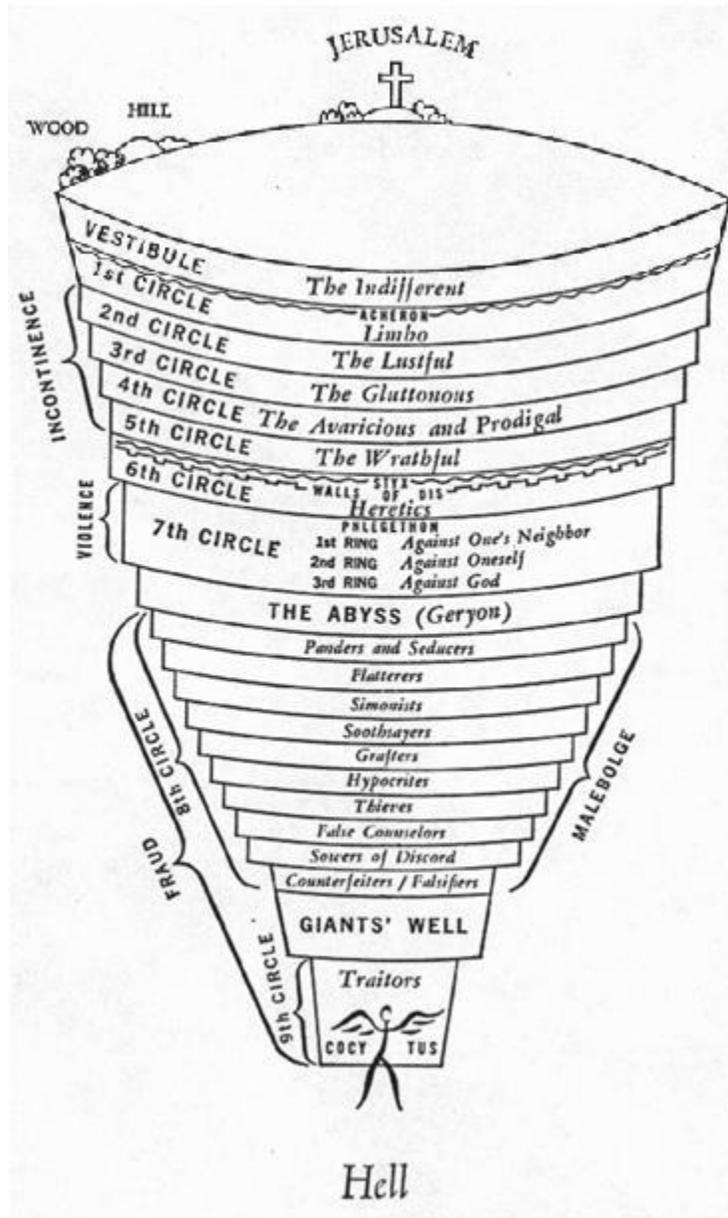


THE INFERNO  
 DANTE ALIGHIERI  
 TRANS. HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW  
 ILLUS. GUSTAVE DORE



# CANTO I

THE DARK FOREST. THE HILL OF DIFFICULTY. THE PANTHER, THE LION, AND THE WOLF. VIRGIL.



Midway upon the journey of our life  
I found myself within a forest dark,  
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say  
What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,  
Which in the very thought renews the fear.

So bitter is it, death is little more;  
But of the good to treat, which there I found,  
Speak will I of the other things I saw there.

I cannot well repeat how there I entered,  
So full was I of slumber at the moment  
In which I had abandoned the true way.

But after I had reached a mountain's foot,  
At that point where the valley terminated,  
Which had with consternation pierced my heart,

Upward I looked, and I beheld its shoulders,  
Vested already with that planet's rays  
Which leadeth others right by every road.

Then was the fear a little quieted  
That in my heart's lake had endured throughout

The night, which I had passed so piteously.

And even as he, who, with distressful breath,  
Forth issued from the sea upon the shore,  
Turns to the water perilous and gazes;

So did my soul, that still was fleeing onward,  
Turn itself back to re-behold the pass  
Which never yet a living person left.

After my weary body I had rested,  
The way resumed I on the desert slope,  
So that the firm foot ever was the lower.

And lo! almost where the ascent began,  
A panther light and swift exceedingly,  
Which with a spotted skin was covered o'er!

And never moved she from before my face,  
Nay, rather did impede so much my way,  
That many times I to return had turned.

The time was the beginning of the morning,  
And up the sun was mounting with those stars  
That with him were, what time the Love Divine

At first in motion set those beauteous things;  
So were to me occasion of good hope,  
The variegated skin of that wild beast,

The hour of time, and the delicious season;  
But not so much, that did not give me fear  
A lion's aspect which appeared to me.

He seemed as if against me he were coming  
With head uplifted, and with ravenous hunger,  
So that it seemed the air was afraid of him;

And a she-wolf, that with all hungerings  
Seemed to be laden in her meagreness,  
And many folk has caused to live forlorn!

She brought upon me so much heaviness,  
With the affright that from her aspect came,  
That I the hope relinquished of the height.

And as he is who willingly acquires,  
And the time comes that causes him to lose,  
Who weeps in all his thoughts and is despondent,

E'en such made me that beast withouten peace,  
Which, coming on against me by degrees  
Thrust me back thither where the sun is silent.

While I was rushing downward to the lowland,  
Before mine eyes did one present himself,  
Who seemed from long-continued silence hoarse.

When I beheld him in the desert vast,  
"Have pity on me," unto him I cried,  
"Whiche'er thou art, or shade or real man!"

He answered me: "Not man; man once I was,

And both my parents were of Lombardy,  
And Mantuans by country both of them.

'Sub Julio' was I born, though it was late,  
And lived at Rome under the good Augustus,  
During the time of false and lying gods.

A poet was I, and I sang that just  
Son of Anchises, who came forth from Troy,  
After that Ilion the superb was burned.

But thou, why goest thou back to such annoyance?  
Why climb'st thou not the Mount Delectable,  
Which is the source and cause of every joy?"

"Now, art thou that Virgilius and that fountain  
Which spreads abroad so wide a river of speech?"  
I made response to him with bashful forehead.

"O, of the other poets honour and light,  
Avail me the long study and great love  
That have impelled me to explore thy volume!

Thou art my master, and my author thou,  
Thou art alone the one from whom I took  
The beautiful style that has done honour to me.

Behold the beast, for which I have turned back;  
Do thou protect me from her, famous Sage,  
For she doth make my veins and pulses tremble."

"Thee it behoves to take another road,"  
Responded he, when he beheld me weeping,  
"If from this savage place thou wouldst escape;

Because this beast, at which thou criest out,  
Suffers not any one to pass her way,  
But so doth harass him, that she destroys him;

And has a nature so malign and ruthless,  
That never doth she glut her greedy will,  
And after food is hungrier than before.

Many the animals with whom she weds,  
And more they shall be still, until the Greyhound  
Comes, who shall make her perish in her pain.

He shall not feed on either earth or pelf,  
But upon wisdom, and on love and virtue;  
'Twixt Feltro and Feltro shall his nation be;

Of that low Italy shall he be the saviour,  
On whose account the maid Camilla died,  
Euryalus, Turnus, Nisus, of their wounds;

Through every city shall he hunt her down,  
Until he shall have driven her back to Hell,  
There from whence envy first did let her loose.

Therefore I think and judge it for thy best  
Thou follow me, and I will be thy guide,  
And lead thee hence through the eternal place,

Where thou shalt hear the desperate lamentations,  
Shalt see the ancient spirits disconsolate,  
Who cry out each one for the second death;

And thou shalt see those who contented are  
Within the fire, because they hope to come,  
Whene'er it may be, to the blessed people;

To whom, then, if thou wishest to ascend,  
A soul shall be for that than I more worthy;  
With her at my departure I will leave thee;

Because that Emperor, who reigns above,  
In that I was rebellious to his law,  
Wills that through me none come into his city.

He governs everywhere, and there he reigns;  
There is his city and his lofty throne;  
O happy he whom thereto he elects!"

