

# **INFERNO**

a simplified sketch of Inferno  
(Numbers refer to Circles [2] and Rings [7.1-3 / 9.1-4] or Pouches [8.1-10])



**Jerusalem**

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ANTE-HELL

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NEUTRALS

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A C H E R O N

1. LIMBO

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2. THE LUSTFUL

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3. THE GLUTTONS

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4. THE AVARICIOUS AND PRODIGALS

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5. THE WRATHFUL AND SULLEN

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S T Y X

6. HERETICS

7.1 VIOLENT: against their neighbors

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7.2 VIOLENT: against themselves and their possessions

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7.3 VIOLENT: against God

8.1 FRAUD: panderers and seducers

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8.2 FRAUD: flatterers

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8.3 FRAUD: simonists

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8.4 FRAUD: deviners,astrologers,magicians

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8.5 FRAUD: barrators

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8.6 FRAUD: hypocrites

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8.7 FRAUD: thieves

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8.8 FRAUD: fraudulent counselors

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8.9 FRAUD: sower of discord

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8.10 FRAUD: falsifiers

C O C Y T U S

9.1 TREACHERY: of kin / CAINA

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9.2 TREACHERY: of homeland or party / ANTENORA

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9.3 TREACHERY: of guests / PTOLOMEA

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9.4 TREACHERY: of benefactors / JUDECCA

Center of earth // Lucifer's navel -----

L  
U  
C

I  
F  
E  
R

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## INFERNO: STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

### *The topographic structure of Hell.*

As it has been mentioned, Hell is in the form of a huge funnel-shaped cavity under ground, beneath Jerusalem, and going all the way to the center of Earth (See sketch on previous page). It was created by Lucifer when he was thrown out of Heaven. Hell consists of nine concentric "circles" or regions diminishing in circumference as they descend toward the center. These are preceded by a vestibule, called Ante-Inferno and separated from Inferno proper by the river Acheron. Inferno proper is divided in an upper and a lower zone. The lower zone is envisioned by Dante much like a fortified city and is divided from the upper part by a marsh-like moat--called Styx--and a high wall. It is called the City of Dis, Dis being another name for Satan, and contains four circles. The other five circles make up the upper part. Each of the nine circles is designed for a particular sin, with the lightest sins near the top. *The moral structure of Hell.*

To begin with, the moral structure of Hell is, first of all, characterized in accordance to two particular beliefs of Dante. One, the fact that he has a strong contemptuous attitude against those who "lived without blame and without praise", the cowardly, the neutrals, those lacking the courage to do neither good nor bad. Dante cannot stand them, and believes that they cannot even deserve to be in Hell proper. Therefore he puts them in a region apart. Two, the fact that he placed in Limbo (which in the official church view was reserved for only the unbaptized and for the just people of the Old Testament who believed in the coming of Christ) also those worthy Pagans who lived before the coming of Christ. This is a place particularly for pre-Christian poets and, of course, is Virgil's permanent abode. With the exclusion of these two large groups then, the whole moral structure of Hell follows basically a division into two main categories. In upper Hell are punished the so-called sins of incontinence, the lack of moderation or control in the natural appetite. So, in the four circles after Limbo are punished, in an increasing order of sinfulness, the lustful, the gluttons, the hoarders-and-squanderers, and the wrathful. In lower Hell are punished sins of malice or the evil intent. And, again in an increasing order of sinfulness, we have the heretics, the violent (subdivided into three rings), the fraudulent (subdivided into ten "pouches"), and finally the traitors (subdivided into four zones). *Inferno: Content Summary* (See Sketch of Inferno).

**[Canti I-III].** The poem begins with the story of how one day Dante got lost in a dark forest. While he is in the process of climbing up a hill he meets three beasts which impede his passage and thrust him back where he came from. At this point the Latin poet Virgil appears and encourages Dante to follow him. He will guide Dante through Hell and Purgatory, and then someone else will come to lead him through Paradise. The two poets begin the journey and soon arrive in front of Hell's door. They enter and find a group of souls, **the Cowardly**, who are obliged to run continually after a flag. **[Canti IV-VIII].** Further on the two Poets cross the river Acheron and reach the first **(1) Circle** of Hell where Limbo is located. This is the zone reserved for those who died without having been baptized and for the ancient Poets. Their "punishment" is only spiritual: they long to see God and will never be satisfied. At the beginning of the second **(2) Circle** is Minos who judges all incoming souls and sends them to their appropriate Circle. Soon after, blown about by a continuous storm, are condemned the **Lustful**. Here Dante has his great encounter with the two lovers Paolo and Francesca. In the third **(3) Circle**, under an incessant cold rain, are the **Gluttons** tormented by the monster Cerberus. Here Dante hears from Ciaccio the first prophesy concerning him and Florence. Another monster, Pluto, is the guardian of the next **(4) Circle** where, in two separate groups, are the **Hoarders** and the **Squanderers**, pushing with their breasts big boulders in semicircles. Continuing their voyage the two Poets descend into the fifth **(5) Circle** which is located in a marsh called Styx. Here are condemned the **Wrathful**, some half-immersed in the muddy waters, some totally immersed in it. **[Canti IX-XVII].** At the walls of the City of Dis, Dante and Virgil are impeded passage by the demons who are guarding it. A heavenly Messenger is required to help them enter. So they reach the sixth **(6) Circle** where are condemned the **Arch-Heretics** in uncovered flaming tombs. They cannot see the present, although can see the future. Dante meets here the Ghibelline Farinata degli Uberti and Cavalcante dei Cavalcanti, father of his dear friend Guido. The seventh **(7) Circle** is for the **Violent** and is subdivided into three rings: **(7.1)** The first ring punishes the **Violent against neighbors** who are in a river of boiling blood. **(7.2)** In the second ring are punished the **Violent against themselves** or suicides who are here

transformed into trees; and also the Violent against their own possessions who are torn apart by hungry bitches. **(7.3)** The third ring hosts three types of violent: **a)** the **Blasphemers**, or violent against God; **b)** the **Sodomites**, or violent against Nature; **c)** the **Usurers**, or violent against Art. Here, among the sodomites, Dante has a memorable encounter with his "mentor" Brunetto Latini. [**Canti XVII-XXX**]. The two Poets descend into the eighth **(8) Circle**, reserved for the **Fraudulent**. This is the most complex of all the Circles of Hell. It is called *Malebolge* (*Evil-pouches*) and is subdivided into ten "pouches". These are divided from each other by big walls and connected by a series of bridges. In each pouch is condemned a specific type of fraudulent sinners. **(8.1)** The first pouch punishes the **Panderers and Seducers** who are scourged by horned demons. **(8.2)** The second is reserved for the **Flatterers** who are immersed in excrements. **(8.3)** The third is for **Simonists** who are condemned head down into holes in the rock. **(8.4)** In the fourth pouch are the **Soothsayers** who have their heads turned backward. **(8.5)** The fifth pouch is for the **Barrators** who are condemned into boiling pitch. **(8.6)** In the sixth are the **Hypocrites** who walk slowly covered with caps of lead. **(8.7)** The seventh pouch is dedicated to the **Thieves** who are bitten by serpents. **(8.8)** In the eighth pouch are condemned the **Fraudulent Counselors** who are totally enclosed in tongue-like flames. **(8.9)** Here in the ninth pouch are the **Sowers of Discord** who are condemned to be wounded again and again by demons. **(8.10)** The last pouch is reserved for **Falsifiers** who are subdivided in their turn into four groups [**(8.10.1) Falsifiers of metals; (8.10.2) Falsifiers of persons; (8.10.3) Falsifiers of coins; (8.10.4) Falsifiers of words**], each group subject to a different punishment. [**Canti XXXI-XXXIII**]. The ninth **(9) Circle**, which is the large well of the Giants, is reached by Dante and Virgil with the help of one of the Giants, Anteo. He takes the two Poets on his hands and deposit them into this frozen lake which is called Cocito. The lake is frozen by the movement of Lucifer's wings. Lucifer is located in the central point of the Circle which is also the center of earth. Here in Cocito's ice are punished the **Traitors**, and are separated into four zones. **(9.1)** The first zone is called *Caina*, and is for **Traitors of relatives**. **(9.2)** The second zone is called *Antenora*, and is for **Traitors of Country**. **(9.3)** The third zone is called *Tolomea*, and is for **Traitors of guests**. **(9.4)** The fourth and last zone, called *Judecca*, is reserved for **Traitors against their benefactors**. Here is Lucifer, King of Hell, with his three heads and three mounths chewing three traitors: Judas, Brutus, and Cassius. [**Canto XXXIV**]. At this point Dante and Virgil begin their exit from Hell. They descend down Lucifer's body, then turn around and ascend through a "hole built by nature" to the southern hemisphere, arriving at the shore of the Mountain of Purgatory, and seeing "once more the stars".

