Navarre.

My mother put me in the service of a lord,
for she had borne me to a wastrel
who made an end of himself and of his fortune;

then I was in the household of the good King Thibault
and there gave myself to the practice of barratry,
for which I pay the reckoning in this heat.”

And Ciriatto, from whose mouth
came out a tusk on each side like a boar's,
let him feel how one of them could rip.

The mouse had fallen among wicked cats,
but Barbariccia caught him in his arms and said:
“Stand off while I grip him,”

then turned his face to my Master and said:
“Ask on, if thou wouldst learn more from him
before another mangles him.”

My Leader said therefore: "Tell us then,
of the other sinners beneath the pitch
knowest thou any that is Italian?" And he:

"I parted just now from one that was a neighbour
of theirs. Would I were still under cover with him
so that I should not fear claw or hook!"

And Libicocco said: "We have borne too much,"
and took him by the arm with his gaff
so that he tore it and carried off a muscle;

Draghignazzo too tried to take hold of him below
by the legs, at which their captain
wheeled round on them all with ugly looks.

When they were somewhat quieted,
my Leader without delay
asked him that was still gazing at his wound:

"Who is he from whom,
as thou sayest, thou didst part
unluckily to come ashore?"

And he replied: "It was Fra Gomita, he of Gallura, a
vessel of every fraud, who had his lord's enemies in his
hand and so dealt with them that all speak well of him;

he 'took the cash and let them off quietly,"
as he says, and in other affairs too
he was no small barrator but a lordly one.

Don Michael Zanche of Logodoro
keeps company with him and in talking of Sardinia
their tongues are never weary.

Oh me, see that other grinding his teeth!
I would tell thee more,
but I fear he is preparing to scratch my scarf."

And the great marshal, turning to Farfarello
who was rolling his eyes to strike, said:
"Take thyself off there, villainous bird!"

“If you would see or hear Tuscans or Lombards,”
the frightened spirit then began again,
“I will make some of them come;

but let the Malebranche hold back a little
so that they may not fear their vengeance,
and I, remaining on this same spot, for one that I am

will make seven come
when I whistle, as our custom is
when any of us gets out.”

Cagnazzo, when he heard that, lifted his snout
and shook his head, saying: “Hear the trick
he has thought of for throwing himself down!”

To which, having great store of devices, he replied:
“I am over-tricky indeed,
in getting more trouble for my friends!”

Alichino could not hold in, but in spite of the others
said to him: “If thou drop down
I will come after thee, not at a gallop

but swooping on my wings over the pitch.
Let us leave the top and make a screen of the dike
and see if by thyself thou art more than a match for us.”

Now, reader, thou shalt hear new sport.
All turned their eyes towards the other slope,
he first that had been most loth to consent.

The Navarrese chose his time well,
planted his feet on the ground,
and with a sudden leap broke away from the marshal;

at which they were all shriven with self-reproach,
but he most that was the cause of the blunder,
so that he started out, crying: “Thou art caught!”

But it availed him little, for wings could not
outstrip terror. The one went under
and the other lifted his breast, flying upward.

Just so the wild duck instantly plunges under
on the approach of the falcon,
which turns upward again, vexed and dispirited.

Calcabrina went flying after him,
furious at the trick but eager
for the sinner to escape so as to have a scuffle,

and as soon as the barrator had disappeared
he turned his claws on his fellow
and got to grips with him over the ditch;

but the other was indeed a full-grown hawk
to claw him well and both fell
into the middle of the boiling pond.

The heat unclutched them in a moment;
but yet there was no getting out,
they had so beglued their wings.

Barbariccio, lamenting with the rest,
made four of them fly to the other bank,
each with his fork, and with all speed they descended

on this side and that to their posts. They pushed out
their gaffs to the two that were limed,
who were already cooked within their crust;

and we left them in that broil.

Inferno - Canto 23

Silent, alone, without escort, we went on,
one before and the other after,
as Friars Minor take their way.

My thoughts were turned
by the present quarrel on the fable of Aesop
where he told of the frog and the mouse;

for *mo* and *issa* are not more alike than the one case
and the other, if we compare the beginning
and the end attentively.

And as one thought springs out of another,
so from that one another was born in turn
which redoubled my former fear.

I thought, they are fooled because of us,
and with such hurt and mockery
as, I believe, must greatly vex them,

and if anger is added to ill-will
they will come after us savager than a dog
snapping at a leveret.

Already I felt my hair all bristling with fear
and I stood looking back intently, when I said:
“Master, unless thou quickly hide

thyself and me I am in terror of the Malebranche;
we have them after us already.
I so imagine them that already I hear them.”

And he said: “Were I of leaded glass,
I should not draw to me thy outward semblance
sooner than I receive thy inward;

just now thy thoughts joined with mine,
being alike in action and aspect,
so that of both I have made one sole counsel.

If it be that the slope on the right lies so
that we can descend into the next ditch,
we shall escape from the chase we imagine.”

He had not yet finished telling me his plan
when I saw them coming with outstretched wings,
not far off, meaning to take us.

My Leader caught me instantly,
like a mother who is wakened by the noise
and sees beside her the flames kindled

and catches up her child and flies
and, more concerned for him than herself,
does not stay even to put on a shift;

and down from the ridge of the stony bank,
lying on his back, he let himself go on the sloping rock
that encloses the next ditch on one side.

Never ran water so fast through a sluice
to turn the wheel of a land-mill
when coming nearest to the blades,

as my Master went down that bank,
bearing me along with him on his breast
not as a companion but as his child.

Hardly had his feet reached the bed
of the depth below when they were on
the height right over us; but there was nothing to fear,

for the high providence which willed
to set them as ministers of the fifth ditch
deprives them all of power to leave it.

There below we found a painted people
who were going round with very slow steps,
weeping and looking weary and overcome.

They had cloaks with cowls down
over their eyes, of the cut
that is made for the monks of Cluny,

so gilded outside that they were dazzling,
but within all lead and so heavy that those Frederick
imposed were of straw. O toilsome mantle for eternity!

We turned again, still to the left,
along with them,
intent on their wretched weeping,

but on account of the load
that weary people came on so slowly
that we were in new company with each step we took;

I said therefore to my Leader:
“Pray find someone that is known
by deed or name, looking round as we go.”

And one who caught the Tuscan speech
cried after us: “Stay your steps,
you that haste so through the dusky air;

perhaps thou shalt have from me what thou askest.”
At which my Leader turned round and said:
“Wait, and then go on at his pace.”

I stopped and saw two showing by their looks
the great haste of their mind to join me,
but the load and the crowded way delayed them.

When they came up they gazed sideways at me
for a while without uttering a word,
then turned to each other and said:

“This man seems alive, by the working of his throat,
and if they are dead by what privilege
do they go uncovered with the heavy stole?”

Then they said to me: “O Tuscan, who art come
to the assembly of the hypocrites of a sad countenance,
do not disdain to tell us who thou art.”

And I said to them: “I was born and grew up
on the fair stream of Arno, in the great city,
and am with the body I have always had,

but who are you down whose cheeks
such pain distills as I see,
and what penalty is upon you that glitters so?"

And one of them answered me: "The orange cloaks
are of lead, so thick that the weight
makes their balances creak thus.

We were Jovial Friars and Bolognese,
I Catalano and he Loderingo by name,
and we were chosen together by thy city,

where it was the custom to take one man alone,
to keep the peace, and what we were
may still be seen round the Gardingo."

I began: "O Friars, your evil deeds" –
but I said no more, for there caught my eye
one crucified on the ground with three stakes.

When he saw me he writhed all over,
blowing in his beard with sighs;
and Fra Catalano, observing it,

said to me: "That transfixed one thou art looking at
counselled the Pharisees that it was expedient
to make one man suffer for the people.

He is stretched naked, as thou seest,
across the way and must feel the weight
of each that passes;

and in the same fashion his father-in-law is racked
in this ditch, and the rest of that council
which was a seed of evil for the Jews."

Then I saw Virgil marvelling over him
that was stretched crosswise
so vilely in the eternal exile.