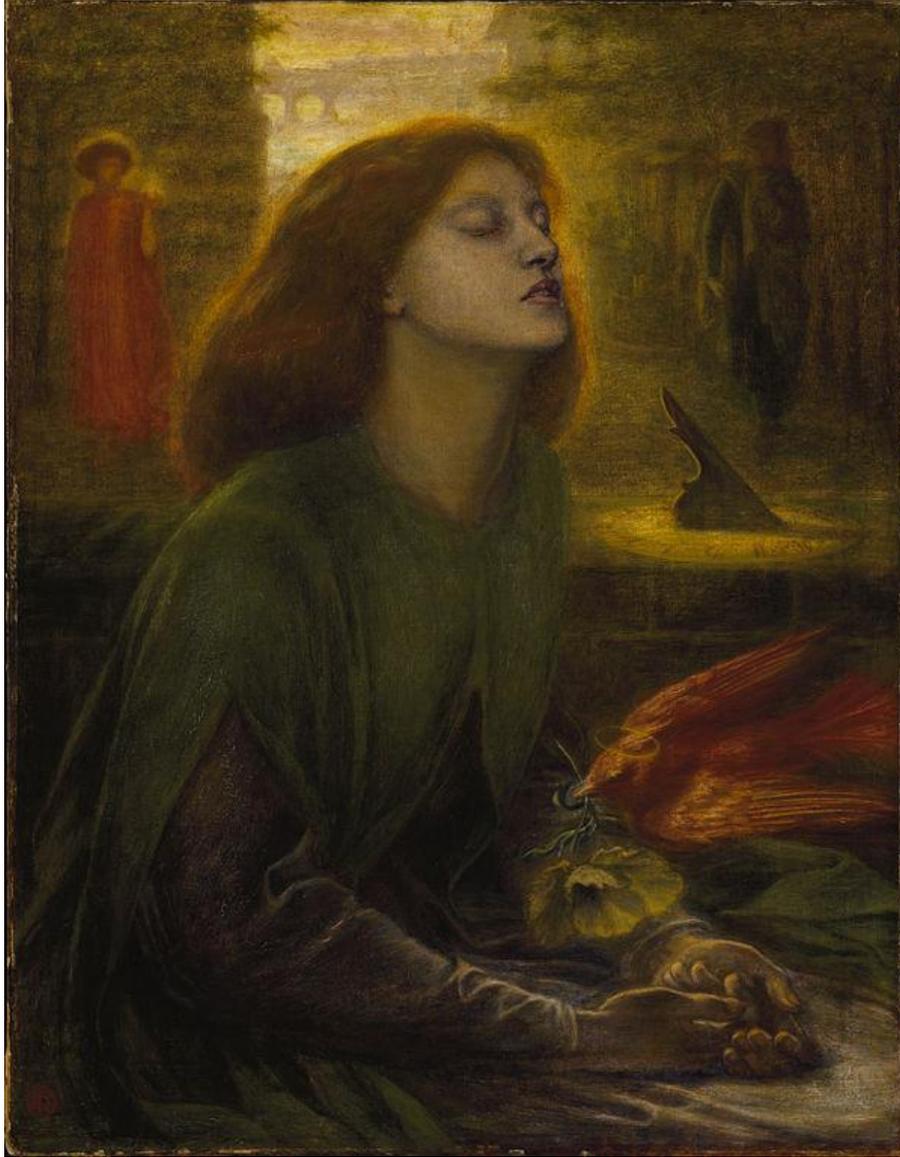
And I to him: "Poet, I thee entreat,  
By that same God whom thou didst never know,  
So that I may escape this woe and worse,

Thou wouldst conduct me there where thou hast said,  
That I may see the portal of Saint Peter,  
And those thou makest so disconsolate."

Then he moved on, and I behind him followed.

## CANTO II

THE DESCENT. DANTE'S PROTEST AND VIRGIL'S APPEAL. THE INTERCESSION OF THE THREE LADIES  
BENEDIGHT.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Beata Beatrix, 1870

Day was departing, and the embrowned air  
Released the animals that are on earth  
From their fatigues; and I the only one

Made myself ready to sustain the war,  
Both of the way and likewise of the woe,  
Which memory that errs not shall retrace.

O Muses, O high genius, now assist me!  
O memory, that didst write down what I saw,  
Here thy nobility shall be manifest!

And I began: "Poet, who guidest me,  
Regard my manhood, if it be sufficient,  
Ere to the arduous pass thou dost confide me.

Thou sayest, that of Silvius the parent,  
While yet corruptible, unto the world  
Immortal went, and was there bodily.

But if the adversary of all evil  
Was courteous, thinking of the high effect  
That issue would from him, and who, and what,

To men of intellect unmeet it seems not;  
For he was of great Rome, and of her empire  
In the empyreal heaven as father chosen;

The which and what, wishing to speak the truth,  
Were established as the holy place, wherein  
Sits the successor of the greatest Peter.

Upon this journey, whence thou givest him vaunt,  
Things did he hear, which the occasion were  
Both of his victory and the papal mantle.

Thither went afterwards the Chosen Vessel,  
To bring back comfort thence unto that Faith,  
Which of salvation's way is the beginning.

But I, why thither come, or who concedes it?  
I not Aeneas am, I am not Paul,  
Nor I, nor others, think me worthy of it.

Therefore, if I resign myself to come,  
I fear the coming may be ill-advised;  
Thou'rt wise, and knowest better than I speak."

And as he is, who unwill's what he willed,  
And by new thoughts doth his intention change,  
So that from his design he quite withdraws,

Such I became, upon that dark hillside,  
Because, in thinking, I consumed the emprise,  
Which was so very prompt in the beginning.

"If I have well thy language understood,"  
Replied that shade of the Magnanimous,  
"Thy soul attainted is with cowardice,

Which many times a man encumbers so,  
It turns him back from honoured enterprise,  
As false sight doth a beast, when he is shy.

That thou mayst free thee from this apprehension,  
I'll tell thee why I came, and what I heard  
At the first moment when I grieved for thee.

Among those was I who are in suspense,  
And a fair, saintly Lady called to me  
In such wise, I besought her to command me.

Her eyes where shining brighter than the Star;  
And she began to say, gentle and low,  
With voice angelical, in her own language:

'O spirit courteous of Mantua,  
Of whom the fame still in the world endures,  
And shall endure, long-lasting as the world;

A friend of mine, and not the friend of fortune,  
Upon the desert slope is so impeded  
Upon his way, that he has turned through terror,

And may, I fear, already be so lost,  
That I too late have risen to his succour,  
From that which I have heard of him in Heaven.

Bestir thee now, and with thy speech ornate,  
And with what needful is for his release,  
Assist him so, that I may be consoled.

Beatrice am I, who do bid thee go;  
I come from there, where I would fain return;  
Love moved me, which compelleth me to speak.

When I shall be in presence of my Lord,  
Full often will I praise thee unto him.'  
Then paused she, and thereafter I began:

'O Lady of virtue, thou alone through whom  
The human race exceedeth all contained  
Within the heaven that has the lesser circles,

So grateful unto me is thy commandment,  
To obey, if 'twere already done, were late;  
No farther need'st thou ope to me thy wish.

But the cause tell me why thou dost not shun  
The here descending down into this centre,  
From the vast place thou burnest to return to.'

'Since thou wouldst fain so inwardly discern,  
Briefly will I relate,' she answered me,  
'Why I am not afraid to enter here.

Of those things only should one be afraid  
Which have the power of doing others harm;  
Of the rest, no; because they are not fearful.

God in his mercy such created me  
That misery of yours attains me not,  
Nor any flame assails me of this burning.

A gentle Lady is in Heaven, who grieves  
At this impediment, to which I send thee,  
So that stern judgment there above is broken.

In her entreaty she besought Lucia,  
And said, "Thy faithful one now stands in need  
Of thee, and unto thee I recommend him."

Lucia, foe of all that cruel is,  
Hastened away, and came unto the place  
Where I was sitting with the ancient Rachel.

"Beatrice" said she, "the true praise of God,  
Why succourest thou not him, who loved thee so,

For thee he issued from the vulgar herd?

Dost thou not hear the pity of his plaint?  
Dost thou not see the death that combats him  
Beside that flood, where ocean has no vaunt?"

Never were persons in the world so swift  
To work their weal and to escape their woe,  
As I, after such words as these were uttered,

Came hither downward from my blessed seat,  
Confiding in thy dignified discourse,  
Which honours thee, and those who've listened to it.'

After she thus had spoken unto me,  
Weeping, her shining eyes she turned away;  
Whereby she made me swifter in my coming;

And unto thee I came, as she desired;  
I have delivered thee from that wild beast,  
Which barred the beautiful mountain's short ascent.

What is it, then? Why, why dost thou delay?  
Why is such baseness bedded in thy heart?  
Daring and hardihood why hast thou not,

Seeing that three such Ladies benedight  
Are caring for thee in the court of Heaven,  
And so much good my speech doth promise thee?"