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**READING DANTE'S INFERNO**  
**Cantos' Line Synopsis and Notes**

Canto lines

**SUMMARY**

<>NOTES<>

**CANTO 1**

**1-12**

Midway in "our life's journey" Dante realizes that he has strayed from the true path into a dark forest.

The first Canto is a canto of introduction to the whole Comedy. Midway of our life is 35 years. Therefore we are in 1300. The dark forest is symbolic of sin

**13-30**

The Mount of Joy. Dante tries to get out of the forest and arrives at the foot of a mountain illuminated by the sun.

The sun (=Sun) is symbolic of God.

**31-60**

Here three beasts impede Dante's ascent: (1) a Leopard, (2) a Lion, (3) a She-wolf. The beasts drive him back where he came from.

The beasts are symbolic of (1) Malice and fraud, (2) Violence and ambitions, (3) Incontinence.

**61-99**

Here a figure appears to Dante. It is the shade of Virgil. It is he who will lead Dante from error. But there cannot be a direct ascent. Dante must take another way.

[Virgil](#) is the symbol of human reason. He is Dante's [first guide](#).

**100-136**

Virgil tells Dante that he must first descend into HELL. Then he must go through PURGATORY. And finally he can ascend to PARADISE. Virgil tells Dante that for Paradise there will be another guide.

The descent into Hell is symbolic of the recognition of sin. The ascent through Purgatory means renunciation of sin and atonement. The [other guide](#) will be [Beatrice](#).

**CANTO 2**

**1-9**

Evening is approaching. Dante invokes the Muses and "the high genius" to help him.

Invocation of the Muses is traditional in poetry.

**10-42**

Dante is following Virgil and finds himself tired and full

Dante is fully aware of his sins and feels unworthy of the voyage to salvation. For Aeneas' and St. Paul's

of doubts: how can he be worthy of such a vision? He is not Aeneas, he is not St. Paul!

voyages, see [above](#).

### 43-126

Virgil comforts Dante and explains how Beatrice descended to him (Virgil) in LIMBO and told him of her concern for Dante. Beatrice has been sent with the prayers of (1) the Virgin Mary, (2) Saint Lucia, and (3) Rachel [Jacob's wife].

Beatrice symbolizes the Science of Revelation (or Theology). The other three women are symbolic of (1) divine grace, (2) divine light, (3) contemplative life. For Jacob's second wife Rachel, see Genesis 29:16ff.

### 127-142

Dante resumes courage, expresses gratitude to Beatrice and to Virgil and follows him, ready to begin the difficult journey.

Virgil is "guide and master" and Dante will follow him throughout Inferno and a good part of *Purgatorio*.

## CANTO 3

### 1-21

The gate of Hell is always open. The inscription above the gate warns whoever enters to leave all hopes. Dante is afraid, but Virgil tells him to leave all hesitation. The two Poets enter.

The inscription and the rest of the Canto characterize the basic atmosphere of Hell, and the initial reaction of Dante.

### 22-69

Dante soon hears the cries of anguish of the souls in torment. These are the souls of the Cowardly who in life neither practiced good or evil. Now they intermingle with the neutral angels.

[The Cowardly](#) must race eternally pursuing a banner that runs forever before them. In turn, they are pursued by wasps and hornets which sting and push them on. This is their [contrapasso](#), a concept in the *Comedy* by which the punishment fits the crime

[59-60]. Dante recognizes one of them. It is the shade of Pope Celestine the V.

[Celestine](#) became Pope in August 1294 and resigned in December of the same year.

### 70-120

The two Poets, without speaking to any of the souls there, move on to pass ACHERON. For the crossing they must use the services of Charon.

[Acheron](#) is the first of the four rivers of Hell. These will be explained by Virgil later in Canto 14. **Charon** is the boatman who must ferry the souls to the other side of the river and to punishment.

### 121-136

There is an earthquake, wind and a lightning; a brilliant red light overcomes Dante who falls "like a man seized by sleep"

Earthquakes, from Aristotle's time, were believed to be caused by land-locked winds or vapors escaping violently from underground.

## CANTO 4

### 1-24

A big thunder awakens Dante. He looks around and realizes that he is inside Hell, and precisely in its first circle which is called Limbo

The first Circle:

[Limbo](#).

### 25-45

Virgil tells Dante that in LIMBO are the souls of children who died before they were baptized, and of virtuous Pagans who lived before Christ.

The "punishment" of the souls in Limbo is that they have an insatiable desire to see God.

### 46-63

Virgil tells Dante that Christ entered into LIMBO "and liberated the shades of our first fathers": Abel, Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, and many others; "and He made them blessed".

Christ descent into Limbo is known as the [Harrowing of Hell](#). The descent of Christ was witnessed by Virgil who "was a new arrival in this state". Virgil died in 19 B.C., and Christ died in 33 A.D., therefore Virgil had been there some 50 years.

### 64-105

In a second zone of LIMBO Dante sees a great dome of light. A voice is heard welcoming back Virgil (Again, this is his place). Soon appear HOMER, HORACE, OVID, LUCAN. They greeted Virgil and invited Dante into their ranks, so that he "was the sixth among such intellects" (l. 102).

Dante did not know Greek nor the works of Homer directly. But he knew well most of the works of the other poets mentioned. Dante is already conscious that he will be a great luminary in the field of poetry, in the same rank with the poets mentioned here.

### 106-141

With the poets Dante enters into the Citadel of Limbo where he sees many great spirits of Pagan antiquity, gathered on a green and all illuminated

The Citadel of Limbo. The light is the symbol of [Human Reason](#), the highest state man can achieve without God.

## CANTO 5

### 1-24

Dante and Virgil enter into the second Circle. There they meet MINOS, the judge of Hell who assigns each soul its place of eternal punishment.

SECOND CIRCLE --

The beginning of Hell proper.

### 25-45

The two Poets find themselves on a dark ledge swept by a continuous whirlwind which spins within it the souls of the **Lustful** or carnal sinners

**Contrapasso:** as the [Lustful](#) in life were swept by the wind of passion, now they are condemned to be swept eternally by a great whirlwind.

### 46-72

Among the list of the carnal sinners are: Semiramis, Dido, Cleopatra, Helen, Paris, Tristan, ..."and more than a thousand shades" (ll. 67-68).

[Semiramis](#), Queen of Assyria (1356-1314 B.C.). [Dido](#) founder of Carthage and lover of Aeneas (*Aeneid*, books I and IV). [Cleopatra](#) Queen of Egypt, mistress first of Julius Caesar and then of Mark Antony. [Helen](#), wife of the King of Sparta, Menelaus; she was abducted and became the mistress of [Paris](#); and this led to the Trojan War. [Tristan](#), hero of a medieval Romance and lover of Yseult, wife of Tristan's uncle.

### 73-142

Dante sees **Paolo and Francesca** swept together by the wind. In love's name he calls them and asks them to tell their own sad story. They pause from their eternal flight to come to him, and FRANCESCA tells Dante their story while Paolo weeps at her side. Dante is stricken by pity for them, faints and "fell as a dead body falls" (l. 142).

The story of Paolo and Francesca takes exactly the second half of the Canto. In lines 100-106 Dante uses the vocabulary used in the tenets of the [Sweet New Style](#). But the emphasis here is on **the fair body** and on **his beauty**. Therefore the "episode" of Paolo and Francesca can be understood as Dante's rejection of those tenets.

## CANTO 6

### 1-33

Dante recovers and finds himself in the Third Circle. A storm of putrefaction falls constantly Stinking snow, dark and cold rain and hail mix in the mud. Here are the **Gluttons** and their bestial guardian **Cerberus** who is barking, doglike, and tearing the souls with his claws.

THIRD CIRCLE. **Contrapasso** here is complex: [the Gluttons](#) here are condemned in all five senses. Taste and smell by the mud in which they lie; sight by the darkness; hearing by the barking of [Cerberus](#); touch by the rain and the mud in which they must wallow.

### 34-57

One of the shades asks Dante whether he recognizes him. Dante doesn't, and he reveals himself as Ciaccio.

[Ciaccio](#) was a Florentine of Dante's time, well known for his gluttony, as Boccaccio tells us. Boccaccio speaks of him also in *Decameron* IX, 8.

### 58-76

At the asking, Ciaccio "prophesises" the Florentine historical events after 1300. He tells Dante that the citizens of the "divided city will come to blood and the party of the woods will chase away the other party". But then within three years the other party will prevail again, with the help of a powerful person, and will inflict heavy penalty on its enemies.

On May Day 1300 the Whites (the party of the woods, because originally from the country) defeated the Blacks. But in less than three years, in April 1302, the banished Blacks returned to power with the help of Pope [Boniface VIII](#). Because of this Dante had to go into exile.

### 77-93

Dante asks Ciaccio about some politically famous Florentines of the past. Ciaccio tells Dante that he will meet them further down in Hell "among the blackest souls". They are **Farinata, Tegghiaio, Rusticucci** and **Mosca**. At the end of their conversation, Ciaccio begs Dante to recall him to men's memory when he returns to the "sweet world", after his voyage.