Then he directed his words to the Friar:
"May it please you, if it is permitted,
to tell us if there lies any passage on the right

by which we two can go out from here,
without requiring some of the black angels
to come and take us from this bottom.”

He replied then: “Nearer than thou hopest
is a ridge of rock that starts from the great
encircling wall and spans all the cruel valleys,

except that at this one it is broken down and does not
go over it. You will be able to mount by the ruin
that slopes against the side and is piled up on the bottom.”

My Leader stood for a moment with bent head,
then said: “An ill account of the business he gave
that hooks the sinners over there.”

And the Friar: “I once heard them tell in Bologna
of the Devil's many vices, among which
I heard that he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Then my Leader went on with great strides,
his looks disturbed somewhat with anger;
so I left these burdened souls,

following the prints of the dear feet.

Inferno - Canto 24

In that part of the youthful year when the sun
refreshes his locks under Aquarius and already
the long nights are moving away to the south,

when the rime copies on the ground
the likeness of her white sister
but her pen does not long keep its point,

the peasant who is short of fodder rises and looks out
and sees the fields all white,
at which he smites his thigh, turns back

into the house and goes here and there
complaining like a poor wretch
that knows not what is to be done,

then comes back and gathers hope again when he sees
how in a little time the world has changed its face,
and grasps his staff and drives forth his sheep to pasture;

thus the Master made me lose heart
when I saw his brow so clouded
and thus quickly came the plaster to the hurt,

for as soon as we reached the shattered bridge
my Leader turned to me with that sweet look
which I saw first at the foot of the mountain.

He opened his arms,
having chosen some plan in his mind,
first examining the ruin well, and took hold of me;

and like one that works and reckons and seems always
to provide beforehand, so, while lifting me up
towards the top of one great boulder,

he was looking out another rock,
saying: "Take hold of that next,
but try first if it will bear thee."

It was no way for one wearing the mantle,
for we – he light and I pushed –
could hardly mount from jag to jag,

and had it not been that on that dike
the slope was shorter than on the other,
I do not know for him,

but I should have been quite beaten;
but since all Malebolge inclines
towards the mouth of the nethermost pit,

the lie of each of the valleys makes one side higher
and the other lower. We did at length come up
to the point where the last stone breaks off,

and the breath was so spent from my lungs
when I was up that I could go no farther,
but sat down as soon as I got there.

“Now must thou thus cast off all sloth,”
said the Master, “for sitting on down
or under blankets none comes to fame,

and without it he that consumes his life
leaves such trace of himself on earth
as smoke in air or foam on the water.

Rise, therefore, conquer thy panting
with the soul, which conquers in every battle
if it sink not with its body's weight.

There is a longer stair which must be climbed;
it is not enough to have left these spirits.
If thou understandest me, act now so that it profit thee.”

I rose then, showing myself better furnished
with breath than I felt, and said:
“Go, for I am strong and fearless.”

We took our way up the ridge, which was craggy
and narrow and difficult and far steeper
than the last, and I talked as I went,

so as not to seem faint; at which a voice came forth
from the next ditch, not able to articulate.
I do not know what it said,

though I was already on the crown
of the arch that crosses there,
but he that spoke seemed to be moved with anger.

I had bent downward, but my keen gaze could not
reach the bottom for the dark; I said therefore:
“Pray, Master, go on to the next encircling bank

and let us descend the wall, for from this point
I not only hear without understanding
but I look down and distinguish nothing.”

“I give thee no answer,” he said,
“but to do it, for a fair request
should be followed by the deed in silence.”

We descended at the end of the bridge
where it joins the eighth bank
and then the ditch was plain to me,

and there within it I saw a fearful throng of serpents
and of kinds so strange
that the memory yet chills my blood.

Let Lybia with her sands boast no more;
for if she breeds chelydri, jaculi and phareae
and cenchres with amphisbaena

she never showed plagues so many
or so malignant, with all Ethiopia
and the regions on the Red Sea.

Among this cruel and most dismal swarm
ran people naked and terrified,
without hope of hiding-place or heliotrope.

They had their hands tied behind with serpents.
These thrust through their loins the head and tail,
which were knotted in front.

And lo, on one that was at our bank
sprang a serpent which transfixed him at the point
where the neck is joined to the shoulders,

and never was *I* or *O* written so fast
as he took fire and burnt
and must sink all turned to ashes;

and when he was on the ground thus dissolved
the dust drew together of itself
and took instantly the same form again.

Thus it is agreed by the great sages that
the phoenix, when she approaches
her five-hundredth year, dies and then is born again;

in her lifetime she feeds neither on herbs nor grain,
but only on teats of frankincense and of balsam,
and nard and myrrh are her last winding-sheet.

And as one that falls, not knowing how,
by force of a devil dragging him to the ground
or by some vital obstruction that binds a man,

and when he rises stares about him
all bewildered with the great anguish
he has suffered, and sighs as he looks;

such was the sinner when he rose.
Ah, the power of God, how stern it is,
pouring forth such strokes for vengeance!

Then my Leader asked him who he was,
to which he answered: "I rained from Tuscany
not long since into this wild gullet.

A beast's life pleased me, not a man's,
mule as I was. I am Vanni Fucci, the Beast,
and Pistoia vitas my fitting den."

And I said to my Leader: "Tell him not to slip off,
and ask what crime thrust him down here,
for I saw him a man of blood and rage."

And the sinner, who heard, did not dissemble,
but set his mind and his look on me
and coloured with wretched shame,

then said: "I suffer more that thou hast caught me
in the misery in which thou seest me
than when I was taken from the other life.

I may not refuse to answer thy question.
I am put down so far because I was a thief
in the Sacristy of the Fair Ornaments

and then it was laid falsely on another.
But lest thou rejoice in this sight,
if ever thou go forth from the dark regions,

open thy ears to what I declare to thee, and hear.
Pistoia first thins herself of Blanks,
then Florence renews her people and her ways.

Mars draws a vapour from Val di Magra,
which is wrapt in turbid clouds,
and with a violent and bitter storm

battle shall be joined on the field of Piceno,
where the fire shall burst of a sudden through
the cloud so that every White shall be struck by it.

And I have told it that it may grieve thee."

Inferno - Canto 25

At the end of his words the thief
lifted up his hands with both the fists crying:
“Take that, God, for at Thee I square them!”

From that time forth the serpents were my friends,
for one coiled itself then about his neck,
as if to say: “I will not have thee say more,”

and another about his arms and bound him again,
so riveting itself in front
that he could not make a motion with them.”

Ah, Pistoia, Pistoia, why dost thou not resolve
to burn thyself to ashes and to last no longer,
since thou surpasses thy own seed in wickedness?”

Through all the dark circles of Hell
I saw no spirit so arrogant against God,
not him that fell from the walls at Thebes.

He fled, not speaking another word,
and I saw a centaur full of rage come shouting:
“Where is he, where is the hardened wretch?”

Maremma has not, I believe,
as many snakes as he had on his croup
up to where our form begins,

and on his shoulders, behind the nape,
lay a dragon with open wings
which sets on fire whoever encounters it.

My Master said: “That is Cacus,
who beneath the rock of Mount Aventine
made many a time a lake of blood.

He does not go in the same road
with his brothers, for his fraud
in stealing the great herd that lay near him,

and for that his crooked ways were ended
under the club of Hercules, who gave him,
perhaps, a hundred blows, and he felt not ten.”

While he spoke the Centaur ran past
and three spirits came beneath us,
of whom neither I nor my Leader was aware

until they cried: “Who are you?”;
on which our talk broke off
and we gave all our heed to them.

I did not know them; but it happened,
as often happens by some chance,
that one had to name another, and he said:

“Where can Cianfa have stopped?” And at that,
so that my Leader should remain attentive,
I laid my finger from chin to nose.

If, reader, thou art now slow to credit what I shall tell,
it will be no wonder,
for I who saw it scarcely admit it to myself.

While I kept my eyes on them,
lo, a serpent with six feet darts up
in front of one and fastens on him all over;

with the middle feet it clasped the paunch
and with those in front seized the arms,
then set its fangs in the one cheek and the other;

the hind feet it spread on the thighs
and thrust its tail between them
and stretched it up over the loins behind.