Even as the flowerets, by nocturnal chill,  
Bowed down and closed, when the sun whitens them,  
Uplift themselves all open on their stems;

Such I became with my exhausted strength,  
And such good courage to my heart there coursed,  
That I began, like an intrepid person:

"O she compassionate, who succoured me,  
And courteous thou, who hast obeyed so soon  
The words of truth which she addressed to thee!

Thou hast my heart so with desire disposed  
To the adventure, with these words of thine,  
That to my first intent I have returned.

Now go, for one sole will is in us both,  
Thou Leader, and thou Lord, and Master thou."  
Thus said I to him; and when he had moved,

I entered on the deep and savage way.

## CANTO III

THE GATE OF HELL. THE INEFFICIENT OR INDIFFERENT. POPE CELESTINE V. THE SHORES OF ACHERON.<sup>1</sup>  
CHARON.<sup>2</sup> THE EARTHQUAKE AND THE SWOON.



Alexander Dmitrievich Litovchenko, Charon carries souls across Acheron, 1861

"Through me the way is to the city doleful;  
Through me the way is to eternal dole;  
Through me the way among the people lost.

Justice incited my sublime Creator;  
Created me divine Omnipotence,  
The highest Wisdom and the primal Love.

Before me there were no created things,  
Only eternal, and I eternal last.  
All hope abandon, ye who enter in!"

These words in sombre colour I beheld

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<sup>1</sup> Acheron (The River of Woe) is one of the five rivers of the Greco-Roman Underworld. The others are Styx (The River of Hate), Phlegethon (The River of Wrath), Lethe (The River of Forgetfulness), and Cocytus (The River of Wailing).

<sup>2</sup> The ferryman of the Underworld.

Written upon the summit of a gate;  
Whence I: "Their sense is, Master, hard to me!"

And he to me, as one experienced:  
"Here all suspicion needs must be abandoned,  
All cowardice must needs be here extinct.

We to the place have come, where I have told thee  
Thou shalt behold the people dolorous  
Who have foregone the good of intellect."

And after he had laid his hand on mine  
With joyful mien, whence I was comforted,  
He led me in among the secret things.

There sighs, complaints, and ululations loud  
Resounded through the air without a star,  
Whence I, at the beginning, wept thereat.

Languages diverse, horrible dialects,  
Accents of anger, words of agony,  
And voices high and hoarse, with sound of hands,

Made up a tumult that goes whirling on  
For ever in that air for ever black,  
Even as the sand doth, when the whirlwind breathes.

And I, who had my head with horror bound,  
Said: "Master, what is this which now I hear?  
What folk is this, which seems by pain so vanquished?"

And he to me: "This miserable mode  
Maintain the melancholy souls of those  
Who lived withouten infamy or praise.

Commingled are they with that caitiff choir  
Of Angels, who have not rebellious been,  
Nor faithful were to God, but were for self.

The heavens expelled them, not to be less fair;  
Nor them the nethermore abyss receives,  
For glory none the damned would have from them."

And I: "O Master, what so grievous is  
To these, that maketh them lament so sore?"  
He answered: "I will tell thee very briefly.

These have no longer any hope of death;  
And this blind life of theirs is so debased,  
They envious are of every other fate.

No fame of them the world permits to be;  
Misericord and Justice both disdain them.  
Let us not speak of them, but look, and pass."

And I, who looked again, beheld a banner,  
Which, whirling round, ran on so rapidly,  
That of all pause it seemed to me indignant;

And after it there came so long a train  
Of people, that I ne'er would have believed  
That ever Death so many had undone.

When some among them I had recognised,  
I looked, and I beheld the shade of him  
Who made through cowardice the great refusal.

Forthwith I comprehended, and was certain,  
That this the sect was of the caitiff wretches  
Hateful to God and to his enemies.

These miscreants, who never were alive,  
Were naked, and were stung exceedingly  
By gadflies and by hornets that were there.

These did their faces irrigate with blood,  
Which, with their tears commingled, at their feet  
By the disgusting worms was gathered up.

And when to gazing farther I betook me.  
People I saw on a great river's bank;  
Whence said I: "Master, now vouchsafe to me,

That I may know who these are, and what law  
Makes them appear so ready to pass over,  
As I discern athwart the dusky light."

And he to me: "These things shall all be known  
To thee, as soon as we our footsteps stay  
Upon the dismal shore of Acheron."

Then with mine eyes ashamed and downward cast,  
Fearing my words might irksome be to him,  
From speech refrained I till we reached the river.

And lo! towards us coming in a boat  
An old man, hoary with the hair of eld,  
Crying: "Woe unto you, ye souls depraved!

Hope nevermore to look upon the heavens;  
I come to lead you to the other shore,  
To the eternal shades in heat and frost.

And thou, that yonder standest, living soul,  
Withdraw thee from these people, who are dead!"  
But when he saw that I did not withdraw,

He said: "By other ways, by other ports  
Thou to the shore shalt come, not here, for passage;  
A lighter vessel needs must carry thee."

And unto him the Guide: "Vex thee not, Charon;  
It is so willed there where is power to do  
That which is willed; and farther question not."

Thereat were quieted the fleecy cheeks  
Of him the ferryman of the livid fen,  
Who round about his eyes had wheels of flame.

But all those souls who weary were and naked  
Their colour changed and gnashed their teeth together,  
As soon as they had heard those cruel words.

God they blasphemed and their progenitors,  
The human race, the place, the time, the seed  
Of their engendering and of their birth!

Thereafter all together they drew back,  
Bitterly weeping, to the accursed shore,  
Which waiteth every man who fears not God.

Charon the demon, with the eyes of glede,  
Beckoning to them, collects them all together,  
Beats with his oar whoever lags behind.

As in the autumn-time the leaves fall off,  
First one and then another, till the branch  
Unto the earth surrenders all its spoils;

In similar wise the evil seed of Adam  
Throw themselves from that margin one by one,  
At signals, as a bird unto its lure.

So they depart across the dusky wave,  
And ere upon the other side they land,  
Again on this side a new troop assembles.

"My son," the courteous Master said to me,  
"All those who perish in the wrath of God  
Here meet together out of every land;

And ready are they to pass o'er the river,  
Because celestial Justice spurs them on,  
So that their fear is turned into desire.

This way there never passes a good soul;  
And hence if Charon doth complain of thee,  
Well mayst thou know now what his speech imports."

This being finished, all the dusk champaign  
Trembled so violently, that of that terror  
The recollection bathes me still with sweat.

The land of tears gave forth a blast of wind,  
And fulminated a vermilion light,  
Which overmastered in me every sense,

And as a man whom sleep hath seized I fell.

## CANTO IV

THE FIRST CIRCLE, LIMBO: VIRTUOUS PAGANS AND THE UNBAPTIZED. THE FOUR POETS, HOMER, HORACE, OVID, AND LUCAN. THE NOBLE CASTLE OF PHILOSOPHY.



Raphael, The Parnassus, detail of Homer, Dante and Virgil, 1511

Broke the deep lethargy within my head  
A heavy thunder, so that I upstarted,  
Like to a person who by force is wakened;

And round about I moved my rested eyes,  
Uprisen erect, and steadfastly I gazed,  
To recognise the place wherein I was.

True is it, that upon the verge I found me  
Of the abysmal valley dolorous,  
That gathers thunder of infinite ululations.

Obscure, profound it was, and nebulous,  
So that by fixing on its depths my sight  
Nothing whatever I discerned therein.

"Let us descend now into the blind world,"  
Began the Poet, pallid utterly;

"I will be first, and thou shalt second be."

And I, who of his colour was aware,  
Said: "How shall I come, if thou art afraid,  
Who'rt wont to be a comfort to my fears?"

And he to me: "The anguish of the people  
Who are below here in my face depicts  
That pity which for terror thou hast taken.

Let us go on, for the long way impels us."  
Thus he went in, and thus he made me enter  
The foremost circle that surrounds the abyss.

There, as it seemed to me from listening,  
Were lamentations none, but only sighs,  
That tremble made the everlasting air.

And this arose from sorrow without torment,  
Which the crowds had, that many were and great,  
Of infants and of women and of men.

To me the Master good: "Thou dost not ask  
What spirits these, which thou beholdest, are?  
Now will I have thee know, ere thou go farther,

That they sinned not; and if they merit had,  
'Tis not enough, because they had not baptism  
Which is the portal of the Faith thou holdest;

And if they were before Christianity,  
In the right manner they adored not God;  
And among such as these am I myself.