[Farinata degli Uberti](#) is among the Heretics in Canto 10, [Tegghiaio Aldobrandini](#) and [Jacopo Rusticucci](#) are among the Sodomites in Canto XVI, and [Mosca dei Lamberti](#) is punished among the Sowers of Scandal in Canto XXVIII. The memory of the "sweet world" is the idea of wanting to be remembered on earth. It is common to many sinners of Hell and constitutes one of the leit-motifs of the *Inferno*.

### 94-115

Dante asks Virgil whether after Judgment Day the damned souls will suffer more, less or the same. Virgil answers that they will suffer more.

The Aristotelian doctrine that full perfection lies in the union of body and spirit was accepted by Medieval thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas, and hence also by Dante. After Judgment Day body and spirit will be reunited and hence perfection will be regained. Therefore the pains will also increase.

## CANTO 7

### 1-15

PLUTUS, guardian of the Fourth Circle, tries to impede Virgil's and Dante's passage by howling some incomprehensible words. But Virgil commands him to be quiet as Dante's voyage has been willed by Above. So the ferocious beast quiets down and falls to the ground.

### 16-66

The two Poets descend into the Fourth Circle where they see a great number of people in two opposite groups, each occupying opposite halves of the Circle: the Avaricious on one side, the Prodigals on the other. They are pushing with their chests big boulders, in semi circles. When they meet, they utter reciprocal insults, turn around and continue pushing the other way, and so on. Many of the avaricious sinners in their lives on earth were popes, cardinals and clerics.

### 67-96

Dante wants to know from Virgil what is Fortune who "clutches the world's wealth"; and the master explains that Fortune is a celestial Intelligence ordained by God to govern worldly goods and to distribute them, without concern about human complaints and beyond the prevention of human wits, as human wisdom cannot oppose her force.

### 97-108

It is now past midnight and begins the second day into the voyage. Dante and Virgil descend into the marsh-like river called Styx, where the Fifth Circle is located.

### 109-130

In the muddy Styx are immersed the Wrathful, some half way, some totally immersed. Those partially immersed tear each other to pieces. The others sigh making the waters above them bubble, as if they were gurgling words in their throat. In the meantime, Dante and Virgil had circled quite a bit around the Styx when they arrive at the foot of a tower.

## CANTO 8

### 1-30

A swift vessel comes toward Dante and Virgil. It

In Canto 3 (94-96) and in Canto 5 (22-23) Virgil had already warned, respectively, Charon and [Minos](#) not to attempt to impede Dante's "fated voyage, as it has been willed Above" Here we have two contrasting concepts: (1) the idea that Dante's voyage is wanted by God, for the ultimate salvation of all mankind, and (2) the attempted impediment of his voyage by the inhabitants of Hell. [More on this later].

FOURTH CIRCLE. [The Avaricious and the Prodigals](#) are at opposite ends of a scale measuring and concerned with worldly goods. Their **contrapasso** is the following: as in life they had been excessively preoccupied in their hearts in the futile handling of worldly possessions, so now they have to push weights with their chests in a likewise futile "round dance".

Dante's conception of Fortune as a divine Intelligence in charge of the world's wealth goes counter-current to the tradition which saw Lady Luck as a blindfolded, capricious female turning the Wheel at random. Here Dante seems to correct a passage in his *Convivio* (IV,xi,6) where he states that worldly goods are imperfect and unjustly distributed. It is interesting to note that later on, in the Italian Humanism, a new conception will slowly come into being whereby man with his virtù can control and overcome Fortune [see [Machiavelli](#)].

FIFTH CIRCLE. **Contrapasso**: as the Wrathful were overtaken by various degree of wrath in life and vented or not their rage, so now they are immersed to various degrees in the marsh..

The episode of the [Wrathful](#) which begins here will continue into next Canto VIII--as Dante tells us at the beginning of that Canto. It is relevant to note that up to now the "episodes" have been restrained, so to speak, within each Canto. From now on, while the subject matter is becoming increasingly more complex, single Cantos will not be sufficient to contain the "episodes" any more. Of course, this also means that Dante has begun perfecting his poetical skill.

[Phlegyas](#) is guardian of the [Styx](#) and also the symbol of rage.

is navigated by the wrathful guardian of the Fifth Circle, Phlegyas. He is going to ferry the two Poets across the marsh.

### 31-64

During the crossing, a "muddy" wrathful and bizarre soul tries to stop the boat and talk to Dante. He is rejected and rebuked by the Wayfarer who expresses the desire to see this soul undergo greater torments. So as it happens a group of souls jump on him and identify him as FILIPPO ARGENTI.

We know nothing about [Filippo Argenti](#), except what we are told by early commentators and by Boccaccio in his *Decameron* (IX,8) where Filippo is portrayed as an arrogant and irascible person. Critics have generally reproached Dante's fierce attitude of scorn against Filippo. But we have to remember that Filippo had stood up before Phlegyas' boat in an attempt to stop Dante's voyage. Again, this is an act of impediment of the "fated journey" and, as we have seen before, cannot be allowed. Here Dante doesn't need Virgil's help. He can address the impediment himself, but will have Virgil's full approval.

### 65-81

In the meantime Virgil and Dante are approaching the walls of the **City of Dis**. Phlegyas shows them the gate and shouts at them to get off his boat.

[Dis](#) is both the name of the lower realm of Hell, as well as another name for Satan, the king of Hell.

### 82-130

A great multitude of demons gather at the gate of Dis trying to impede Virgil's and Dante's entrance.

Virgil tries to calm them down but he cannot.

## CANTO 9

### 1-33

Seeing all those demons and that it is impossible for his guide to do anything, Dante is taken by deep fear. Virgil tries to comfort him by telling him that once before he himself went all the way down to the bottom of Hell, and hence he knows the way.

This Canto is strictly connected with Canto 8. Here, however, in the emotional crescendo, Dante becomes for the first time unsure of his guide.

### 34-60

At this moment Dante sees the three Furies appear to strengthen defence of the City. They make frightening gestures and threaten to call on Medusa to turn Dante into a stone. So Virgil makes Dante turn his back to the wall and tells him to keep his eyes shut

The three [Furies](#) are the guardians of the City of Dis. [Medusa](#) is one of the three [Gorgon](#) sisters. She has serpents for hair.

### 61-109

Virgil cannot overcome this impediment. Therefore the coming of a celestial Messenger will be necessary. He arrives, forces the doors open with a little wand, reproaches the wall defenders for having tried to obstruct heavenly justice, and turns back as fast as he has come. So Dante and Virgil can finally enter into the City of Dis.

Here Virgil, as symbol of human reason, fails. This is the strongest impediment to the journey so far. Virgil reassurance to Dante that he knows the way, is of no use here. To open the way is necessary not simply human Reason, but the intervention of Grace.

### 110-130

Once inside the City, Dante sees everywhere uncovered tombs inside of which there are hot flames and growing laments. Virgil informs Dante that inside those sepulchers are condemned the arch-Heretics.

Inquisition tribunals to conduct inquests against suspected heretics were set up in 1233. Perhaps through analogy with Roman law on treason, burning at the stake was considered a fitting punishment for heretics. In reality burning of heretics was not a common practice in the Middle Ages.

## CANTO 10

### 1-21

The burning coffins of the Sixth Circle are uncovered. Dante asks Virgil if he could see the souls inside. Virgil answers that after Judgment Day, those coffins will all be shut with souls and bodies inside. He also tells Dante that here are punished Epicurus and his followers, that is to say all those who believe that the individual soul dies with the body.

### SIXTH CIRCLE.

The Heretics. In the Middle Ages the Greek philosopher [Epicurus](#) had become the symbol of all skeptical persons who denied the immortality of the soul.

### 22-51

One of the shades has recognized Dante to be a Florentine by the way he speaks and asks him to stop a while. He is Farinata degli Uberti, also Florentine. Farinata and Dante have a rather brief and cutting exchange, belonging as they do to differing political parties. In the exchange are encapsulated the political fortunes of Guelfs and Ghibellines during a couple of scores, before and after the middle of the Century.

[Farinata](#) was born to the noble family Degli Uberti, and became leader of the **Ghibelline** party in 1239. He helped to expel the **Guelfs** from Florence in 1248, but the Guelfs returned twice, in 1251 and 1266. Farinata is only concerned with politics.

### 52-72

While Dante is having his exchange with Farinata, another shade rises all of a sudden from the coffin and wants to know from Dante where is his son. He is Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti, father of Dante's dear friend Guido. Dante's answer is misunderstood by Cavalcante who now believes that his son is dead, and falls back into his coffin.

Dante's friend, [Guido Cavalcanti](#), was a famous poet of the "**Sweet New Style**". He was born around 1250 and died in August 1300. Thus, in the fictional time of Dante's voyage, Guido is still alive. In contrast to Farinata, Cavalcante is only concerned with family.