Never was ivy so rooted to a tree
as the horrid beast intertwined
the other's members with its own;

then, as if they had been of hot wax, they stuck together
and mixed their colours and neither the one nor the other
appeared now what it was before;

thus spreads over the paper before the flame
a dark colour that is not yet black,
and the white dies off.

The other two were looking on and each cried:
“O me, Agnello, how thou changest!
Lo, thou art now neither two nor one!”

Now the two heads had become one,
when the two shapes appeared to us blended
in one face in which the two were lost;

two arms were made of the four lengths;
the thighs with the legs, the belly and the chest,
became such members as were never seen.

Each former feature was blotted out;
the perverted shape seemed both and nether,
and such, with slow pace, it moved away.

As the lizard under the great scourge
of the dog-days, passing from hedge to hedge,
seems lightning if it cross the way,

so appeared, making for the bellies of the other two,
a small, fiery serpent,
livid, and black as a pepper-corn;

and that part by which we first receive
our nourishments it transfixed in one of them,
then fell down before him stretched out.

The one transfixed stared at it, but said nothing,
only stood still and yawned,
as if sleep or fever had come upon him.

He kept looking at the serpent and it at him;
the one from the wound, the other from the mouth,
smoked violently, and their smoke met.

Let Lucan now be silent with his tales
of wretched Sabellus and Nasidius,
and let him wait to hear what now comes forth!

Let Ovid be silent about Cadmus and Arethusa;
for if in his lines he turns him into a serpent
and her into a fountain, I do not grudge it to him,

for two natures face to face
he never so transmuted that both kinds
were ready to exchange their substance.

They responded mutually in such order
that the serpent split its tail into a fork
and he that was wounded drew his footprints together,

the legs with the thighs adhering to each other
of themselves so that soon
there was no mark of the juncture to be seen;

the divided tail took the shape
that was lost there and its skin
turned soft and the other's hard.

I saw the arms draw in at the armpits
and the brute's two paws, which were short,
lengthen as much as these shortened;

then the hind-paws, twisted together,
became the member man conceals,
and from his the wretch had put forth two feet.

While the smoke veils the one and the other
with new colour and on the one hand
brings out the hair and on the other strips it off,

the one rose and the other fell down,
but neither turned aside the baleful lamps
beneath which they exchanged visages.

He that was erect drew his towards the temples,
and out of the excess of matter that came there
the ears issued from the baby cheeks;

that which did not run back and was retained
made of that excess a nose for the face
and thickened the lips to the due size.

He that was lying down drives the snout forward
and draws back the ears into the head
as the snail does its horns, and the tongue,

which was whole and fit for speech before,
divides, and the forked one of the other
joins up, and the smoke stops.

The soul that was become a brute
fled hissing along the valley,
the other talking and spitting after it.

Then he turned on it his new shoulders
and said to the other shade: "I'll have Buoso
run on all fours, as I have done, along this road."

Thus I saw the seventh ballast change
and interchange, and let the newness of it
be my plea if in anything my pen be at fault.

And although my eyes were somewhat confused
and my mind bewildered, these could not fly
so secretly that I did not clearly make out

Puccio the Cripple, and he was the only one
of the three companions that came first
who was not changed;

the other was he for whom, Gaville, thou dost mourn.

Inferno - Canto 26

Rejoice, Florence, since thou art so great
that over land and sea thou beatest thy wings
and through Hell thy name is spread abroad!

Among the thieves I found five such citizens
of thine that shame for them comes on me
and thou risest not to great honour by them.

But if near morning our dreams are true,
thou shalt feel ere long that which Prato,
not to say others, craves for thee;

and were it come already it would not be too soon.
Would it were, since indeed it must,
for it will weigh the more on me the more I age.

We set out, and, on the stairs which
the projecting rocks had made for our descent before,
my leader mounted again and drew me up,

and, following the lonely way among the rocks
and splinters of the ridge,
the foot made no speed without the hand.

I grieved then and grieve now anew
when I turn my mind to what I saw,
and more than I am wont I curb my powers

lest they run where virtue does not guide them,
so that, if favouring star or something better have
granted me such boon, I may not grudge it to myself.

As many as the fire-flies which the peasant
resting on the hill – in the season when he that lights
the world least hides his face from us and at the hour

when the fly gives place to the gnat –
sees along the valley below, in the fields,
perhaps, where he gathers the grapes and tills;

with so many flames the eighth ditch
was all gleaming, as I perceived
as soon as I came where the bottom was in sight.

And as he that was avenged by the bears
saw the chariot of Elijah at his departure
when the horses reared and rose to heaven,

who could not follow it with his eyes
so as to see anything but the flame alone
like a little cloud mounting up;

so each flame moves along
the gullet of the ditch, for none shows
the theft and every one steals away a sinner.

I was standing on the bridge, having risen up to see,
so that if I had not taken hold of a rock
I should have fallen below without a push;

and my Leader, who saw me so intent, said:
“Within the flames are the spirits;
each is swathed in that which burns him.”

“My Master,” I replied, “by hearing thee
I am more certain, but already I thought it was so,
and I already wished to ask thee

who is in that fire which comes so cloven at the top
that it seems to rise from the pyre
where Eteocles was laid with his brother.”

He answered me: “Within there are tormented
Ulysses and Diomed, and thus together
they go under vengeance as once under wrath,

and within their flame they groan for the ambush
of the horse that made the gateway by which
the noble seed of the Romans went forth;

they lament within it the craft on account of which
Deidamia dead still mourns Achilles,
and there is borne the penalty for the Palladium.”

If they are able to speak within these lights,”
I said, “I earnestly pray thee, Master,
and pray again that my prayer avail a thousandfold

that thou do not forbid me to stay
till the horned flame comes near;
thou seest how I bend toward it with desire.”

And he said to me: “Thy prayer
deserves much praise, therefore I consent to it.
But do thou restrain thy tongue.

Leave it to me to speak, for I have understood
what thou wishest; for perhaps,
since they were Greeks, they would disdain thy speech.”

After the flame had come
where it seemed to my Leader the time and place
I heard him speak in these words:

“O ye who are two within one fire,
if I deserved of you while I lived,
if I deserved of you much or little

when in the world I wrote the lofty lines,
do not move on, but let the one of you
tell where, being lost, he went to die.”

The greater horn of the ancient flame
began to toss and murmur
just as if it were beaten by the wind,

then, waving the point to and fro
as if it were the tongue that spoke,
it flung forth a voice and said: “When I

parted from Circe, who held me
more than a year near Gaeta
before Aeneas so named it, not fondness for a son,

nor duty to an aged father,
nor the love I owed Penelope
which should have gladdened her,

could conquer within me the passion I had
to gain experience of the world
and of the vices and the worth of men;

and I put forth on the open deep
with but one ship and with that little company
which had not deserted me.

The one shore and the other I saw as far as Spain,
as far as Morocco, and Sardinia
and the other islands which that sea bathes round.

I and my companions were old and slow
when we came to that narrow outlet
where Hercules set up his landmarks

so that men should not pass beyond.
On my right hand I left Seville,
on the other had already left Ceuta.

“O brothers,” I said, “who through
a hundred thousand perils have reached the west,
to this so brief vigil of the senses

that remains to us
choose not to deny experience,
in the sun's track, of the unpeopled world.

Take thought of the seed from which you spring.
You were not born to live as brutes,
but to follow virtue and knowledge.”

My companions I made so eager for the road
with these brief words
that then I could hardly have held them back,

and with our poop turned to the morning
we made of the oars wings
for the mad flight, always gaining on the left.

Night then saw all the stars of the other pole
and ours so low
that it did not rise from the ocean floor.

Five times the light had been rekindled
and as often quenched on the moon's under-side
since we had entered on the deep passage,

when there appeared to us a mountain,
dim by distance, and it seemed to me
of such a height as I had never seen before.

We were filled with gladness, and soon
it turned to lamentation, for from the new land
a storm rose and struck the forepart of the ship.