For such defects, and not for other guilt,  
Lost are we and are only so far punished,  
That without hope we live on in desire."

Great grief seized on my heart when this I heard,  
Because some people of much worthiness  
I knew, who in that Limbo were suspended.

"Tell me, my Master, tell me, thou my Lord,"  
Began I, with desire of being certain  
Of that Faith which o'ercometh every error,

"Came any one by his own merit hence,  
Or by another's, who was blessed thereafter?"  
And he, who understood my covert speech,

Replied: "I was a novice in this state,  
When I saw hither come a Mighty One,  
With sign of victory incoronate.

Hence he drew forth the shade of the First Parent,  
And that of his son Abel, and of Noah,  
Of Moses the lawgiver, and the obedient

Abraham, patriarch, and David, king,  
Israel with his father and his children,  
And Rachel, for whose sake he did so much,

And others many, and he made them blessed;

And thou must know, that earlier than these  
Never were any human spirits saved."

We ceased not to advance because he spake,  
But still were passing onward through the forest,  
The forest, say I, of thick-crowded ghosts.

Not very far as yet our way had gone  
This side the summit, when I saw a fire  
That overcame a hemisphere of darkness.

We were a little distant from it still,  
But not so far that I in part discerned not  
That honourable people held that place.

"O thou who honourest every art and science,  
Who may these be, which such great honour have,  
That from the fashion of the rest it parts them?"

And he to me: "The honourable name,  
That sounds of them above there in thy life,  
Wins grace in Heaven, that so advances them."

In the mean time a voice was heard by me:  
"All honour be to the pre-eminent Poet;  
His shade returns again, that was departed."

After the voice had ceased and quiet was,  
Four mighty shades I saw approaching us;  
Semblance had they nor sorrowful nor glad.

To say to me began my gracious Master:  
"Him with that falchion in his hand behold,  
Who comes before the three, even as their lord.

That one is Homer, Poet sovereign;  
He who comes next is Horace, the satirist;  
The third is Ovid, and the last is Lucan.

Because to each of these with me applies  
The name that solitary voice proclaimed,  
They do me honour, and in that do well."

Thus I beheld assemble the fair school  
Of that lord of the song pre-eminent,  
Who o'er the others like an eagle soars.

When they together had discoursed somewhat,  
They turned to me with signs of salutation,  
And on beholding this, my Master smiled;

And more of honour still, much more, they did me,  
In that they made me one of their own band;  
So that the sixth was I, 'mid so much wit.

Thus we went on as far as to the light,  
Things saying 'tis becoming to keep silent,  
As was the saying of them where I was.

We came unto a noble castle's foot,  
Seven times encompassed with lofty walls,  
Defended round by a fair rivulet;

This we passed over even as firm ground;  
Through portals seven I entered with these Sages;  
We came into a meadow of fresh verdure.

People were there with solemn eyes and slow,  
Of great authority in their countenance;  
They spake but seldom, and with gentle voices.

Thus we withdrew ourselves upon one side  
Into an opening luminous and lofty,  
So that they all of them were visible.

There opposite, upon the green enamel,  
Were pointed out to me the mighty spirits,  
Whom to have seen I feel myself exalted.

I saw Electra with companions many,  
'Mongst whom I knew both Hector and Aeneas,  
Caesar in armour with gerfalcon eyes;

I saw Camilla and Penthesilea  
On the other side, and saw the King Latinus,  
Who with Lavinia his daughter sat;

I saw that Brutus who drove Tarquin forth,  
Lucretia, Julia, Marcia, and Cornelia,  
And saw alone, apart, the Saladin.

When I had lifted up my brows a little,  
The Master I beheld of those who know,  
Sit with his philosophic family.

All gaze upon him, and all do him honour.  
There I beheld both Socrates and Plato,  
Who nearer him before the others stand;

Democritus, who puts the world on chance,  
Diogenes, Anaxagoras, and Thales,  
Zeno, Empedocles, and Heraclitus;

Of qualities I saw the good collector,  
Hight Dioscorides; and Orpheus saw I,  
Tully and Livy, and moral Seneca,

Euclid, geometrician, and Ptolemy,  
Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna,  
Averroes, who the great Comment made.

I cannot all of them pourtray in full,  
Because so drives me onward the long theme,  
That many times the word comes short of fact.

The sixfold company in two divides;  
Another way my sapient Guide conducts me  
Forth from the quiet to the air that trembles;

And to a place I come where nothing shines.

## CANTO V

THE SECOND CIRCLE: THE WANTON. MINOS. THE INFERNAL HURRICANE. FRANCESCA DA RIMINI.



Joseph Noel Paton, Dante Meditates on Francesca Da Rimini, 19<sup>th</sup> c.

Thus I descended out of the first circle  
Down to the second, that less space begirds,  
And so much greater dole, that goads to wailing.

There standeth Minos horribly, and snarls;  
Examines the transgressions at the entrance;

Judges, and sends according as he girds him.

I say, that when the spirit evil-born  
Cometh before him, wholly it confesses;  
And this discriminator of transgressions

Seeth what place in Hell is meet for it;  
Girds himself with his tail as many times  
As grades he wishes it should be thrust down.

Always before him many of them stand;  
They go by turns each one unto the judgment;  
They speak, and hear, and then are downward hurled.

"O thou, that to this dolorous hostelry  
Comest," said Minos to me, when he saw me,  
Leaving the practice of so great an office,

"Look how thou enterest, and in whom thou trustest;  
Let not the portal's amplitude deceive thee."  
And unto him my Guide: "Why criest thou too?"

Do not impede his journey fate-ordained;  
It is so willed there where is power to do  
That which is willed; and ask no further question."

And now begin the dolesome notes to grow  
Audible unto me; now am I come  
There where much lamentation strikes upon me.

I came into a place mute of all light,  
Which bellows as the sea does in a tempest,  
If by opposing winds 't is combated.

The infernal hurricane that never rests  
Hurtles the spirits onward in its rapine;  
Whirling them round, and smiting, it molests them.

When they arrive before the precipice,  
There are the shrieks, the plaints, and the laments,  
There they blaspheme the puissance divine.

I understood that unto such a torment  
The carnal malefactors were condemned,  
Who reason subjugate to appetite.

And as the wings of starlings bear them on  
In the cold season in large band and full,  
So doth that blast the spirits maledict;

It hither, thither, downward, upward, drives them;  
No hope doth comfort them for evermore,  
Not of repose, but even of lesser pain.

And as the cranes go chanting forth their lays,  
Making in air a long line of themselves,  
So saw I coming, uttering lamentations,

Shadows borne onward by the aforesaid stress.  
Whereupon said I: "Master, who are those  
People, whom the black air so castigates?"

"The first of those, of whom intelligence

Thou fain wouldst have," then said he unto me,  
"The empress was of many languages.

To sensual vices she was so abandoned,  
That lustful she made licit in her law,  
To remove the blame to which she had been led.

She is Semiramis, of whom we read  
That she succeeded Ninus, and was his spouse;  
She held the land which now the Sultan rules.

The next is she who killed herself for love,  
And broke faith with the ashes of Sichaeus;  
Then Cleopatra the voluptuous."

Helen I saw, for whom so many ruthless  
Seasons revolved; and saw the great Achilles,  
Who at the last hour combated with Love.

Paris I saw, Tristan; and more than a thousand  
Shades did he name and point out with his finger,  
Whom Love had separated from our life.

After that I had listened to my Teacher,  
Naming the dames of old and cavaliers,  
Pity prevailed, and I was nigh bewildered.

And I began: "O Poet, willingly  
Speak would I to those two, who go together,  
And seem upon the wind to be so light."

And, he to me: "Thou'lt mark, when they shall be  
Nearer to us; and then do thou implore them  
By love which leadeth them, and they will come."

Soon as the wind in our direction sways them,  
My voice uplift I: "O ye weary souls!  
Come speak to us, if no one interdicts it."

As turtle-doves, called onward by desire,  
With open and steady wings to the sweet nest  
Fly through the air by their volition borne,

So came they from the band where Dido is,  
Approaching us athwart the air malign,  
So strong was the affectionate appeal.

"O living creature gracious and benignant,  
Who visiting goest through the purple air  
Us, who have stained the world incarnadine,

If were the King of the Universe our friend,  
We would pray unto him to give thee peace,  
Since thou hast pity on our woe perverse.