### 73-93

After the "interruption" of Cavalcanti, the partisan exchange between Dante and Farinata continues. Then Farinata makes a prophesy about the political future of Florence after 1300 when the Guelfs will be expelled again from Florence. This, of course, involves Dante's own exile

By interjecting family feeling (Cavalcante's story) into a political discourse (Farinata's concern), Dante seems to tell us that family is the small fundamental nucleus of a civilized state.

### 94-120

Dante is confused by the fact that Farinata can see the future and Cavalcanti has no idea of the present. Farinata explains to him that the souls here can see the future, but as it approaches and becomes present their knowledge is totally lost. Therefore, he says, at the end of times, when future will be no more, also their knowledge will be totally in vain. Dante

The idea that knowledge in these souls will be, at the end of times, totally extinct, is part of the **contrapasso**.

[Frederick II](#), Holy Roman Emperor from 1215 to 1250, was well known for his efforts to reunite the Empire. He was also one of the poets in his famous Sicilian School at his court.

now understands and asks Farinata to tell Cavalcante that his son is still alive. Then Farinata mentions to Dante that among his group there is also Frederick II.

## CANTO 11

### 1-13

The two Poets arrive at the edge of the Sixth Circle. The stench that comes from the Circle below is so strong that they decide to stop a while by a coffin in order to get somewhat accustomed to the smell. In the coffin there is the soul of Pope Anastasius II.

[Pope Anastasius II](#) (496-498) was considered by all historians up to the XVI century as a follower of an heretical doctrine, later disproved. Dante may have confused him with Emperor Anastasius I (491-518) whose heretical inclination stirred religious unrest throughout the Empire.

### 13-90

In order not to waste time, Virgil begins to explain to Dante how lower Hell is organized. He tells his pupil that there are three more Circles below: one for sinners of Violence and two for sinners of Fraud. Dante has some doubts and asks Virgil why the sinners they met in the upper part of Hell are not punished within the City of Dis. Virgil reminds him of what Aristotle said in his *Ethics*, namely that Incontinence is less offensive to God and therefore deserves a lesser punishment than Violence and Fraud.

The moral order of Hell and the distribution of sinners within it have been discussed in the Introduction to *Inferno*. ([See above](#))

The *Ethics* here is a reference to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In Dante's times Aristotle was known to Europe only in Latin translations.

### 95-115

Dante has one more doubt: why should usury be a kind of violence against God? Virgil again reminds him of what Aristotle said in his *Physics*: Nature is the daughter of God and Art imitates Nature, therefore Art is the granddaughter of God. Usury is an unnatural use of Nature because the usurer earns his living not through work--as *Genesis* teaches--but without any effort, through gains made from interest on money loaned to the less fortunate. Usury therefore offends both Art and Nature and, of course, God.

The reference here is to Aristotle's *Physics* "not many pages from the beginning". In fact here Virgil is referring to Chapter 2 of Book II where Aristotle sets forth the principle explained. In *Genesis* 3:17 and 19 is written that man must earn his bread by the sweat of his own brow.

## CANTO 12

### 1-30

Dante and Virgil have arrived at a place where they can descend from the Sixth to the Seventh Circle. There is a Minotaur who tries to block the Poets passage. Virgil tricks him and the two can pass.

The Cretan [Minotaur](#), born from the union of [Pasiphae](#) with a bull, is half a man and half a bull. The monster is symbolic of bestial violence.

**30-45** The path is full of loose rocks which move under Dante's weight. Virgil tells Dante that the fallen mass was caused by the earthquake at Christ's death

**46-99**

Virgil asks Dante to look below at the river of boiling blood that punishes sinners of violence against their neighbors. The place is guarded by Centaurs who keep the sinners at their assigned depth in the boiling blood.

**100-139**

Guided by the Centaur Nesso the two Poets continue their voyage. Nesso reveals the names of some of the sinners immersed in the blood to various levels. Then Nesso takes Dante and Virgil to a shallow part of the river where they can cross.

The story of the earthquake that marked the moment of Christ's death is narrated in the *Gospel* by Matthew (27.51).

**SEVENTH CIRCLE. First Ring:** Violent against Neighbors. **Contrapasso:** As the violent weltered in blood on earth, so now they are immersed in blood. **Centaurs** are mythological creatures, half man and half animal. Generally they were uncouth and savage, but some, such as **Chiron**, became friends and teachers of man.

The various levels of immersion in the boiling blood indicate the various degree of guilt of the violent against neighbors.

**CANTO 13**

**1-21**

Dante and Virgil enter a strange despoiled forest with nesting Harpies. Virgil has Dante notice that he is in the Second Ring until he has come to the "horrible sand".

The **Harpies** are mythological monsters with heads of women and bodies in the shape of rapacious birds. We are in the SEVENTH CIRCLE, **Second Ring** where are punished **(a)** Violent against their persons or **Suicides**, **(b)** Violent against their possessions or **Squanderers**. "The sand" of the following Third Ring of this same Seventh Circle.

**22-78**

They hear voices but see no one. Virgil tells Dante to break a branch and his idea of people hidden will prove mistaken. Dante plucks a twig only to hear "Why do you tear me?". Its voice is mixed with blood, while it tells Dante that once it had been a man. Being asked, the shade reveals his name: on earth he was Pier della Vigna, personal Secretary of Frederick II. Having been accused of betrayal, he took his life.

**Pier della Vigna** (1190-1249), notary and famous poet at the Sicilian Court, was for many years chief adviser, Chancellor and personal secretary to Emperor Frederick II. Accused of treason, he was imprisoned and blinded. There he committed suicide. According to Dante (and others) he had been accused falsely.

**79-108**

Pier della Vigna explains that the souls of suicides are sent by Minos to the wood of the Seventh Circle. There wherever they fall they take roots and become plants. The Harpies feed on these plants causing pains and laments. As other souls, on Judgement Day they too will go for their bodies which will be dragged here. But, unlike other souls, they will not reunite with the bodies because "it is not right for anyone to have what one has cast away". So their bodies will instead hang on their branches forever.

Pier's explanation clarifies the **contrapasso** of **(a)** the **Suicides**: Those who destroyed their body are denied a human form: the soul becomes encased in a tree, a step down in the scale of being; from the animal to the vegetable kingdom. After Doomsday the body will hang on the tree as a dry twig that is no more a part of that tree as, through *sui-cide*, it has been **cut away**.

### 109-129

While the two Poets are intent on listening to Pier della Vigna, they see two naked souls being chased by black hungry bitches. These are the souls of the Violent against their possessions. One of them (Lano da Siena) flees; the other (Jacopo da Sant'Andrea) hides in a bush. But the bitches are soon on top of it tearing it apart.

### 130-151

The bush now justly complains against Jacopo da Sant'Andrea, the cause of its being torn apart, and asks Virgil to please gather its scattered leaves and to place them at its foot. Virgil asks for his name but the bush doesn't reveal it. With a circumlocution, he says that he was from a city that is always at war (Florence) and that he hanged himself in his own house.

(b) **Violent against their possessions** or **Squanderers**. Their **contrapasso**: as they scattered their possessions away, so now they are torn to pieces by hungry bitches. Lano da Siena (+ 1287) and **Jacopo da Sant'Andrea** (+ 1239) were two notorious squanderers of the time.

The identity of this suicide is not revealed even though he had been specifically requested. But it is clear that he is from Florence and an innocent unwillingly involved in the guilty lives of others. Perhaps Dante here wants to make a political statement about Florence and the lives of some innocent people there.

## CANTO 14

### 1-3

For love of his native city, Dante restores the torn leaves to the soul of the Florentine suicide.

The shade suffers unjustly because of other people's fault. Perhaps he is one with whom Dante, in a sense, identifies.

### 4-42

The two Poets come to the Third Ring of the Seventh Circle which, on one side, is flanked by the forest of the Suicides. It is a great desert of burning sand on which descend an eternal rain of fire. The sand is covered by a great number of naked souls, in various positions: (a) some lying supine-- Violent against God, (b) some sitting all crouched up--Violent against Nature, (c) some running incessantly--Violent against Art.

SEVENTH CIRCLE.

**Third Ring.** As in the previous two Rings, here we witness a deformed nature and a topsy-turvy world, symbolizing the sinful conditions of the souls and at the same time the instrument of divine punishment. Here are the Violent against the whole divine kinship of God as Father, Nature as Daughter, Art as Granddaughter of God.

### 43-72

Dante wants to know about a soul who doesn't seem to heed the rain of fire. The soul, having heard Dante, immediately answers: "That which I was in life, so I am in death". He is CAPANEUS, and he is still full of disdain against God.

(a) **Violent against God, or Blasphemers.**

**Capaneus**, one of the seven kings of Greece in the confederation against the Boethian city of Thebes (modern Thivai). In Thebes' siege he mounted on the walls and boasted that not even Jove could stop him. So Jove struck him down with a thunderbolt.