Three times it whirled her round with all the waters,
the fourth time lifted the poop aloft
and plunged the prow below,

as One willed, until the sea closed again over us.”

Inferno - Canto 27

Already the flame was erect and still,
having ceased to speak, and it was already
leaving us with consent of the gentle Poet,

when another coming on behind it
made us turn our eyes to its point
by a confused sound that came from it.

As the Sicilian bull which bellowed for the first time –
and it was just – with the cry of him
who had shaped it with his file

used to bellow with the voice of the victim,
so that, though it was of brass,
it yet seemed pierced with pain;

thus, having at first no course or outlet
in the fire, the doleful words
were transformed into its language.

But after they had made their way up
through the point, giving it the same vibration
that the tongue had given in their passage,

we heard it say: “O thou to whom I direct my voice
and who just now spoke in Lombard, saying:
‘Now go thy way, I do not urge thee more’,

though I have come, perhaps, somewhat late,
let it not irk thee to stay and speak with me;
thou seest it irks not me, and I am burning.

If thou hast fallen but now into this blind world
from that sweet land of Italy
whence I bring all my guilt,

tell me if the Romagnoles have peace or war;
for I was of the mountains there
between Urbino and the height where Tiber is released.”

I was still bent down and intent
when my Leader touched me on the side said:
“Speak thou; he is Italian.”

And I, being at once ready with the answer,
began without delay to speak:
“O soul that art hidden down there,

thy Romagna is not, nor ever was,
without war in the hearts of her tyrants,
but openly I left none there now.

Ravenna stands as it has done for many a year;
the Eagle of Polenta broods over it
and covers Cervia with its pinions.

The city which once bore long siege
and made of the French a bloody heap
finds itself again under the Green Claws.

Both the Old and the Young Mastiff of Verrucchio
who made ill disposal of Montagna
drive their fangs where they are wont.

The cities on the Lamone and on the Santerno
the Young Lion in the White Lair controls,
changing party from summer to winter;

and the other whose flank the Savio bathes,
as it lies between plain and mountain
spends its life between tyranny and freedom.

Now who art thou, I beg of thee to tell us;
be not more grudging than another has been to thee,
so may thy name in the world maintain its place.”

After the fire had roared in its fashion for a time,
it moved the sharp point to and fro
and then gave breath thus:

“If I thought my answer were to one
who would ever return to the world,
this flame should stay without another movement;

but since none ever returned alive
from this depth, if what I hear is true,
I answer thee without fear of infamy.

I was a man of arms, and then a corded friar,
thinking, so girt, to make amends;
and indeed my thought had come true

but for the Great Priest – may ill befall him! –
who put me back in the old sins,
and how and wherefore I would have thee hear from me.

While I informed the bones and flesh
my mother gave me my deeds were those,
not of the lion, but of the fox;

I knew all wiles and covert ways
and so practiced their arts
that their sound went forth to the end of the world.

When I saw myself come to that part of my life
when every man should lower the sails
and gather in the ropes,

that which before had pleased me then grieved me
and with repentance and confession I turned friar,
and – woe is me! – it would have served.

The Prince of the new Pharisees –
being at war near the Lateran
and not with Saracens or Jews,

for every one of his enemies was Christian
and none had been at the taking of Acre
or trading in the land of the Soldan –

regarded neither the supreme office and holy orders
in himself nor, in me,
that cord which used to make its wearers lean;

but as Constantine sought out Sylvester
in Soracte to cure his leprosy,
so this man sought me out as his physician

to cure the fever of his pride.
He asked counsel of me, and I was silent,
for his words seemed drunken; and then he spoke again:

“Do not let thy heart mistrust;
I absolve thee henceforth, and do thou teach me
how I may cast Palestrina to the ground.

I have power to lock and to unlock Heaven,
as thou knowest, for the keys are two
which my predecessor did not hold dear.”

Then the weighty arguments drove me to the point
where silence seemed to me the worse offense,
and I said: “Father, since thou dost cleanse me from

this sin into which I must now fall,
large promise with scant observance
will make thee triumph in the lofty seat.”

Then, as soon as I was dead, Francis came for me;
but one of the black cherubim said to him:
‘Do not carry him off, do not cheat me;

he must come down among my minions
because he gave the fraudulent counsel
and from then till now I have been by his hair.

For he cannot be absolved who repents not,
nor can there be repenting and willing at once,
for the contradiction does not permit it.’

O wretched me, how I started
when he took me, saying to me:
‘Perhaps thou didst not think I was a logician.’

He carried me to Minos,
who coiled his tail eight times about his rough back
and after biting it in great rage said:

‘This is one of the wicked for the thievish fire.’
Therefore I am lost where thou seest and,
thus clothed, go in bitterness.”

When he had so ended his words
the flame, grieving, departed,
twisting and tossing the pointed horn.

We passed on, my Leader and I,
over the edge as far as the next arch,
which spans the ditch where their dues are paid

by those who, making division, gather their load.

Inferno - Canto 28

Who could ever tell, even with words untrammelled
and the tale often repeated,
of all the blood and the wounds I saw now?

Surely every tongue would fail,
for our speech and memory
have not the capacity to take in so much.

Were all the people assembled again
who once in the fateful land of Apulia
bewailed their blood fished by the Trojans

and in the long war which
inside the high-piled spoil of rings –
as Livy writes who does not err –

with those who suffered grievous strokes
in the struggle with Robert Guiscard
and those others whose bones are still in heaps

at Ceperano where every Apulian was faithless,
and there by Tagliacozzo
where old Alardo conquered without arms;

and were one to show his wounded limb and another
his cut off, it would be nothing to compare
with the foul fashion of the ninth ditch.

No cask ever gapes by loss of end-board or stave
like him I saw who was ripped
from the chin to the part that breaks wind;

between the legs hung the entrails;
the vitals appeared, with the foul sack
that makes excrement of what is swallowed.

While I was all absorbed in the sight of him
he looked at me and with his hands
laid open his breast, saying:

“See now how I split myself; see how Mahomet
is mangled! Before me goes Ali in tears,
his face cleft from chin to forelock;

and all the others thou seest here
were in life sowers of scandal and schism
and therefore are thus cloven.

There is a devil behind here that decks us out
thus cruelly, putting each of this kind
to the edge of the sword again

when we have passed round the doleful road;
for the wounds have closed again
before any comes again in front of him.

But who art thou lingering on the ridge,
perhaps to delay going to the penalty
pronounced on thy own accusations?”

“Neither has death yet readied him
nor does guilt bring him for torment,”
replied my Master, “but to give him full experience

I, who am dead, must bring him down here
through Hell from circle to circle;
and this is as true as that I speak to thee.”

There were more than a hundred who,
when they heard this, stopped in the ditch
to look at me, in wonder forgetting the torment.

“Tell Fra Dolcino, then,
thou who wilt perhaps see the sun before long,
to arm himself

with victuals if he would not soon follow me here,
so that stress of snow may not give the Novarese
the victory which would else be hard to win.”

When he had raised one foot to go on
Mahomet said this to me,
then set it on the ground and left us.

Another, who had his throat pierced,
his nose cut off just under the eyebrows,
and only one ear left,

stopped with the rest to gaze in astonishment
and before the others cleared his windpipe,
which was all red outside,

and said: "O thou whom guilt does not condemn
and whom I saw above on Italian soil,
if too great likeness do not deceive me,

remember Piero da Medicina
if ever thou return to see the sweet plain
that slopes from Vercelli to Marcabo,

and make it known to the two chief men of Fano,
both Messer Guido and Angiolello,
that, unless our foresight here is vain,

they shall be thrown out of their ship
and drowned near La Cattolica
through a fell tyrant's treachery.

Between the islands of Cyprus and Majorca
Neptune never saw so great a crime,
not of pirates nor of men of Greece.

That traitor who sees with but one eye
and holds the city which one here with me
would fain never have seen

will bring them to a parley with him
and then deal so that for Me wind of Focara
they shall have no need of vow or prayer."

And I said to him: "Point him out to me and explain,
if thou wouldst have me carry news of thee above,
who he is to whom that sight was bitter."