Of what it pleases thee to hear and speak,  
That will we hear, and we will speak to you,  
While silent is the wind, as it is now.

Sitteth the city, wherein I was born,  
Upon the sea-shore where the Po descends  
To rest in peace with all his retinue.

Love, that on gentle heart doth swiftly seize,  
Seized this man for the person beautiful  
That was ta'en from me, and still the mode offends me.

Love, that exempts no one beloved from loving,  
Seized me with pleasure of this man so strongly,  
That, as thou seest, it doth not yet desert me;

Love has conducted us unto one death;  
Caina waiteth him who quenched our life!"  
These words were borne along from them to us.

As soon as I had heard those souls tormented,  
I bowed my face, and so long held it down  
Until the Poet said to me: "What thinkest?"

When I made answer, I began: "Alas!  
How many pleasant thoughts, how much desire,  
Conducted these unto the dolorous pass!"

Then unto them I turned me, and I spake,  
And I began: "Thine agonies, Francesca,  
Sad and compassionate to weeping make me.

But tell me, at the time of those sweet sighs,  
By what and in what manner Love conceded,  
That you should know your dubious desires?"

And she to me: "There is no greater sorrow  
Than to be mindful of the happy time  
In misery, and that thy Teacher knows.

But, if to recognise the earliest root  
Of love in us thou hast so great desire,  
I will do even as he who weeps and speaks.

One day we reading were for our delight  
Of Launcelot, how Love did him enthral.  
Alone we were and without any fear.

Full many a time our eyes together drew  
That reading, and drove the colour from our faces;  
But one point only was it that o'ercame us.

When as we read of the much-longed-for smile  
Being by such a noble lover kissed,  
This one, who ne'er from me shall be divided,

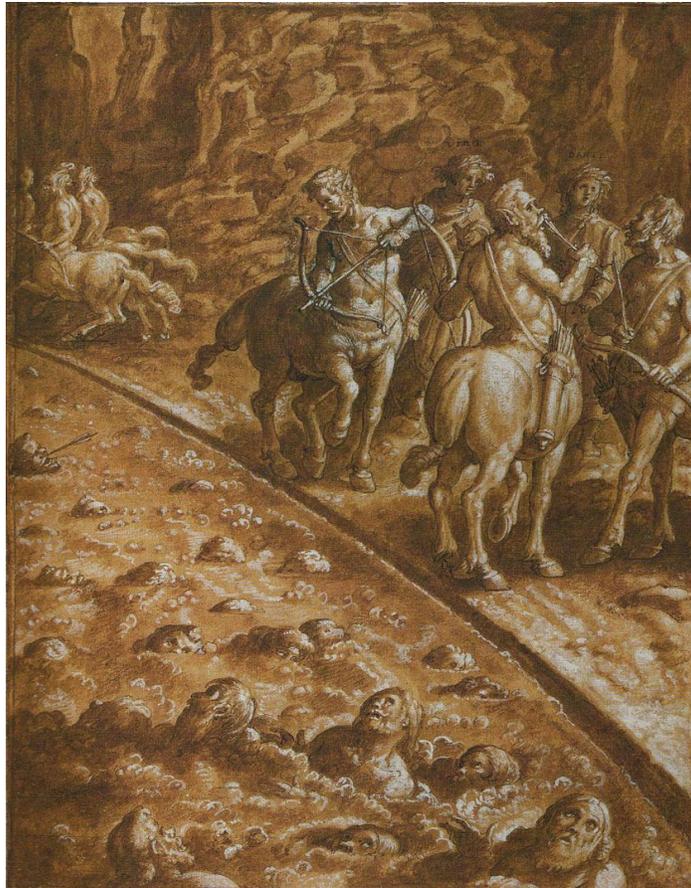
Kissed me upon the mouth all palpitating.  
Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it.  
That day no farther did we read therein."

And all the while one spirit uttered this,  
The other one did weep so, that, for pity,  
I swooned away as if I had been dying,

And fell, even as a dead body falls.

## CANTO XII

THE MINOTAUR. THE SEVENTH CIRCLE: THE VIOLENT. THE RIVER PHLEGETHON.<sup>3</sup> THE VIOLENT AGAINST THEIR NEIGHBOURS. THE CENTAURS. TYRANTS.



Johannes Stradanus, Canto XII, 1544

The place where to descend the bank we came  
Was alpine, and from what was there, moreover,  
Of such a kind that every eye would shun it.

Such as that ruin is which in the flank  
Smote, on this side of Trent, the Adige,  
Either by earthquake or by failing stay,

For from the mountain's top, from which it moved,  
Unto the plain the cliff is shattered so,  
Some path 'twould give to him who was above;

Even such was the descent of that ravine,  
And on the border of the broken chasm  
The infamy of Crete was stretched along,

Who was conceived in the fictitious cow;  
And when he us beheld, he bit himself,  
Even as one whom anger racks within.

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<sup>3</sup> "Phlegethon" means "flaming".

My Sage towards him shouted: "Peradventure  
Thou think'st that here may be the Duke of Athens,  
Who in the world above brought death to thee?"

Get thee gone, beast, for this one cometh not  
Instructed by thy sister, but he comes  
In order to behold your punishments."

As is that bull who breaks loose at the moment  
In which he has received the mortal blow,  
Who cannot walk, but staggers here and there,

The Minotaur beheld I do the like;  
And he, the wary, cried: "Run to the passage;  
While he wroth, 'tis well thou shouldst descend."

Thus down we took our way o'er that discharge  
Of stones, which oftentimes did move themselves  
Beneath my feet, from the unwonted burden.

Thoughtful I went; and he said: "Thou art thinking  
Perhaps upon this ruin, which is guarded  
By that brute anger which just now I quenched.

Now will I have thee know, the other time  
I here descended to the nether Hell,  
This precipice had not yet fallen down.

But truly, if I well discern, a little  
Before His coming who the mighty spoil  
Bore off from Dis, in the supernal circle,

Upon all sides the deep and loathsome valley  
Trembled so, that I thought the Universe  
Was thrilled with love, by which there are who think

The world oftentimes converted into chaos;  
And at that moment this primeval crag  
Both here and elsewhere made such overthrow.

But fix thine eyes below; for draweth near  
The river of blood, within which boiling is  
Whoe'er by violence doth injure others."

O blind cupidity, O wrath insane,  
That spurs us onward so in our short life,  
And in the eternal then so badly steeps us!

I saw an ample moat bent like a bow,  
As one which all the plain encompasses,  
Conformable to what my Guide had said.

And between this and the embankment's foot  
Centaur in file were running, armed with arrows,  
As in the world they used the chase to follow.

Beholding us descend, each one stood still,  
And from the squadron three detached themselves,  
With bows and arrows in advance selected;

And from afar one cried: "Unto what torment  
Come ye, who down the hillside are descending?  
Tell us from there; if not, I draw the bow."

My Master said: "Our answer will we make  
To Chiron, near you there; in evil hour,  
That will of thine was evermore so hasty."

Then touched he me, and said: "This one is Nessus,  
Who perished for the lovely Dejanira,  
And for himself, himself did vengeance take.

And he in the midst, who at his breast is gazing,  
Is the great Chiron, who brought up Achilles;  
That other Pholus is, who was so wrathful.

Thousands and thousands go about the moat  
Shooting with shafts whatever soul emerges  
Out of the blood, more than his crime allots."

Near we approached unto those monsters fleet;  
Chiron an arrow took, and with the notch  
Backward upon his jaws he put his beard.

After he had uncovered his great mouth,  
He said to his companions: "Are you ware  
That he behind moveth whate'er he touches?"

Thus are not wont to do the feet of dead men."  
And my good Guide, who now was at his breast,  
Where the two natures are together joined,

Replied: "Indeed he lives, and thus alone  
Me it behoves to show him the dark valley;  
Necessity, and not delight, impels us.

Some one withdrew from singing Halleluja,  
Who unto me committed this new office;  
No thief is he, nor I a thievish spirit.

But by that virtue through which I am moving  
My steps along this savage thoroughfare,  
Give us some one of thine, to be with us,

And who may show us where to pass the ford,  
And who may carry this one on his back;  
For 'tis no spirit that can walk the air."

Upon his right breast Chiron wheeled about,  
And said to Nessus: "Turn and do thou guide them,  
And warn aside, if other band may meet you."

We with our faithful escort onward moved  
Along the brink of the vermilion boiling,  
Wherein the boiled were uttering loud laments.