### 73-93

Dante and Virgil continue walking along the burning sand remaining as close as possible to the edge of the forest of the Suicides which encircles the Third Ring. Soon they come to a blood-red river which flows boiling from the forest and crosses the burning plain.

The name of this river, as we will be told at the end of the Canto, is **Phlegethon**, meaning "boiling river".

## 94-120

Virgil explains the power of its waters and also begins talking, allegorically, about the Old Man of Crete. Inside a Cretan mountain there is a colossal statue. It is the Old Man of Crete. His back is to the East, but faces West looking toward Rome. His head is golden, his arms and chest are silver, the rest is copper, but his legs are iron, and one foot is baked clay. Each part of the Old Man, except his head, is cracked. From the openings tears drip down to form the rivers of Hell: Acheron, Styx, Phlegethon and proceeding all the way down to finally form the last river Cocytus, at the bottom of Hell.

## CANTO 15

### 1-21

The two Poets are now walking along one of the two retaining stone walls of Phlegethon. They are protected from the falling fire by the vapor clouds of the boiling river which extinguish the slow falling flakes of fire. Soon they notice coming towards them a large group of souls.

### 22-99

One of those souls recognizes Dante and is marveled to see him. Dante looks at him, recognizes him as Ser BRUNETTO. The two begin a pleasant conversation as would a father and son: for Brunetto Dante is "my son", and for Dante Brunetto is the "kind paternal image". In the conversation Ser Brunetto predicts to Dante his future glory, as well as the difficulties that he will encounter because of the ingratitude of the Florentines. There follows a bitter invective against the "Fiesolan beasts" of Florence on the part of Brunetto for whom Dante is one of "the sacred seed of those few Romans who remained there", in Florence. Dante answers, saying that he is ready; and thanks Brunetto, his teacher, who in life taught him "how man makes himself immortal".

### 100-124

Brunetto gives an account of the souls punished there: clerics and men of letters. Among them are Priscian and Francesco d'Accorso. He then takes leave from Dante rather quickly because another group of homosexuals is arriving with whom he cannot be. He recommends to Dante his major work, *Tesoro*, "in which [he] still lives", and runs away

The [Old Man of Crete](#) is symbolic of human history and decadence. The figure is taken from the Bible and adopted by Dante. The various metals signify the decadence of humanity from the Golden Age down to the present. The iron foot symbolizes the Empire, and the clay foot the Papacy. The cracks in the statue from silver down word attest to Dante inventiveness, together with the tears that flow from the body of humanity to form the one river (with various names) in Hell.

(b) **The Violent against Nature**, or [Sodomites](#). They run in endless circles on the hot sand.

[Brunetto Latini](#) (c1220-1294), famous Florentine writer, composed in French an encyclopedic work called *Tresor*, and in Italian two didactic poems, *Tesoretto* and *Favolello*. He also translated into Italian the rhetorical works of Cicero. Brunetto was a Guelf and an ambassador to King Alfonso X of Castile. After the Guelfs' defeat at Montaperti (1260), Brunetto went to France, but returned to Florence after the battle of Benevento (1266) and held several political positions. He became famous as a teacher in Florence and was Dante's counselor in his studies. His homosexuality is not confirmed by other documents.

There are two groups of Sodomites punished here. Brunetto's group is composed of clerics and men of letters. The second group composed of politicians will be encountered in next Canto. [Francesco d'Accorso](#) (1255-1293) a celebrated professor at the universities of Bologna and Oxford. Nothing is known about his homosexuality. [Priscian](#) is a famous grammarian of the 6th century whose work was a common reference in medieval schools. His being a

homosexual has not been satisfactorily confirmed so far.

## CANTO 16

### 1-45

While Dante and Virgil continue walking along the river, they see another group of Sodomites. These are men of politics. Three of them leave the group to come and talk with Dante. These are three illustrious Florentines whose policies and personalities Dante admired greatly. They are Guido Guerra, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi e Jacopo Rusticucci. Jacopo talks with Dante and introduces to him the other two and himself.

Two of these men (Tegghiaio and Jacopo-- together with Farinata) had been mentioned in Dante's talk with Ciaccio. They are famous men. "Men of such worth whose minds were set on well-doing" (*Canto 6*, 79-80).

### 46-90

The three want to know from Dante whether courtesy and valor still abide in Florence, as they did when they were alive. Dante is deeply touched by the question and breaks out with a cry against the present day excess and arrogance of Florence, caused by the "new comers to the city" and the unbridled desire for "quick gain".

The realization that Florence has degenerated so much in only 30-40 years [the three famous men had died, respectively, in 1272, 1266, c.1268] prompts Dante to shout a fierce invective against contemporary life "with lifted face", as if looking up towards Florence.

### 91-136

The two poets have now arrived at a point where Phlegethon plunges down through a steep ravine into the Eighth Circle below. Dante removes a cord from around his waist and Virgil drops it over the edge of the abyss. As if called, a figure comes swimming up through the dirty air. It is Geryon, the guardian of the Circle of the Fraudulent below.

**The cord.** Many explanations have been advanced. One claims that Dante was a Friar Minor, but had left without taking the vows, retaining however the habit of wearing the white cord of the Franciscans.

## CANTO 17

### 1-33

Geryon is a monster with a face of a just man, two hairy paws, the rest of the body is like that of a serpent. His back, chest and both flanks are painted with knots and circlets. His tail is forked and similar to a scorpion's pinchers.

Geryon is the symbol of Fraud. Fraud, or deceit, "is man's peculiar vice" and is practised by a man against another (1) who has no trust in him, or (2) who trusts in him, as Dante explained earlier in *Canto XI*. Fraud, then will be punished, respectively, in the last two circles of Hell.

### 34-42

While Virgil talks to Geryon about the fact that he, Geryon, has to transport Dante and Virgil down to the Eighth Circle, Dante is sent to see the Usurers with a warning to be quick.

The reason for which Geryon is called before visiting the Usurers is that Usury is a sin against God Nature and Art, but it is distanced from blasphemy and sodomy. These have a kind of passionate feeling about them. Usury, on the contrary, has an element of fraud in it.

### 43-78

Dante goes and finds the Usurers sitting in the burning sand, crouched up and crying. Dante doesn't recognize any of them. But each has a purse hanging from his neck, with a special color and an emblem. One of the souls identifies himself and the other companions of pain.

### 79-136

Dante returns and finds Virgil ready to climb on Geryon's back. Virgil asks Geryon to move on down and he does so making large spirals. Once arrived, the passengers dismount, and Geryon disappears into the dark.

The emblems on the purses are the coat of arms of families well known for their usury. There are two from Florence and one from Padova--the notorious [Scrovegni](#). (It is worth noting that, in atonement of his father's sins, a son erected the Scrovegni Chapel in [Padua](#) where [Giotto](#) painted his world famous frescoes).

Although Geryon is a figure of classical mythology, Dante's Geryon reminds us of the Serpent of Genesis, much like the great dragon of *Revelation*, "that serpent of old, called Devil or [Satan](#) (*Rev.*, 12, 9)

## CANTO 18

### 1-21

Dante and Virgil find themselves in the **Eighth Circle**, a place in Hell called **Malebolge**, made all of grey-looking stone. Right in the "middle of these **evil pouches**" there is a great circular pit [which will constitute Circle Nine]. The Eighth Circle is divided into ten concentric pouches or ditches over which are connecting bridge-like ridges, all made of stone, going all the way to the central pit.

THE EIGHTH CIRCLE is made up by ten concentric ditches. Each ditch slopes downward from the one before it and is smaller. In each one is punished a specific type of Fraud. Therefore we have ten types of fraud condemned in the Eighth Circle.

### 22-39

Dante and Virgil begin their voyage over one of these bridges. They are now over the First Pouch or Ditch. From there Dante sees below two groups of sinners who travel in opposite directions. The sinners are watched over by demons who lash the spirits from behind.

#### EIGHTH CIRCLE.

**First Ditch.** Two groups: in the first group are **(a)** the **Panderers**, in the second group are **(b)** the **Seducers**. They are driven by scourges of horned demons.

### 40-66

Dante seems to recognize one of the sinners below. He is Venedico Caccianemico who is trying to hide from Dante.

**(a) Panderes.** The bolognese [Venedico Caccianemico](#) (c1228-c1302) acted as a panderer for his own sister, Ghisolabella, with one of the marquises of Este.

### 67-99

Continuing on Dante and Virgil arrive on top of the bridge-like ridge. From there Dante sees the other group of sinners. These are the Seducers. Virgil identifies several from classical times. Among these is Jason who seduced first Hypsipyle and "abandoned her, alone and pregnant", and later seduced Medea.