Then he laid his hand on the jaw
of one beside him and opened the mouth, crying:
"This is the man, and he does not speak;

banished, he quenched Caesar's doubts,
declaring that one prepared
always loses by delay.”

Ah, how aghast appeared to me,
with tongue slit in the gullet,
Curio, who was so bold of speech!

And one who had both the one hand and the other
cut off, lifting the stumps through the murky air
so that the blood befouled his face,

cried: “Thou wilt recall Mosca too, who said,
alas: ‘A thing done has an end!’ –
which was ill seed for the Tuscan people.”

“And death to thy stock!” I added then;
at which, heaping sorrow on sorrow,
he went away like a man crazed with grief.

But I stayed to watch the troop
and saw a thing I should fear
simply to tell without more proof,

but that conscience reassures me,
the good companion which emboldens a man
under the breastplate of his felt integrity.

Verily I saw, and I seem to see it still,
a trunk without a head going
as were the others of the miserable herd;

and it held the severed head by the hair
swinging in its hand like a lantern,
and that was looking at us and saying: “Woe is me!”

Of itself it made for itself a lamp,
and they were two in one and one in two;
how it can be He knows who so ordains.

When it was just below the bridge
it raised its arm high and with it the head
so as to bring its words nearer us, and they were:

“See now my grievous punishment,
thou who, breathing, goest looking on the dead;
see if any other is so great as this.

And, that thou mayst bear news of me,
know that I am Bertran de Born,
he that gave evil backing to the Young King.

I made rebellion between the father and the son;
Ahithophel did no worse for Absalom and David
with his wicked goadings.

Because I parted those so joined
I carry my brain, alas,
parted from its root in this trunk;

thus is observed in me the retribution.”

Inferno - Canto 29

The many people and the strange wounds
had made my eyes so drunken
that they were fain to stay and weep;

but Virgil said to me: "What art thou still gazing at?
Why does thy look still rest down there
among the miserable maimed shades?"

Thou hast not done this at the other depths.
Consider, if thou think to number them,
that the valley goes twenty-two miles round

and already the moon is beneath our feet.
The time is now short that is allowed to us
and there is more to see than thou seest here."

"If thou hadst given heed to my reason for looking,"
I answered then, "perhaps
thou wouldst have granted me a longer stay."

Meantime the Leader was going on,
and I went after him, already making my reply,
and I added: "Within that den

where I held my eyes so intently just now
I think a spirit, one of my blood,
weeps for the guilt that costs so much down there."

Then said the Master: "Let not thy thoughts
be distracted about him henceforth,
attend to other things and let him stay there;

for I saw him below the bridge point at thee
and threaten fiercely with his finger,
and I heard him called Geri del Bello.

Thou wast then so wholly occupied with him
who once held Hautefort
that thou didst not look that way till he was gone."

“O my Leader,” I said, “the violent death
which is yet unavenged for him
by any that is a partner in his shame

made him indignant, and for that reason, as I judge,
he went on without speaking to me, and by this
he has made me more compassionate with him.”

We talked thus as far as the nearest point
which shows the next valley from the ridge,
had there been more light, right to the bottom.

When we were above
the last cloister of Malebolge
so that its lay-brothers could be seen by us,

strange lamentations assailed me
that had their shafts barbed with pity,
at which I covered my ears with my hands.

As the pain would be if the diseases of the hospitals
of Val di Chiana between July and September,
and of the Maremma and Sardinia,

were all together in one ditch,
such was it there, and such stench issued from it
as is wont to come from festered limbs.

We descended on to the last bank
from the long ridge, still keeping to the left,
and then my sight was clearer down into the depth,

where the handmaid of the Sovereign Lord,
unerring justice, punishes the counterfeiters
whom she registers here.

I do not think the sight of the whole people
sick in Aegina was more pitiful,
when the air was so full of corruption

that all the animals, to the little worm, fell dead,
and then, as the poets hold for certain,
the ancient tribes were restored again from seed of ants,

than was the sight
along that dark valley of the spirits
languishing in divers heaps.

One lay on his belly,
one lay on the shoulders of another,
and one shifted on all fours along the dismal way.

Step by step we went without speech,
watching and listening to the sick,
who had not strength to raise themselves.

I saw two sitting propped against each other
as pan is propped on pan to warm,
spotted from head to foot with scabs;

and I never saw curry-comb
plied by a stable-boy whose master waits for him
or by one kept unwillingly awake

as each plied on himself continually
the bite of his nails for the great fury
of the itch that has no other relief,

and the nails were scraping off the scabs
as the knife does the scales of the bream
or other fish that has them larger.

“O thou that dismailest thyself with thy fingers,”
my Leader began to one of them,
“and sometimes makest pincers of them,

tell us if there many Italian among those
that are within there, so may thy nails
serve thee forever in that employment.”

“We are Italians whom thou seest so disfigured,
both of us here,” the one replied weeping,
“but who art thou that enquirest of us?”

And the Leader said: “I am one who descend
from level to level with this living man,
and my purpose is to show him Hell.”

Then their mutual support was broken
and each turned toward me trembling,
with others who overheard him.

The good Master drew close to me, saying:
“Tell them what thou wishest.”
And, since he wished it, I began:

“So may your memory not pass
from the minds of men in the former world
but live on under many suns,

tell me who you are and of what people;
let not your foul and loathsome penalty
make you fear to declare yourselves to me.”

“I was of Arezzo,” the one replied, “
and Albert of Siena had me put in the fire;
but that which I died for does not bring me here.

It is true I said to him, speaking in jest,
that I knew how to raise myself through the air
in flight, and he, being curious and of little wit,

would have me show him the art;
and only because I did not make him a Daedalus
he had me burned by one who held him as a son.”

But to the last ditch of the ten,
for the alchemy I practiced in the world,
Minos, who may not err, condemned me.”

And I said to the Poet:
“Now was ever a people so light as the Sienese?
Not the French, surely, by far.”

At which the other leper, who heard what I said,
rejoined: “Except Stricca, pray,
who knew how to spend in moderation,

and Niccolo, who first devised
the costly fashion of the clove
in the garden where such seed takes root,

and except the company in which Caccia of Asciano
squandered the vineyard and the great forest
and Blunderer displayed his wit.”

But, that thou mayst know who thus seconds thee
against the Sieneſe, ſharpen thy looks on me
ſo that my face may rightly answer thee,

and thou ſhalt ſee then that I am the ſhade
of Capocchio, who counterfeitèd metals by alchemy;
and thou muſt recall, if I make thee out aright,

how good an ape I was of nature.”

Inferno - Canto 30

In the time when Juno was enraged
because of Semele against the Theban blood,
as she showed once and again,

Athamas turned so insane that,
seeing his wife go carrying their two children,
one in either hand,

he cried: "Let us spread the nets to take the lioness
and the whelps as they pass!",
then stretched out his pitiless claws,

taking the one that was named Learchus,
and whirled him round and dashed him on a rock,
and she drowned herself with the other burden;

and when fortune turned low the loftiness
of the Trojans, who dared all, so that the king
together with the kingdom was blotted out,

Hecuba, sad, forlorn and captive,
when she saw Polyxena dead
and recognized with anguish

her Polydorus on the beach,
being out of her wits barked like a dog,
so distraught was her mind with grief.

But no fury of Thebes or Troy
was ever seen so cruel against any,
rending beasts and even the limbs of men,

as I saw two pallid and naked shades
which ran biting like the hog
loosed from the sty.

The one came at Capocchio and set its fangs
in the nape of his neck, then, dragging him,
made his belly scrape on the hard bottom.

And the Aretine, who was left trembling,
said to me: "That goblin is Gianni Schicchi,
and he goes raging and dealing so with the rest."

"Oh," I said to him, "so may the other
not fix its teeth on thee, be pleased to tell me
who it is before it makes off."

And he answered me: "That is the ancient spirit
of cursed Myrrha, who became dear
to her father with more than lawful love."

She contrived to sin with him thus,
counterfeiting in herself another's person,
as the other who goes off there

took it upon him, that he might gain
the lady of the stud, to counterfeit in himself
Buoso Donati, making the will and giving it due form."