People I saw within up to the eyebrows,  
And the great Centaur said: "Tyrants are these,  
Who dealt in bloodshed and in pillaging.

Here they lament their pitiless mischiefs; here  
Is Alexander, and fierce Dionysius  
Who upon Sicily brought dolorous years.

That forehead there which has the hair so black  
Is Azzolin; and the other who is blond,

Obizzo is of Esti, who, in truth,

Up in the world was by his stepson slain."  
Then turned I to the Poet; and he said,  
"Now he be first to thee, and second I."

A little farther on the Centaur stopped  
Above a folk, who far down as the throat  
Seemed from that boiling stream to issue forth.

A shade he showed us on one side alone,  
Saying: "He cleft asunder in God's bosom  
The heart that still upon the Thames is honoured."

Then people saw I, who from out the river  
Lifted their heads and also all the chest;  
And many among these I recognised.

Thus ever more and more grew shallower  
That blood, so that the feet alone it covered;  
And there across the moat our passage was.

"Even as thou here upon this side beholdest  
The boiling stream, that aye diminishes,"  
The Centaur said, "I wish thee to believe

That on this other more and more declines  
Its bed, until it reunites itself  
Where it behoveth tyranny to groan.

Justice divine, upon this side, is goading  
That Attila, who was a scourge on earth,  
And Pyrrhus, and Sextus; and for ever milks

The tears which with the boiling it unseals  
In Rinier da Corneto and Rinier Pazzo,  
Who made upon the highways so much war."

Then back he turned, and passed again the ford.

## CANTO XIII

THE WOOD OF THORNS. THE HARPIES. THE VIOLENT AGAINST THEMSELVES. SUICIDES. PIER DELLA VIGNA. LANO AND JACOPO DA SANT' ANDREA.



William Blake, The Wood of the Self-Murderers: The Harpies and the Suicides, 1827

Not yet had Nessus reached the other side,  
When we had put ourselves within a wood,  
That was not marked by any path whatever.

Not foliage green, but of a dusky colour,  
Not branches smooth, but gnarled and intertangled,  
Not apple-trees were there, but thorns with poison.

Such tangled thickets have not, nor so dense,  
Those savage wild beasts, that in hatred hold  
'Twixt Cecina and Corneto the tilled places.

There do the hideous Harpies make their nests,  
Who chased the Trojans from the Strophades,  
With sad announcement of impending doom;

Broad wings have they, and necks and faces human,  
And feet with claws, and their great bellies fledged;  
They make laments upon the wondrous trees.

And the good Master: "Ere thou enter farther,  
Know that thou art within the second round,"

Thus he began to say, "and shalt be, till

Thou comest out upon the horrible sand;  
Therefore look well around, and thou shalt see  
Things that will credence give unto my speech."

I heard on all sides lamentations uttered,  
And person none beheld I who might make them,  
Whence, utterly bewildered, I stood still.

I think he thought that I perhaps might think  
So many voices issued through those trunks  
From people who concealed themselves from us;

Therefore the Master said: "If thou break off  
Some little spray from any of these trees,  
The thoughts thou hast will wholly be made vain."

Then stretched I forth my hand a little forward,  
And plucked a branchlet off from a great thorn;  
And the trunk cried, "Why dost thou mangle me?"

After it had become embrowned with blood,  
It recommenced its cry: "Why dost thou rend me?  
Hast thou no spirit of pity whatsoever?"

Men once we were, and now are changed to trees;  
Indeed, thy hand should be more pitiful,  
Even if the souls of serpents we had been."

As out of a green brand, that is on fire  
At one of the ends, and from the other drips  
And hisses with the wind that is escaping;

So from that splinter issued forth together  
Both words and blood; whereat I let the tip  
Fall, and stood like a man who is afraid.

"Had he been able sooner to believe,"  
My Sage made answer, "O thou wounded soul,  
What only in my verses he has seen,

Not upon thee had he stretched forth his hand;  
Whereas the thing incredible has caused me  
To put him to an act which grieveth me.

But tell him who thou wast, so that by way  
Of some amends thy fame he may refresh  
Up in the world, to which he can return."

And the trunk said: "So thy sweet words allure me,  
I cannot silent be; and you be vexed not,  
That I a little to discourse am tempted.

I am the one who both keys had in keeping  
Of Frederick's heart, and turned them to and fro  
So softly in unlocking and in locking,

That from his secrets most men I withheld;  
Fidelity I bore the glorious office  
So great, I lost thereby my sleep and pulses.

The courtesan who never from the dwelling

Of Caesar turned aside her strumpet eyes,  
Death universal and the vice of courts,

Inflamed against me all the other minds,  
And they, inflamed, did so inflame Augustus,  
That my glad honours turned to dismal mournings.

My spirit, in disdainful exultation,  
Thinking by dying to escape disdain,  
Made me unjust against myself, the just.

I, by the roots unwonted of this wood,  
Do swear to you that never broke I faith  
Unto my lord, who was so worthy of honour;

And to the world if one of you return,  
Let him my memory comfort, which is lying  
Still prostrate from the blow that envy dealt it."

Waited awhile, and then: "Since he is silent,"  
The Poet said to me, "lose not the time,  
But speak, and question him, if more may please thee."

Whence I to him: "Do thou again inquire  
Concerning what thou thinks't will satisfy me;  
For I cannot, such pity is in my heart."

Therefore he recommenced: "So may the man  
Do for thee freely what thy speech implores,  
Spirit incarcerate, again be pleased

To tell us in what way the soul is bound  
Within these knots; and tell us, if thou canst,  
If any from such members e'er is freed."

Then blew the trunk amain, and afterward  
The wind was into such a voice converted:  
"With brevity shall be replied to you.

When the exasperated soul abandons  
The body whence it rent itself away,  
Minos consigns it to the seventh abyss.

It falls into the forest, and no part  
Is chosen for it; but where Fortune hurls it,  
There like a grain of spelt it germinates.

It springs a sapling, and a forest tree;  
The Harpies, feeding then upon its leaves,  
Do pain create, and for the pain an outlet.

Like others for our spoils shall we return;  
But not that any one may them revest,  
For 'tis not just to have what one casts off.

Here we shall drag them, and along the dismal  
Forest our bodies shall suspended be,  
Each to the thorn of his molested shade."

We were attentive still unto the trunk,  
Thinking that more it yet might wish to tell us,  
When by a tumult we were overtaken,

In the same way as he is who perceives  
The boar and chase approaching to his stand,  
Who hears the crashing of the beasts and branches;

And two behold! upon our left-hand side,  
Naked and scratched, fleeing so furiously,  
That of the forest, every fan they broke.

He who was in advance: "Now help, Death, help!"  
And the other one, who seemed to lag too much,  
Was shouting: "Lano, were not so alert

Those legs of thine at joustings of the Toppo!"  
And then, perchance because his breath was failing,  
He grouped himself together with a bush.

Behind them was the forest full of black  
She-mastiffs, ravenous, and swift of foot  
As greyhounds, who are issuing from the chain.

On him who had crouched down they set their teeth,  
And him they lacerated piece by piece,  
Thereafter bore away those aching members.

Thereat my Escort took me by the hand,  
And led me to the bush, that all in vain  
Was weeping from its bloody lacerations.

"O Jacopo," it said, "of Sant' Andrea,  
What helped it thee of me to make a screen?  
What blame have I in thy nefarious life?"

When near him had the Master stayed his steps,  
He said: "Who wast thou, that through wounds so many  
Art blowing out with blood thy dolorous speech?"

And he to us: "O souls, that hither come  
To look upon the shameful massacre  
That has so rent away from me my leaves,

Gather them up beneath the dismal bush;  
I of that city was which to the Baptist  
Changed its first patron, wherefore he for this

Forever with his art will make it sad.  
And were it not that on the pass of Arno  
Some glimpses of him are remaining still,

Those citizens, who afterwards rebuilt it  
Upon the ashes left by Attila,  
In vain had caused their labour to be done.

Of my own house I made myself a gibbet."

## CANTO XV

### THE VIOLENT AGAINST NATURE. BRUNETTO LATINI.



Salvador Dalí, Inferno Canto 15, 1964

Now bears us onward one of the hard margins,  
And so the brooklet's mist o'ershadows it,  
From fire it saves the water and the dikes.