**(b) Seducers.** [Jason](#), in Greek mythology, sailed with a group of heroes in the [Argo](#) (hence the "Argonauts") in quest of the golden fleece. Jason had been reared secretly by the Centaur [Chiron](#). Hypsipyle bore Jason two children. She is in Limbo (see *Purgatorio*, 22.112). [Medea](#), skilled in magic and sorcery, helped Jason to obtain the golden fleece. She bore him two children. Later Jason abandoned her for another woman.

### 100-136

The two poets arrive on the edge separating the first from the second Ditch. There is an unbearable stench that come from the second Ditch where the Flatterers are punished. They are immersed in a pool of human excrements. The two poets, in order to see better, walk to the highest point of the bridge. From there Dante can recognize **Alessio Interminelli** from Lucca who briefly tells him why he is there. Then Virgil points out to Dante another of those dirty shades. She is the harlot **Thais**.

## CANTO 19

### 1-30

As the two Poets cross the bridge over the third Ditch, Dante sees that the bottom of the Ditch is full of holes in the rock. Inside each hole there are souls jammed upside down with only their feet and calves projecting outside and with their soles on fire. Dante compares these holes to those which were once used as fonts for baptism (by immersion) in Saint John's Baptistery in Florence--one of which once was broken by him in order to save a baby who was drowning inside.

### 31-87

Dante notices that the soles of one sinner are burning more than those of his fellows, so he asks Virgil who he might be. Virgil offers to take Dante into the Ditch so that he may ask the soul directly. Once there, Dante invites the soul to talk. The soul, hearing a voice, mistakenly believes that it is the soul of Boniface VIII who is due to occupy the hole--pushing the one there further into the rock. Dante tells him that he is mistaken, and the soul reveals his name. He is Pope Nicholas III, and predicts that soon Boniface VIII will come, and after him an even worse Pope, Clement V, will occupy the hole

### 88-117

Dante burst out with a vehement and sarcastic invective against Pope Nicholas III and all simoniac Popes, calling to their attention the trust committed on to them by Christ. They have betrayed that trust prostituting the Church for gold and silver, which now have become their idols. The primary cause of this evil is to be sought in the donation of Constantine which made "the first rich father".

### EIGHTH CIRCLE.

**Second Ditch: Flatterers.** These sinners are sunk in human excrements, the true equivalent of their flattery on earth, and obvious **contrapasso**. Nothing is known about Alessio Interminelli. **Thais** is a courtesan in the *Eunuchus* of Terence, a play commented, among others, by Cicero and by **John of Salisbury**.

**EIGHTH CIRCLE: Third Ditch.** The Canto begins with an invective against the "Simonists", men of the church who commercialize on sacred things. **Simon the Magician** tried to buy spiritual power to confer the Holy Spirit (*Acts* 8:9-24). Dante's objective here is to chastise the Popes who have reversed their role. The **contrapasso** is obvious in its sarcastic topsy-turvy aspect: as by anointment on their heads the Popes have received the flame of the Holy Spirit, so now their feet are painfully ablaze; and, as they fraudulently pocketed money, so now they are "pocketed" in holes.

Here Dante ingeniously contrives to get all three Popes into the Third Ditch of Hell by having **Nicholas** (1277-1280) predict the punishment of both **Boniface VIII** (1294-1303) and **Clement V** (1305-1314), in a crescendo of uglier deeds by these "adulterous" Popes.

The allegorical image of adultery together with that of the virtuous wife (the Church) prostituted by the the greedy husband (the Pope) is a recurring element of the Canto. **Emperor Constantine** (324-337) was supposed to have endowed the Church in the person of **Pope Sylvester** (314-335) with territorial claim over its dominion in the West. For Dante this was the beginning of the corruption of the Church. Dante attacks on logical grounds the "donation" in his *Monarchia* (III, 10) But the document of the donation was proven false only in the XV Century.

### 118-133

Virgil approves Dante's rebuke against the Popes, embraces him and carries him back to the top of the arch that crosses over the fourth Ditch.

## CANTO 20

### 1-30

Down, in the fourth Ditch, Dante sees people silent and weeping. They have their faces twisted toward their backs and are forced to walk backwards, since seeing forward is denied them. At this sight Dante is moved and begins to cry, but is strongly rebuked by Virgil.

### 31-56

Virgil identifies some of the souls punished there: Amphiaraus, Tiresias, and Manto "who wandered through the world for many years".

### 57-99

Virgil tells Dante the story of his native city. Manto, after her father's (Tiresias) death, wandered for many years and finally came to Italy and settled high up at the foot of the Alps. Later, the people who lived nearby gathered on the spot where Manto's body was buried, decided to build a city and called it Mantua in her honor, but "without any magic of her arts". Finally Virgil tells Dante to disregard any other story he may have heard, because this is the only truth about the origin of Mantua.

### 100-130

Now Dante wants to know from Virgil if he sees in the Ditch other souls worthy of being mentioned. And Virgil identifies a few more soothsayers and magicians, among whom is Michael Scot and Guido Bonatti. In the meantime Virgil observes that the moon is setting at the western edge of the northern hemisphere, and it is time to move on.

## CANTO 21

### 1-21

The two Poets arrive on the bridge over the fifth

### EIGHTH CIRCLE.

**Fourth Ditch**, reserved for **Diviners** and **Soothsayers**, practitioners of "magic frauds". **Contrapasso**: those who have tried to look too far forward into the future, now have their heads turned backwards.

[Amphiaraus](#), one of the seven kings who fought against Thebes. Tiresias, a Theban soothsayer. [Manto](#), daughter of Tiresias, who left Thebes and settled in Italy.

Virgil here "corrects" the story of the origin of Mantua as told in the *Aeneid*. Virgil wants to clear his name from medieval legends that considered him as a magician. But there is more: the newly founded city is given the name of Mantua--"without casting any lots"(l.93)--simply to honor Manto as a person, not as a magician.

[Michael Scot](#) (early 13th C.), famous philosopher and astronomer, a long time at the court of Frederick II, translated many works of Aristotle and [Avicenna](#). The Ghibelline [Guido Bonatti](#) (late 13th C.), astronomer and astrologer, also at the court of [Frederick II](#) for a time. Wrote a voluminous *Treatise on Astronomy*, which became well known throughout Europe.

### EIGHTH CIRCLE.

**Fifth Ditch**: [Barrators](#) or **Grafters**. Barratry is the

Ditch. There, condemned in boiling pitch, are the Barrators. They are guarded by demons armed with prongs, and tear them to pieces whenever they rise above the surface.

### **22-57**

A demon carrying on his shoulders an "Elder" from Lucca arrives on the bridge and throws him down into the pitch. As the sinner rises to the surface, the guardian demons rush at him and prick him with their prongs.

### **58-87**

Virgil tells Dante to hide while he goes to talk with the demons. When the demons see Virgil they run towards him in a menacing manner, but he tells them that he wants to talk to one, and not to all of them. So Malacoda (Evil-Tail) is chosen. Virgil explains to him that he is there because "it is willed in Heaven" for him "to show this difficult way to another". So Malacoda drops his prong on the ground and tells the others not to hurt Virgil.

### **88-105**

Virgil then asks Dante to come out of hiding. As soon as the demons see Dante they gather around him and threaten him. Malacoda calms them down.

### **106-126**

Malacoda tells the two Poets that they cannot pass there because the sixth bridge has been in ruin since it collapsed 1266 years before. Therefore, Malacoda says, if the two want to continue their voyage, they will have to use another path which serves as bridge, and offers an escort of demons to accompany the two there.

### **127-139**

Dante is fearful, but Virgil calms his fears. So they start out following the band of ten demons. The starting signal is given by an obscene "trumpet" signal given by Barbariccia's ass.

## **CANTO 22**

### **1-30**

Dante spends some twelve lines to comment on the filthy starting signal given by Barbariccia, the demons' leader. Now, resigned, Dante proceeds with the

buying or selling of political offices (as **Simony** is of ecclesiastical offices). The sticky pitch is symbolic of the sticky fingers of the grafters.

The Elders were magistrates who held executive power. The Elder here is anonymous, and perhaps symbolizes the whole city of [Lucca](#).

Here once again we have an attempted impediment overcome by the formula that the voyage is willed from above. It should be remembered that among Dante's unjust accusations by the Blacks there was also Barratry. Virgil's advice for Dante to hide (and much of the narration about Drafters here) very well reflect this episode in Dante's life. Thus the political dimension of this and the following canto must not be undervalued.

The meaning here may well be that Dante is ready to "come out" and openly denounce the many grafters of his city.

Here [Malacoda](#) deceives Virgil because he tells him at the same time truth (that the bridge has been ruined 1266 years before, when Christ died, on Good Friday of the year 34) and lies (that there is another path that can be used).

The group of ten demons is led by [Barbariccia](#).

"savage company" of the demons, walking by the edge of the ditch. Looking down at the boiling pitch, Dante observes the dolphin-like behavior of the souls boiling in it, as they occasionally try to seek some relief by surfacing out from the pitch.