And when the furious two on whom
I had kept my eyes were gone,
I turned to look at the other ill-born shades

and saw one shaped like a lute,
if only he had been cut short at the groin
from the part where a man is forked.

The heavy dropsy which disproportions the members
by ill disposal of the humours
so that the face does not answer to the belly

made him hold his lips apart,
like the hectic who, for thirst,
curls the one toward the chin and the other upward.

"O you that are free from all punishment,
I know not why, in the grim world,"
he said to us, "look and give heed

to the misery of Master Adam.
Alive, I had in plenty all I wished,
and now, alas, I crave one drop of water.

The little streams that from the green hills
of the Casentino flow down to the Arno,
making their channels cool and moist,

are always before me, and not in vain,
for their image parches me far more
than the ill that wastes my features.

The unbending justice which searches me
takes occasion from the place where I sinned
to make my sighs come faster;

there is Romena, where I falsified the currency
stamped with the Baptist
and for that left above my body burnt.

But might I see here the wretched soul of Guido,
or of Alessandro, or of their brother,
for Fonte Branda I would not give the sight.

One is in here already, if the furious shades
that go round speak true,
but what does it avail me whose limbs are bound?

If I were only so light still
that I could go an inch in a hundred years
I would have set out already on the road

seeking him among these misshapen folk,
for all it is eleven miles round
and a full half-mile across.

Through them I am in such a household;
they induced me to strike the florins
that had three carats of dross.”

And I said to him: “who are the two poor wretches
that smoke as wet hands do in winter,
lying close on thy right boundary?”

“I found them here when I rained into this trough,”
he replied, “and they have not given a turn since,
nor do I think they will to all eternity.

The one is the false woman who accused Joseph;
the other false Sinon, the Greek from Troy.
Burning fever makes them throw off such a reek.”

And one of them, who took it ill, perhaps,
to be named so meanly,
struck him with his fist on the leathery paunch;

it sounded as if it had been a drum.
And Master Adam struck him in the face
with his arm, which seemed no less hard,

saying to him: “Though I am kept from moving
by the weight of my limbs,
I have an arm free for such a case.”

To which he replied: “Going to the fire
thou hadst it not so ready; but thou hadst it as ready,
and more, when thou wast coining.”

And the dropsied one: “Thou speakest truth in this;
but thou wast not so true a witness at Troy,
where truth was wanted from thee.”

“If I spoke falsely,” said Sinon, “thou too
didst falsify the coin, and I am here for one fault
and thou for more than any other devil.”

“Remember, perjurer, the horse,”
replied he of the inflated paunch,
“and may it plague thee that all the world knows of it.”

“And be thou plagued with the thirst that cracks
thy tongue,” said the Greek, “and the foul water
that makes that belly such a hedge before thy eyes.”

Then the coiner: “Thus thy mouth gapes, as usual,
to put thee in the wrong,
for if I have thirst and humour stuffs me,

thou hast burning fever and aching head
and wouldst need little persuasion
to lap Narcissus' mirror.”

I was all intent on listening to them,
when the Master said to me: "Now keep looking.
A little more and I quarrel with thee."

When I heard him speak to me in anger
I turned to him with such shame
that still it haunts my memory.

Like one that dreams of harm to himself and,
dreaming, wishes it a dream,
so that he longs for that which is as if it were not,

I became such that, unable to speak,
I wished to excuse myself and did excuse myself
all the while, not thinking that I did.

"Less shame washes away a greater fault
than thine has been," said the Master,
"therefore unload thy heart of all sadness

and take account that I am always at thy side
if it befall again that fortune bring thee
where are people in a like dispute;

for the desire to hear it is a base desire."

Inferno - Canto 31

One self-same tongue first stung me
so that it dyed both my cheeks,
and then it offered me the medicine;

so have I heard that the lance of Achilles
and his father brought a gift,
first of pain, then of healing.

We turned our back on the wretched valley,
going up by the enclosing bank
and crossing over it without any speech.

Here it was less than night and less than day
so that my sight went little ahead,
but I heard a blast from a horn

so loud that it would have made any thunder-clap
seem faint, and it directed my eyes,
following back on its course, wholly to one place.

After the dolorous rout
when Charlemagne lost the sacred army
Roland did not sound a blast so terrible.

I had not long kept my head turned that way
when I seemed to see many lofty towers;
I said therefore: "Master, tell me, what city is this?"

And he said to me: "It is because
thou piercest the dark from too far off
that thou strayest in thy fancy,

and if thou reach the place thou shalt see plainly
how much the sense is deceived by distance;
push on, therefore, with more speed."

Then he took me kindly by the hand and said:
"Before we go farther,
that the face may seem less strange to thee,

know that they are not towers, but giants,
and they are every one in the pit,
round its battlements, from the navel downward.”

As, when mist thins off,
the sight little by little re-shapes that
which the vapour hides that loads the air,

so, as I pierced the thick and murky atmosphere
and came on nearer to the brink,
error fled and fear grew in me;

for, as on the circle of its walls
Montereggione is crowned with towers,
so on the bank encompassing the pit

towered with half their bulk
the horrible giants whom Jove still threatens
from Heaven when he thunders,

and I began now to distinguish the face of one,
the shoulders and the chest and a great part
of the belly and down by his sides both arms.

Nature, assuredly, when she gave up the art
of making creatures like these,
did right well to deprive Mars of such executors;

and if she does not repent of elephants and whales,
one looking at it carefully will hold her
the more just and prudent for it,

for where the equipment of the mind
is joined to evil will and to power
men can make no defence against it.

His face appeared to me to have the length and bulk
of Saint Peter's pine-cone at Rome
and the other bones were in proportion,

so that the bank, which was an apron to him
from the middle down, still showed
so much of him above that three Frieslanders.

would have boasted in vain of reaching his hair;
for I saw thirty great spans of him
down from the place where a man buckles his cloak.

“Raphel may amech zabi almi,”
began the savage mouth to cry,
for which no sweeter psalms were fit;

and my Leader towards him: “Stupid soul,
keep to thy horn and vent thyself with that
when rage or other passion takes thee.

Search at thy neck, bewildered soul,
and thou shalt find the strap that holds it tied;
see how it lies across thy great chest.”

Then he said to me: “He is his own accuser.
This is Nimrod, through whose wicked device
the world is not of one sole speech.

Let us leave him there and not talk in vain,
for every language is to him as his to others,
which is known to none.”

We made our way, therefore,
farther on, turning left, and found the next
a bowshot off, far savager and larger.

Whose was the master-hand that bound him
I cannot tell, but he had the right arm
pinioned behind and the other in front

with a chain that held him girt from the neck down,
so that on the part of him exposed
it was wound to the fifth coil.

“This proud spirit chose to try his strength
against supreme Jove,” said my Leader,
“and he is thus rewarded.

Ephialtes he is called, and he made
the great attempt when the giants put the gods
in fear. The arms he plied he moves no more.”

And I said to him:
“If it is possible, I would my eyes
might have sight of the vast Briareus”;

to which he replied: “thou shalt see Antaeus
near here, who speaks and is unfettered,
and he will set us down in the lowest depth of guilt.

He thou wouldst see is much farther on,
and he is bound and fashioned like this one
except that he seems fiercer by his looks.”

Never did mighty earthquake
shake a tower so violently
as Ephialtes shook himself of a sudden;

then more than ever I was in fear of death,
nor was need of more than the terror,
had I not seen the fetters.

We went farther then and came to Antaeus,
who stood full five ells,
not reckoning the head, above the rock.

“O thou who, in the fateful valley
which made Scipio heir of glory
when Hannibal and his men turned their backs,

didst once take for prey a thousand lions,
and through whom,
hadst thou been with thy brothers in the great war,

it seems yet to be believed that the sons of earth would
have conquered, set us down below, and do not be
disdainful of it, where the cold locks up Cocytus.

Do not make us go on to Tityus or to Typhon.
This man can give of that which is craved for here.
Bend down, therefore, and do not curl thy lip;

he can yet restore thy fame in the world;
for he lives and expects to live long still,
if Grace call him not untimely to itself.”