Even as the Flemings, 'twixt Cadsand and Bruges,  
Fearing the flood that tow'rds them hurls itself,  
Their bulwarks build to put the sea to flight;

And as the Paduans along the Brenta,  
To guard their villas and their villages,  
Or ever Chiarentana feel the heat;

In such similitude had those been made,  
Albeit not so lofty nor so thick,  
Whoever he might be, the master made them.

Now were we from the forest so remote,  
I could not have discovered where it was,  
Even if backward I had turned myself,

When we a company of souls encountered,  
Who came beside the dike, and every one  
Gazed at us, as at evening we are wont

To eye each other under a new moon,  
And so towards us sharpened they their brows  
As an old tailor at the needle's eye.

Thus scrutinised by such a family,  
By some one I was recognised, who seized  
My garment's hem, and cried out, "What a marvel!"

And I, when he stretched forth his arm to me,  
On his baked aspect fastened so mine eyes,  
That the scorched countenance prevented not

His recognition by my intellect;  
And bowing down my face unto his own,  
I made reply, "Are you here, Ser Brunetto?"

And he: "May't not displease thee, O my son,  
If a brief space with thee Brunetto Latini  
Backward return and let the trail go on."

I said to him: "With all my power I ask it;  
And if you wish me to sit down with you,  
I will, if he please, for I go with him."

"O son," he said, "whoever of this herd  
A moment stops, lies then a hundred years,  
Nor fans himself when smiteth him the fire.

Therefore go on; I at thy skirts will come,  
And afterward will I rejoin my band,  
Which goes lamenting its eternal doom."

I did not dare to go down from the road  
Level to walk with him; but my head bowed  
I held as one who goeth reverently.

And he began: "What fortune or what fate  
Before the last day leadeth thee down here?  
And who is this that showeth thee the way?"

"Up there above us in the life serene,"  
I answered him, "I lost me in a valley,  
Or ever yet my age had been completed.

But yestermorn I turned my back upon it;  
This one appeared to me, returning thither,  
And homeward leadeth me along this road."

And he to me: "If thou thy star do follow,  
Thou canst not fail thee of a glorious port,  
If well I judged in the life beautiful.

And if I had not died so prematurely,  
Seeing Heaven thus benignant unto thee,

I would have given thee comfort in the work.

But that ungrateful and malignant people,  
Which of old time from Fesole descended,  
And smacks still of the mountain and the granite,

Will make itself, for thy good deeds, thy foe;  
And it is right; for among crabbed sorbs  
It ill befits the sweet fig to bear fruit.

Old rumour in the world proclaims them blind;  
A people avaricious, envious, proud;  
Take heed that of their customs thou do cleanse thee.

Thy fortune so much honour doth reserve thee,  
One party and the other shall be hungry  
For thee; but far from goat shall be the grass.

Their litter let the beasts of Fesole  
Make of themselves, nor let them touch the plant,  
If any still upon their dunghill rise,

In which may yet revive the consecrated  
Seed of those Romans, who remained there when  
The nest of such great malice it became."

"If my entreaty wholly were fulfilled,"  
Replied I to him, "not yet would you be  
In banishment from human nature placed;

For in my mind is fixed, and touches now  
My heart the dear and good paternal image  
Of you, when in the world from hour to hour

You taught me how a man becomes eternal;  
And how much I am grateful, while I live  
Behoves that in my language be discerned.

What you narrate of my career I write,  
And keep it to be glossed with other text  
By a Lady who can do it, if I reach her.

This much will I have manifest to you;  
Provided that my conscience do not chide me,  
For whatsoever Fortune I am ready.

Such handsel is not new unto mine ears;  
Therefore let Fortune turn her wheel around  
As it may please her, and the churl his mattock."

My Master thereupon on his right cheek  
Did backward turn himself, and looked at me;  
Then said: "He listeneth well who noteth it."

Nor speaking less on that account, I go  
With Ser Brunetto, and I ask who are  
His most known and most eminent companions.

And he to me: "To know of some is well;  
Of others it were laudable to be silent,  
For short would be the time for so much speech.

Know them in sum, that all of them were clerks,

And men of letters great and of great fame,  
In the world tainted with the selfsame sin.

Priscian goes yonder with that wretched crowd,  
And Francis of Accorso; and thou hadst seen there  
If thou hadst had a hankering for such scurf,

That one, who by the Servant of the Servants  
From Arno was transferred to Bacchiglione,  
Where he has left his sin-excited nerves.

More would I say, but coming and discoursing  
Can be no longer; for that I behold  
New smoke uprising yonder from the sand.

A people comes with whom I may not be;  
Commended unto thee be my Tesoro,  
In which I still live, and no more I ask."

Then he turned round, and seemed to be of those  
Who at Verona run for the Green Mantle  
Across the plain; and seemed to be among them

The one who wins, and not the one who loses.

## CANTO XXXIV

FOURTH DIVISION OF THE NINTH CIRCLE, THE JUDECCA: TRAITORS TO THEIR LORDS AND BENEFACTORS. LUCIFER, JUDAS ISCARIOT, BRUTUS, AND CASSIUS. THE CHASM OF LETHE. THE ASCENT.



Coppo di Marcovaldo, Mosaic of Satan, 1225

"Vexilla Regis prodeunt Inferni'  
Towards us; therefore look in front of thee,"  
My Master said, "if thou discernest him."

As, when there breathes a heavy fog, or when  
Our hemisphere is darkening into night,  
Appears far off a mill the wind is turning,

Methought that such a building then I saw;  
And, for the wind, I drew myself behind  
My Guide, because there was no other shelter.

Now was I, and with fear in verse I put it,  
There where the shades were wholly covered up,  
And glimmered through like unto straws in glass.

Some prone are lying, others stand erect,  
This with the head, and that one with the soles;  
Another, bow-like, face to feet inverts.

When in advance so far we had proceeded,  
That it my Master pleased to show to me  
The creature who once had the beautiful semblance,

He from before me moved and made me stop,  
Saying: "Behold Dis, and behold the place  
Where thou with fortitude must arm thyself."

How frozen I became and powerless then,  
Ask it not, Reader, for I write it not,  
Because all language would be insufficient.

I did not die, and I alive remained not;  
Think for thyself now, hast thou aught of wit,  
What I became, being of both deprived.

The Emperor of the kingdom dolorous  
From his mid-breast forth issued from the ice;  
And better with a giant I compare

Than do the giants with those arms of his;  
Consider now how great must be that whole,  
Which unto such a part conforms itself.

Were he as fair once, as he now is foul,  
And lifted up his brow against his Maker,  
Well may proceed from him all tribulation.

O, what a marvel it appeared to me,  
When I beheld three faces on his head!  
The one in front, and that vermilion was;

Two were the others, that were joined with this  
Above the middle part of either shoulder,  
And they were joined together at the crest;

And the right-hand one seemed 'twixt white and yellow;  
The left was such to look upon as those  
Who come from where the Nile falls valley-ward.

Underneath each came forth two mighty wings,  
Such as befitting were so great a bird;  
Sails of the sea I never saw so large.

No feathers had they, but as of a bat  
Their fashion was; and he was waving them,  
So that three winds proceeded forth therefrom.

Thereby Cocytus wholly was congealed.  
With six eyes did he weep, and down three chins  
Trickled the tear-drops and the bloody drivel.

At every mouth he with his teeth was crunching  
A sinner, in the manner of a brake,  
So that he three of them tormented thus.

To him in front the biting was as naught  
Unto the clawing, for sometimes the spine  
Utterly stripped of all the skin remained.

"That soul up there which has the greatest pain,"  
The Master said, "is Judas Iscariot;  
With head inside, he plies his legs without.

Of the two others, who head downward are,  
The one who hangs from the black jowl is Brutus;

See how he writhes himself, and speaks no word.

And the other, who so stalwart seems, is Cassius.  
But night is reascending, and 'tis time  
That we depart, for we have seen the whole."

As seemed him good, I clasped him round the neck,  
And he the vantage seized of time and place,  
And when the wings were opened wide apart,

He laid fast hold upon the shaggy sides;  
From fell to fell descended downward then  
Between the thick hair and the frozen crust.

When we were come to where the thigh revolves  
Exactly on the thickness of the haunch,  
The Guide, with labour and with hard-drawn breath,

Turned round his head where he had had his legs,  
And grappled to the hair, as one who mounts,  
So that to Hell I thought we were returning.

"Keep fast thy hold, for by such stairs as these,"  
The Master said, panting as one fatigued,  
"Must we perforce depart from so much evil."

Then through the opening of a rock he issued,  
And down upon the margin seated me;  
Then tow'rds me he outstretched his wary step.