### 31-75

One of the sinners is caught with his head out of the pitch. Graffiacane (Scratchdog), one of the demons, hooks him and hauls him up. By now Dante knows the names of all the demons and watches them carefully. Having been requested by Virgil, the sinner who has just been hauled up identifies himself as being from Navarre, a son of a squanderer, and at the service of King Thibaud of Navarre, where he began the practice of barratry.

### 76-132

Ciampolo, having been asked by Virgil whether there are any Italians in the pitch, identifies Fra Gomita and Michele Zanche. Ciampolo also promises to bring many other sinners from the pitch in exchange for freedom from the hooks of the demons. The demons agree, but it was simply a trick on the part of Ciampolo who, once freed, jumps into the pitch.

### 133-151

The "escape" of Ciampolo causes a big quarrel among the demons, and two of them end up in the boiling pitch. While they are being rescued by their fellow demons, Dante and Virgil move on by themselves.

## CANTO 23

### 1-72

While the two Poets walk alone, Dante is taken by the fear that the demons might give pursuit. In fact Virgil, realizing that the ten demons are coming, takes Dante in his arms and slides down into the next ditch. The demons arrive on the edge of the ditch, but Dante and Virgil are already in the Sixth Ditch, and the demons are not allowed to move outside their territory which, of course, is the Fifth Ditch. Once in the Sixth Ditch, Dante and Virgil notice people walking round and round very slowly, weighted down by big robes shaped like a monk's habit, gilded outside but inside heavy with lead.

### 73-108

The devils' peculiar names -- Malacoda (Evil-tail), Cagnazzo (Ugly-dog), Ciriatto (Swine-face), Rubicante (Rabic-face), Barbariccia (Porcupice beard), Draghignazzo (Vile dragon), etc.-- are fashioned by Dante on names used in Tuscany during his times. And, of course, this underlines Dante's political intent. Nothing is known about Ciampolo. [Thibaut](#) is almost certainly Thibaut II, King of Navarre (1253-70).

Fra Gomita was Chancellor of Nino Visconti and was hanged for having accepted bribes. Not much is known of Michele Zanche, who was killed by treason by his son-in-law [Branca Doria](#) (see Canto 33. 136 ff.).

## EIGHTH CIRCLE.

### Sixth Ditch: The Hypocrites.

According to the medieval etymologists, "hypocrite" comes from **yper** ("outside") and **crisis** ("gold"), or "**gilded over**", because on the surface the person is good, but inside is bad. Hence the **contrapasso**. Dante's blows here are particularly directed against the monastic orders.

The Jovial Friars, a religious order founded in

Dante asks Virgil if there are any known people. A person who heard Dante's question is surprised to see a living individual in Hell, and asks Dante to identify himself, which he does. In turn the sinner explains that he and his companion are two Jovial Fiars from Bologna, Catalano and Loderingo.

Bologna in 1261, soon well known for its lavish and luxurious way of life. Both [Catalano and Loderingo](#) had been magistrates in Florence in 1266 to try to establish peace between Guelfs and Ghibellines.

### 109-126

Dante starts speaking harsh words against them, when suddenly realizes that there is a spirit crucified on the ground over whom other hypocrites must walk. He is identified as Caiaphas, the high priest of the Hebrews who counseled the Pharisees that it would be advisable to crucify Christ for the good of the people. Annas, Caiaphas' father-in-law, and others who supported his view, are also condemned there. Virgil is amazed at th

Dante takes [Caiaphas'](#) episode from the Gospel of John (11.50). The Pharisees were considered hypocrites. Caiaphas, however, was not a Pharisee but a Sadducee. For Dante he is more hypocrite than the Pharisees.

### 127-148

Having been asked the way out by Virgil, Catalano explains to him that they will soon be on the ruins of the other bridge across the ditch. Virgil is in anger remembering that Malacoda had told him that the bridge was intact. Malacoda had deceived him. So Dante and Virgil must climb the cliff.

## CANTO 24

### 1-21

At first Dante, seeing that Virgil is quite troubled at Malacoda's deceit, becomes worried. Then, as soon as they arrive at the ruin, realizing that Virgil turns towards him in a sweet manner, his hopes rise again. Dante likens this experience of his to that of a young shepherd in a winter morning. As he gets up and sees that the countryside is white, thinking that snow fell, becomes quite depressed because he has no other feed for his flock. But finally when the sun comes up and the frost outside disappears, he is happy that he can lead his flock out to graze.

The Canto begins with the very long simile of the shepherd. This is one of the many examples of Dante's masterful poetical efforts to express a psychological reality by the use of a concrete and realistic everyday's event.

### 22-60

Virgil examines carefully the ruin, and the two pilgrims begin their difficult ascent. With Virgil helping up Dante from spur to spur, they finally arrive to the top. Dante is exhausted and sits down, but Virgil spurs him on.

The difficult ascent is symbolic of moral perfection and progress through the knowledge of sin. But there can be no rest as there is "a longer ladder still to be climbed".

### 61-96

Dante and Virgil now move on along the narrow bridge over the Seventh Ditch. Dante hears a voice from the Ditch but, even though they are at a point on

## EIGHTH CIRCLE.

**Seventh Ditch: The Thieves.** Continuous transformation is the painful condition of the Thieves. As in life they took the substance of others, now their

the bridge right above the ditch, he cannot understand nor see anything. So they continue walking till the end of the bridge, and decide to go a bit down the bank. From that vantage point they can see a great number of horrible snakes attacking the souls of the Thieves there.

### 97-151

One of the damned souls is pierced at the nape by a serpent and immediately turns into ashes, and then instantly resumes the human shape, to be bitten again and so on. Having been asked by Virgil, he reveals his name. He is Vanni Fucci "beast" from Pistoia. In life Dante actually knew him "as a man of blood and anger" and the Poet wonders why he is not with the violent sinners above. So Dante would like to know what sin Vanni committed for having been condemned all the way down there. Vanni explains that he was sent down so far into Hell because he robbed the fair ornaments of Pistoia cathedral's sacristy. Vanni is much ashamed that Dante has discovered him here and, retaliating with an openly spiteful spirit against Dante, predicts the defeat of the Whites.

## CANTO 25

### 1-9

As soon as Vanni has finished his angry prophesy, he directs an obscene gesture and words against God. But soon a serpent coils about his neck and another around his arms to block any further words or movement

### 10-33

After Vanni's sinful words and gesture against God, Dante pronounces a strong invective against Pistoia. The city should perish rather than producing such horrible men as Vanni Fucci. Meanwhile the Centaur Cacus with a number of serpents and a dragon on his hounch begins chasing Vanni Fucci.

### 34-151

Cacus has hardly gone by when three souls arrive (they are Agnello, Buoso e Puccio). Soon another soul arrives. He is Cianfa who, at the moment, is in the form of a six-footed serpent. Suddenly Cianfa springs out against one of the three, clutches him and bites his face. The bitten one is Agnello. A terrible and

bodies are taken from them. They have acted in sneaky and furtive ways, and now their forms are constantly changed from human into snakes.

[Vanni Fucci](#) from Pistoia, a militant Black whom Dante met perhaps in 1292. The Sacristy of Pistoia's Cathedral was famous for its treasures, some of which were stolen in 1293. An innocent man was accused. Later the guilty parties were discovered, but Vanni was able to escape. Vanni's prediction refers, once again, to the political events in the wars between the Blacks and the Whites, with the final expulsion of the Whites from Florence--and of course, Dante's life long exile.

[Cacus](#) was the son of Vulcan and lived in a cave. He stole [Hercules'](#) cattle dragging them backwards into the cave. Hercules went into the cave and killed Cacus. Cacus is the symbol of thievery through fraud.

The episode involves five noble thieves from Florence. Not much is known of them. Their names are: [Agnello Brunelleschi](#) [Cianfa Donati](#), [Buoso Donati](#), [Puccio Sciancato](#) and [Francesco dei Cavalcanti](#). The fantastic metamorphoses described here must not be understood as simply Dante's bravura vis-a-vis his Latin poets. Dante wants to do

bizarre metamorphosis takes place as the two merge together into a monstrous something which is neither serpent nor human, "which is neither two nor one", having mixed in such a way that "neither seemed what had been before". And so the new monstrous form moves away slowly. At this point a blazing little serpent arrives and swiftly pierces the navel of one of the two remaining (it happened to be Buoso). So another transformation slowly begins to take place, whereby the little serpent (Francesco) and the bitten one (Buoso) gradually exchange bodies. (And here Dante dares to challenge Lucan and Ovid, the two major Latin artists of the metamorphic genre). At the end of the transformation, the new serpent (Buoso) hurries off along the valley hissing, while the new man (Francesco) speaks and spits at it.

something different. The metamorphoses described by Dante are not static; they change continually because they are a part of the contrapasso and hence the eternal punishment of the thieves. Dante innovates tradition with amoral purpose.