The Master spoke thus, and the other in haste
reached forth the hands of which Hercules
once felt the mighty grasp and took my Leader,

and Virgil, when he felt himself taken,
said to me: "Come close, that I may take thee,"
then made one bundle of himself and me.

As appears the Carisenda seen from beneath
the leaning side when a cloud passes over it
against the direction in which it hangs,

so did Antaeus appear to me while I watched
to see him bend, and it was such a moment
that I would fain have gone by another road.

But he set us down lightly on the bottom
which engulfs Lucifer with Judas,
and he did not stay thus bent,

but like the mast in a ship rose up.

Inferno - Canto 32

Had I the harsh and grating rhymes
that would be fitting for the dismal hole
on which all the other rocks bear down

I would press out more completely
the sap of my conception; but since I have not
it is not without fear I bring myself speak,

for to describe the bottom of all the universe
is no enterprise to undertake in sport
or for a tongue that cries *mamma* and *babbo*.

But may those ladies aid my verse
who aided Amphion to wall in Thebes,
so that the telling may not be diverse from the fact.

O beyond all others misbegotten crowd
who are in the place it is hard to speak of,
better had you here been sheep or goats!

When we were down in the dark well,
far below the giants' feet,
and I was still gazing up at the lofty wall,

I heard said to me: "Look to thy steps;
move so that thy feet do not tread on the heads
of the wretched weary brothers."

At which I turned and saw before me and under my feet
a lake which through frost
had the appearance of glass and not of water.

Never did Danube in Austria
or far-off Don under its frigid sky
make in winter so thick

a veil on its course as was here;
for had Tambernic fallen on it, or Pietrapana,
it would not even at the edge have given a creak.

And as the frog sits with its muzzle
out of the water to croak
when the peasant-girl dreams often of her gleanings,

so, livid up to where the flush of shame appears,
the suffering shades were in the ice,
setting their teeth to the note of the stork.

Each kept his face bent down;
by the mouth the cold and by the eyes
the misery of the heart finds evidence among them.

When I had looked round me for a time I turned
to my feet and saw two pressed so close together
that they had the hair of their heads intermingled.

“Tell me,” I said, “you that so strain your breasts
together, who are you?” And they bent back their necks;
and when they had raised their faces to me their eyes,

which before were moist only within,
gushed over at the lids, and the frost
bound the tears between and locked them up again,

never did clamp bind beam on beam so hard;
whereupon they butted together like two goats,
such fury mastered them

And one who had lost both his ears by the cold said,
with his face still down: “Why dost thou
mirror thyself in us so long?”

If thou wouldst know who are these two,
the valley down which the Bisenzio flows
was their father Albert's and theirs.”

They issued from one womb,
and all Caina thou mayst search
and not find a shade more fit to be set in jelly,

not him whose breast and shadow were pierced
with a single blow from Arthur's hand,
nor Focaccia, nor him here who so obstructs me

with his head that I do not see past him
and who was called Sassol Mascheroni;
if thou art Tuscan thou knowest well now who he was.

And, that thou put me to no further talk,
know that I was Camicion de' Pazzi,
and I wait for Carlino to exonerate me.”

After that I saw a thousand faces made dog-like
with the cold, so that shuddering comes over me,
and always will, at frozen pools;

and while we were going
towards the centre at which all gravity converges
and I was shivering in the eternal chill,

whether it was will or fate or chance I do not know,
but, walking among the heads,
I struck my foot hard in the face of one.

Weeping, he shouted at me: 'Why dost thou trample
on me? Unless thou comest to add to the revenge
for Montaperti, why dost thou molest me?’”

And I: “My Master, now wait for me here,
that through him I may be cleared of a doubt;
then thou shalt make me hasten as thou wilt.”

The Leader stopped, and I said to him
who kept on cursing violently:
“Who art thou, reviling one so?”

“Nay, who art thou,” he answered,
“that goest through Antenora
striking one's cheeks harder than if thou wert alive?”

“I am alive,” was my reply, “and it may be
worth much to thee, if thou ask for fame,
that I note thy name among the rest.”

And he said to me: “What I crave for is the opposite.
Take thyself hence and do not vex me further,
for thou ill knowest how to flatter in this depth.”

Then I took him by the scalp and said:
“Thou must name thyself,
or not a hair will be left on thee here.”

At which he said to me: “Though thou strip me bald
I will not tell thee who I am, nor show thee
if thou fall upon my head a thousand times.”

I already had his hair twisted in my hand
and had torn out more than one tuft of it,
he barking and with his eyes hod down,

when another cried: “What ails thee, Bocca?
Art thou not satisfied with the music of thy jaws,
but thou must bark? What devil is at thee?”

“Now,” said I, “I do not want thee to speak,
vile traitor, for in spite of thee
I shall carry of thee a true report.”

“Be off,” he answered, “and tell what tale thou wilt;
but do not be silent, if thou get out from here,
about him that had his tongue so ready just now.

Here he laments the Frenchman's silver.
‘I saw,’ thou canst say, ‘him of Duera in the place
where the sinners are put to cool.’

If thou art asked who else was there,
thou hast beside thee him of Beccheria,
whose gullet Florence slit;

Gianni de' Soldanier is, I think, farther on,
with Ganelon, and with Tribaldello,
who opened Faenza while it slept.”

We had already left him
when I saw two frozen in one hole
so that the one head was a hood to the other,

and, as bread is devoured for hunger,
the one above set his teeth in the other
at the place where the brain joins the nape;

Tydeus gnawed the temples of Menalippus
for rage just as he was doing
with the skull and the other parts.

“O thou who by so bestial a token
showest thy hatred against him thou eatest,
tell me the cause,” I said, “on this agreement,

that if thou hast reason in thy complaint against him
I, knowing who you are and what his sin,
shall yet requite thee in the world above,

if this tongue I talk with be not withered.”

Inferno - Canto 33

That sinner lifted his mouth
from the savage meal, wiping it
on the hair of the head he had wasted behind,

then began: "Thou wilt have me renew
desperate grief which even to think of
already wrings my heart before I speak of it;

but if my words are to be seed
that may bear fruit of infamy to the traitor I gnaw,
thou shalt see me speak and weep together.

I know not who thou art nor by what means
thou hast come down here, but indeed
thou seemest to me Florentine when I hear thee.

Thou art to know that I was Count Ugolino
and this is the Archbishop Ruggieri.
I shall tell thee now why I am such a neighbour to him.

How by means of his evil devices,
confiding in him, I was taken
and then killed, there is no need to tell;

but what thou canst not have learnt, that is,
how cruel was my death, thou shalt hear
and shalt know if he has done me wrong.

A little opening within the mew
which because of me has the title of Hunger
and in which others are yet to be shut up,

had already shown me through its slit
several moons, when I had the bad dream
which rent for me the veil of the future.

This man appeared to me as master and lord hunting
the wolf and the whelps on the mountain
for which the Pisans cannot see Lucca.

With hounds lean, trained and eager
he had sent the Gualandi, the Sismondi
and the Lanfranchi to the front before him,

and after a short run the father and sons
seemed to me spent and with the sharp fangs
I seemed to see their flanks torn open.

When I awoke before morning
I heard my children, who were with me,
crying in their sleep and asking for bread.

Thou art cruel indeed if thou grieve not now,
thinking what my heart foreboded,
and, if thou weep not, at what dost thou ever weep?

They were now awake and the hour approached
when our food used to be brought to us,
and each was afraid because of his dream,

and I heard below the door of the horrible tower
nailed up; at which I looked
in the faces of my sons without a word.

I did not weep, I so turned to stone within.
They wept, and my little Anselm said:
'Thou lookest so, father, what ails thee?'

At that I shed no tears nor answered all that day
nor the night after,
till another sun came forth on the world.

As soon as a little ray made its way
into the doleful prison
and I discerned in four faces my own look,

I bit both hands for grief; and they,
thinking I did it from a desire to eat,
rose up suddenly and said:

'Father, it will be far less pain for us
if thou eat of us. Thou didst clothe us
with this wretched flesh and do thou strip us of it.'