I lifted up mine eyes and thought to see  
Lucifer in the same way I had left him;  
And I beheld him upward hold his legs.

And if I then became disquieted,  
Let stolid people think who do not see  
What the point is beyond which I had passed.

"Rise up," the Master said, "upon thy feet;  
The way is long, and difficult the road,  
And now the sun to middle-tierce returns."

It was not any palace corridor  
There where we were, but dungeon natural,  
With floor uneven and unease of light.

"Ere from the abyss I tear myself away,  
My Master," said I when I had arisen,  
"To draw me from an error speak a little;

Where is the ice? and how is this one fixed  
Thus upside down? and how in such short time  
From eve to morn has the sun made his transit?"

And he to me: "Thou still imaginest  
Thou art beyond the centre, where I grasped  
The hair of the fell worm, who mines the world.

That side thou wast, so long as I descended;  
When round I turned me, thou didst pass the point  
To which things heavy draw from every side,

And now beneath the hemisphere art come

Opposite that which overhangs the vast  
Dry-land, and 'neath whose cope was put to death

The Man who without sin was born and lived.  
Thou hast thy feet upon the little sphere  
Which makes the other face of the Judecca.

Here it is morn when it is evening there;  
And he who with his hair a stairway made us  
Still fixed remaineth as he was before.

Upon this side he fell down out of heaven;  
And all the land, that whilom here emerged,  
For fear of him made of the sea a veil,

And came to our hemisphere; and peradventure  
To flee from him, what on this side appears  
Left the place vacant here, and back recoiled."

A place there is below, from Beelzebub  
As far receding as the tomb extends,  
Which not by sight is known, but by the sound

Of a small rivulet, that there descendeth  
Through chasm within the stone, which it has gnawed  
With course that winds about and slightly falls.

The Guide and I into that hidden road  
Now entered, to return to the bright world;  
And without care of having any rest

We mounted up, he first and I the second,  
Till I beheld through a round aperture  
Some of the beauteous things that Heaven doth bear;

Thence we came forth to rebehold the stars.

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Hell, by Dante Alighieri*

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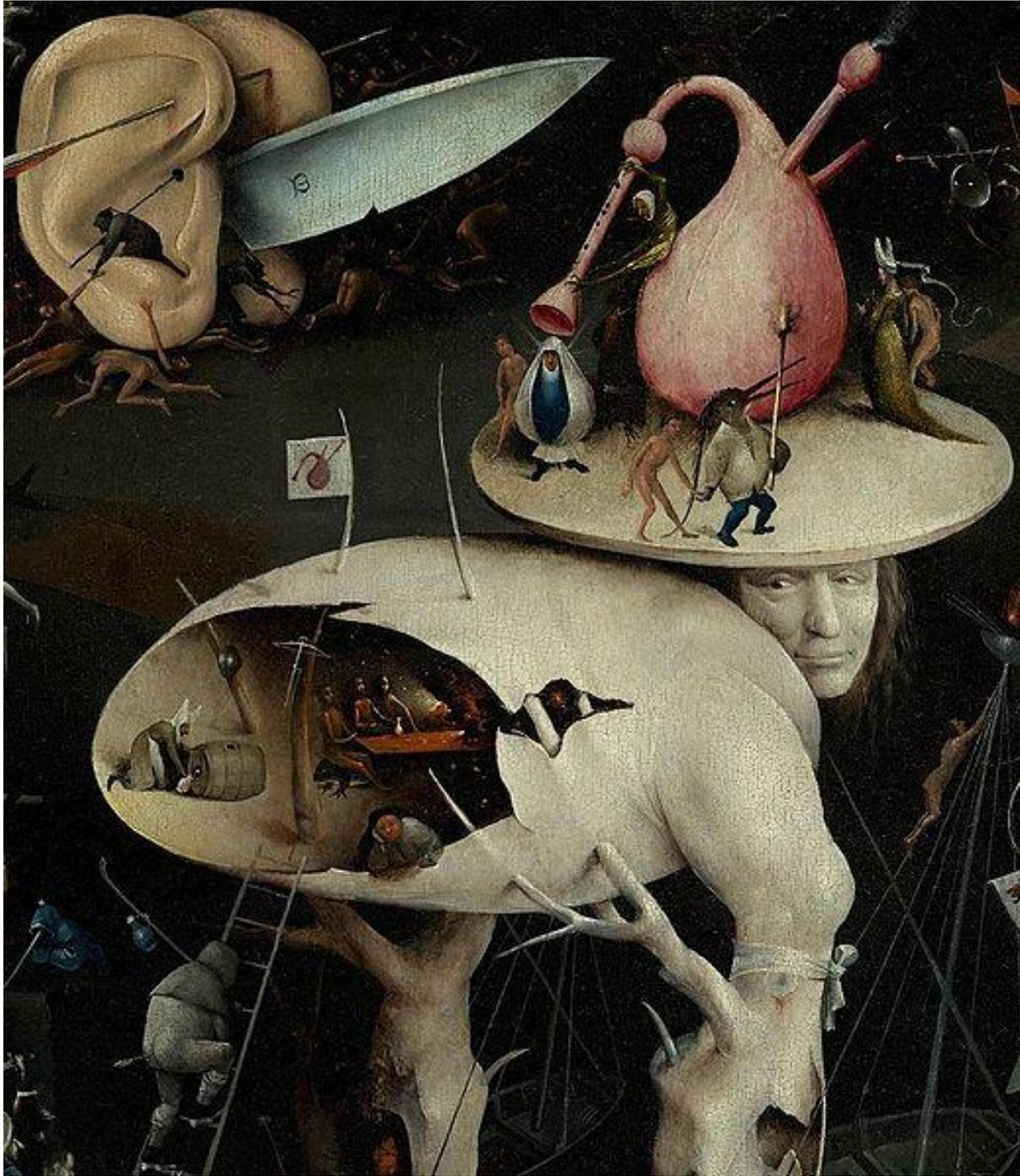




William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Dante and Virgil in Hell, 1850

“This painting was inspired by a short scene from the *Inferno*, set in the eighth circle of Hell (the circle for falsifiers and counterfeiters), where Dante, accompanied by Virgil, watches a fight between two damned souls: Capocchio, a heretic and alchemist is attacked and bitten on the neck by Gianni Schicchi who had usurped the identity of a dead man in order to fraudulently claim his inheritance.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "William Bouguereau Dante and Virgil." Musée d'Orsay. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Apr. 2014. <[http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search/commentaire/commentaire\\_id/dante-et-virgile-21300.html?no\\_cache=1&cHash=16808332e9&S=1](http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search/commentaire/commentaire_id/dante-et-virgile-21300.html?no_cache=1&cHash=16808332e9&S=1)>.



Hieronymus Bosch, "The Tree Man," Garden of Earthly Delights, 1500.

The Garden of Earthly Delights is a triptych (3 paneled painting) by the Early Netherlandish Renaissance painter Hieronymus Bosch. The triptych depicts the Garden of Eden, the worldly life, and Hell. The "Tree Man" is from the right panel (Hell).



Raphael, The Parnassus, 1511

The Parnassus, by the Italian Renaissance artist Raphael, is a fresco painting depicting the Greco-Roman god Apollo<sup>5</sup> (center, playing a violin) surrounded by the nine muses.<sup>6</sup> There nine contemporary poets and nine ancient poets, including Sappho holding a scroll with her name on it (lower left). Dante, Homer, and Virgil are depicted together in the upper left.

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<sup>5</sup> God of music, healing, and prophecy.

<sup>6</sup> The muses were goddesses of inspiration. They are: Clio (history, present but unidentified in the painting), Thalia (comedy, holding the comic mask on the right), Erato (erotic poetry, holding a cithara on her lap, in blue), Euterpe (music and elegiac poetry, holding an aulos on her thigh, in white), Polyhymnia (hymns or sacred songs, present but unidentified in the painting), Calliope (epic poetry, holding a writing tablet), Terpsichore (dance, holding a lute or a lyre (?), with her back to the audience), Urania (astronomy, present but unidentified in the painting), and Melpomene (tragedy, holding the tragic mask on the left).



Domenico di Michelino, The Comedy Illuminating Florence, 1465

This painting by Florentine School artist Michelino depicts Dante holding his *Divine Comedy*. He looks toward Florence on the right and gestures toward Hell on the left. Behind Dante is Purgatory with Adam and Eve on top. Above everything are the Heavenly Spheres.