I calmed myself then, not to make them
more unhappy. That day and the next we stayed all
silent. – Ah, hard earth, why didst thou not open? –

When we had come to the fourth day
Gaddo threw himself outstretched at my feet,
saying: ‘My father, why dost thou not help me?’

There he died, and, as thou seest me,
I saw the three drop one by one during the fifth day
and the sixth; therefore I gave myself,

now blind, to groping over each and for two days
called on them after they were dead.
Then fasting had more power than grief.”

When he had said this, with eyes askance
he took hold of the wretched skull again with his teeth,
which were strong on the bone like a dog's.

Ah, Pisa, shame of the peoples
of the fair land where sounds the *si*,
since thy neighbours are slow to punish thee

may Capraia and Gorgona
shift and put a bar on Arno's mouth
so that it drown every soul in thee!

What if Count Ugolino had the name
of betraying thy strongholds, thou shouldst not
have put his children to such torment.

Their youthful years, thou new Thebes,
made them innocent, Uguccione and Brigata
and the other two named already in my song.

We passed on farther, where the ice
roughly swathes another tribe,
who were not face downward but all turned up.

The very weeping there does not let them weep
and the pain which finds a barrier in the eyes
turns inward to increase the anguish;

for the first tears form a cluster and,
like a crystal visor,
fill up all the hollow under the brows.

And although from the cold
all feeling had left my face as in a callus,
I seemed now to feel some wind,

so that I said: "My master,
who causes this?
Is not all heat quenched down here?"

And he said to me: "Thou shalt soon be
where the eye shall give thee the answer,
seeing the cause that drives down the blast."

And one of the wretches of the frozen crust
cried to us: "O souls so cruel
that there is given you the last station,

lift from my face the hard veils, that I may give vent
for a little to the misery that swells my heart,
before the tears freeze up again."

So I said to him: "If thou wouldst have my help,
tell me who thou art, and if I do not relieve thee
may I have to go to the bottom of the ice."

He replied then: "I am Fra Alberigo;
I am he of the fruit of the bad garden,
and here I am paid date for fig."

"Oh," I said to him, "then art thou dead already?"
And he to me: "How my body fares in the world above
I have no knowledge.

This Ptolomea is so privileged
that many a time the soul fallss down here
before Atropos sends it forth;

and that thou mayst more willingly
clear the glazing of tears from my face,
know that as soon as the soul betrays as I did,

its body is taken from it by a devil,
who controls it henceforth
till its full time comes round.

The soul falls headlong into this tank here,
and perhaps the body still appears above
of the shade that is wintering here behind me;

thou must know, if thou art just come down.
He is Ser Branca d'Oria and many years
have passed since he was thus enclosed.”

“I believe thou art deceiving me,” I said to him,
“for Branca d'Oria never died,
but eats and drinks and sleeps and puts on clothes.”

“In the ditch above of the Malebranche,”
he said, “where the sticky pitch boils,
Michael Zanche had not yet arrived

when this man left a devil instead of himself
in his body, as did a near kinsman of his
who wrought the treachery along with him.

But now reach out thy hand here; open my eyes.”
And I did not open them for him,
and it was courtesy to be a churl to him.

Ah, Genoese, people strange to all good custom
and full of all corruption,
why are you not driven from the world?

For with the worst spirit of Romagna
I found one of you such that for his deeds
he is in soul already bathed in Cocytus

and in body appears still living above.

Inferno - Canto 34

“*Vexilla regis proderunt inferni* towards us,”
my Master said; “look forward,
therefore, if thou discern him.”

As when a thick fog rises or night
falls on our hemisphere appears in the distance
a windmill turning with the wind,

I seemed to see a structure of the kind;
then, for the wind, I drew back behind my Leader,
for there was no other shelter there.

I was already – and with fear I set it down in verse –
where the shades were wholly covered
and showed through like straws in glass;

some were lying, some erect,
this with the head, that with the soles uppermost,
another like a bow, bent face to feet.

When we had gone on so far
that my Master thought it good
to show me the creature who was once so fair,

he took himself from before me and made me stop,
saying: “Lo Dis, and the place
where thou must arm thee with fortitude.”

How chilled and faint I turned then,
do not ask, reader,
for I do not write it, since all words would fail.

I did not die and I did not remain alive;
think now for thyself, if thou hast any wit,
what I became, denied both death and life.

The Emperor of the woeful kingdom
stood forth at mid-breast from the ice,
and I compare better with a giant

than giants with his arms;
see now what that whole
must be to answer to such a part.

If he was as fair as he is now foul
and lifted up his brows against his Maker,
well may all sorrow come from him.

Ah, how great a marvel it seemed to me
when I saw three faces on his head;
one in front, and that was red,

the two others joined to it
just over the middle of each shoulder
and all joined at the crown.

The right seemed between white and yellow;
the left had such an aspect
as the people from where the Nile descends.

Under each came forth two great wings
of size fitting for such a bird,
sails at sea I never saw like these;

they had no feathers but were like a bat's,
and he was beating them
so that three winds went forth from him

by which Cocytus was kept frozen.
With six eyes he was weeping
and over three chins dripped tears and bloody foam.

In each mouth he crushed a sinner
with his teeth as with a heckle
and thus he kept three of them in pain;

to him in front the biting was nothing
to the clawing, for sometimes
the back was left all stripped of skin.

“That soul up there which has the greatest punishment,”
said the Master, “is Judas Iscariot,
who has his head inside and plies his legs without.

Of the other two who have their heads below,
the one that hangs from the black muzzle is Brutus –
see how he writhes and utters not a word –

and the other Cassius, who looks so stalwart.
But night is rising again and now it is time to go,
for we have seen all.”

At his bidding I clasped him round the neck;
and he watched his chance of time and place and,
when the wings were wide open,

caught hold of the shaggy flanks,
then descended from tuft to tuft
between the matted hair and the frozen crusts.

When we were where the thigh turns,
just on the swelling of the haunch,
the Leader with labour and strain

brought round his head where his legs had been
and grappled on the hair like one climbing,
so that I thought we were returning into Hell again.

“Hold fast,” said the Master, panting like one spent,
“for by such stairs must we go forth
from so much evil.”

And he passed out through the cleft of a rock
and put me on the edge to sit,
then reached toward me his cautious step.

I raised my eyes and thought to see Lucifer
as I had left him,
and I saw his legs held upward;

and if I became perplexed
then let the dull crowd judge who do not see
what is the point that I had passed.”

“Rise up on thy feet,” said the Master;
“the way is long and the road is hard
and already the sun returns to middle tierce.”

It was no palace hall where we were,
but a natural dungeon,
ill-floored and scant of light.

“Before I extricate myself from the abyss, my Master,”
I said when I had risen, “to clear me
from perplexity speak to me a little.

Where is the ice? And he there, how is he fixed
thus upside-down? And how, in so short a time,
has the sun made the passage from evening to morning?”

And he said to me: “Thou imaginest thou art
still on the other side of the centre, where I took hold
of the hair of the guilty worm that pierces the world.

Thou wast on that side so long as I descended;
when I turned myself thou didst pass the point
to which weights are drawn from every part

and art now come beneath the hemisphere
opposite to that which covers the great dry land
and under whose zenith

the Man was done to death who was born and lived
without sin. Thou hast thy feet upon a little sphere
which forms the other face of Judecca;

here it is morning when it is evening there,
and he that made a ladder for us with his hair
is still fixed as he was before.

On this side he fell down from Heaven,
and the land which before stood out here
made a veil of the sea for fear of him

and came to our hemisphere; and perhaps to escape
from him that which appears on this side
left here the empty space and rushed upwards.”

Down there is a place at the farthest part
of his tomb from Beelzebub,
which is known, not by sight, but by the sound

of a stream that descends there
through the hollow of a rock which it has worn
in its winding course and gentle slope.

The Leader and I entered on that hidden road
to return into the bright world,
and without caring to have any rest

we climbed up, he first and I second,
so far that I saw through a round opening
some of the fair things that Heaven bears;

and thence we came forth to see again the stars.