## CANTO 26

### 1-12

The sight of the five Florentine thieves prompts Dante to utter a strong and sarcastic invective against his city. Florence can be proud of her greatness since her name is known all over the universe...and also in Hell! The Poet then prophesies for Florence a just punishment.

The opening lines are a sarcastic rendering of an inscription placed on the facade of the Mayor's palace in 1255 stating that by land and by sea she possesses Florence whole world.

### 13-48

The two Poets climb back up to the ridge by the same way they had gone down (XXIV, 72-81) and arrive on the bridge over the Eight Ditch. From there Dante can see many flames moving below. Now painfully he reflects on the talent given by God to man, and on the importance to keep it under control. Virgil explains to him that each flame contains a sinner

Lines 19-24 express Dante's reflection on man's abuse of his God given talent and on the necessity to curb it so "that it not run where virtue does not guide" (l. 22). These lines may be considered as Dante's judgement on Ulysses' decision.

### 49-75

Dante notices a strange flame with two points. Virgil tells him that inside that flame are punished Ulysses and Diomedes. Dante is taken by a strong desire to hear their story. Virgil assents, but tells him that he himself will ask the questions, and not Dante. The two Greeks are in one flame because they committed fraudulent acts together. But the flame has two points of different sizes, the tallest being the one enveloping Ulysses.

[Ulysses](#) is the central figure of the Trojan war and Diomedes his close associate. Together they stole the sacred statue of Athena which protected Troy, they perpetrated "the ambush of the [wooden] horse". So Troy fell, which led to the journey of [Aeneas](#) and the founding of Rome, destined to be the heart of the Roman Empire and the center of Christianity.

### 72-142

Virgil invites the flame to stop and asks Ulysses to

This is Ulysses' fervent, unchecked and burning desire for human knowledge. Not even sacred duties (love for

retell the story of his death. So Ulysses tells how after having explored all the known world, he and his crew were old and tired when they arrived at the Straits of Gibraltar, where Hercules had planted his pillars so that man should not proceed beyond them. But Ulysses wanted to go further. Therefore he urged his small crew to go beyond the pillars and explore the "unpeopled world". Ulysses reminds them that they were not "made to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge". With a "brief oration" Ulysses was able to convince the crew. Therefore, having turned the stern towards east, they begun "the mad flight" towards the west. Finally, after five months of voyage, a mountain appeared far away. But soon a whirlwind came from the mountain. It hit the boat and made it turn around three times. At the fourth turn, it raised the stern and the bow went down into the waters, "as it pleased Another". And the sea closed over it!

## CANTO 27

### 1-34

The flame containing Ulysses and Diomedes moves away, while another flame appears. It attracts the Poets' attention because of a confused sound that comes from it. The sound reminds Dante of Perillus' fate who perished inside his own invention. That confused sound from the flame becomes more distinct and the spirit inside says that he was from Romagna, and wants to know from Dante whether in his homeland there is war or peace.

### 35-44

Dante tells the spirit that Romagna is a restless region afflicted by continuous wars: the city of Ravenna is ruled by Da Polenta's family; the city of Forlì is dominated by the Ordelaffis; the cities of Faenza and Imola change political parties frequently.

### 55-111

Dante wants to know whom he is speaking with. The spirit doesn't reveal his name, but says that first he was a man of arms, and then, having repented, he became a man of religion and embraced the Franciscan order. But unfortunately the Pope induced him to sin again. Then he tells Dante how he became a damned spirit: Pope Boniface VIII, while fighting against the Colonna's family, asked Guido to suggest a stratagem by which he could

his old father, his wife, his son) can restrain him. Ulysses' fraudulent sin is not simply going beyond the pillars of Hercules, but having incited his crew to do so with the use of his tongue, i.e. through a "small speech", a false and hence fraudulent syllogism: there is no "worth of men" in the "unpeopled world"! But Ulysses "small speech" convinces the mutinied crew to change minds. So they turn the east-bound bow towards the west and "the mad flight" begins. The mountain they see is the mountain of Purgatory, which cannot be experienced in life (unless it is so willed by God). The tornado that comes from the mountain is symbolic of God's rejection and condemnation: the rejection is given by the direction of the bow, the condemnation by the sinking of the boat.

[Perillus](#), an Athenian artisan, had built for the Sicilian tyrant Phalaris a bronze torture machine in the form of a bull. After the condemned were placed inside the bronze bull, a fire was lit under it. The cries of pain of the person inside could be heard outside as lowing of a bull. Its inventor, Perillus, was the first to experience the horrible machine. [Romagna](#) is a region in north-central Italy on the Adriatic sea. It contains the cities of [Ravenna](#) and [Rimini](#), and the independent republic of San Marino. Now it is a part of the Emilia-Romagna Region.

The Da Polenta's family controlled Ravenna from 1270 until 1441. Dante spent the last years of his life as guest of [Guido Novello Da Polenta](#).

The sinner is [Guido da Montefeltro](#) (1220-1298), famous Ghibelline man of arms, fought and won several battles against the Guelfs. In 1296 he became a Franciscan monk. Dante speaks of him with admiration also in his *Convivio* (IV, xxviii, 8). Boniface VIII excommunicated the [Colonna](#) family in 1297 and summoned them to surrender. But they didn't and entrenched themselves in their stronghold at [Palestrina](#), some 24 miles from Rome. The Colonnas had refused to recognize Boniface's election as Pope.

trick the Colonnas. Guido knew how, but he was afraid to sin if he revealed it to the Pope. So the Pope reassured Guido and told him that he would absolve him of his sin in advance. Guido obeyed the Pope and told him to make the Colonnas a promise and to not maintain it.

### 112-136

When Guido died, Saint Francis went to get his soul, but a devil demonstrated with strict logic that Guido's soul belonged to him and in Hell. In fact you cannot be absolved from a sin first and then commit it later; "the law of contradiction won't allow it".

The struggle between Heaven and Hell for the possession of a soul is part of medieval lore. In Dante we find it again in *Purgatorio*, canto 5, where the story of Guido's son [Buonconte](#) is told.

## CANTO 28

### 1-21

The Poets are now on the bridge over the Ninth Ditch where are punished the Sowers of Discord. Dante comments that if one could put together in one place the mutilated victims of various wars, the resulting spectacle would in no way equal the horrible sight that he is now observing.

### 22-63

Dante notices a sinner split open from chin to crotch. The sinner introduces himself to Dante as Mohammed, and also points out his son-in-law who walks ahead of him with his face split. Mohammed explains to Dante that all sinners there were on earth sowers of scandal and schism, and that is why they are now split. He also tells Dante that, once mutilated, the sinners are compelled to drag their bodies around. When the wounds are healed and the bodies restored, demons split them up again. When Mohammed hears that Dante is alive, he gives him an ironic message for Fra Dolcino to stock up food if he wants to survive, otherwise soon Fra Dolcino will be joining him there, in Hell.

### 64-111

Another sinner talks to Dante. He is Pier da Medicina and predicts the betrayal of Malatestino Malatesta against two noblemen from Fano. Then he points out to Dante the Tribune Curio. Another sinner introduces himself to Dante as Mosca dei Lamberti

### 112-142

After Mosca departs Dante sees something terrible

## EIGHTH CIRCLE.

**Ninth Ditch: [the Sowers of Discord](#).** **Contrapasso:** just as they divided what God meant to be united, so now their bodies are cut and torn apart by demons. There are three classes of sinners; each sinner suffers according to his degree.

### First Class: Sowers of religious discord.

[Mohammed](#) (570-632) founder of Islamism, considered a schismatic during Dante's times. He was believed to be a Christian who wanted to become Pope. Ali (597-660), cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed, succeeded him in 656 but was assassinated in 660. [Fra Dolcino](#), leader of an heretical sect called the Apostolic Brothers, preached the common holding of property and the sharing of women. Condemned by the Pope in 1305, he and his followers entrenched themselves in the hills of Novara, withstood the Pope's soldiers for one year and finally gave up in 1307, after many of them had died of starvation. Fra Dolcino was burnt at the stakes in [Novara](#) the same year.

**Second Class: Sowers of political discord.** These men were the cause of schism either of states or of community. [Curio](#) joined Caesar's party after serving under Pompey. [Mosca dei Lamberti](#) was considered the cause of the division of Florence and the beginning of the rivalry between Guelfs and Ghibellines.

**Class Three: Sowers of family discord.** [Bertran de Born](#), nobleman and poet, is in Hell because he

and unbelievable: a sinner is holding his own head with one hand by the hair and is swinging it as if it were a lantern to light his dark way. Then he raises it at arm's length in order that he might speak to Dante and reveals his name. He is Bertran de Born who divided father and son. He compares his evil counsel to that of Achitophel who provoked the rebellion between Absaloms and David. Finally he ends with the line: "Thus the **contrapasso** is observed in me".

## CANTO 29

### 1-39

Dante is deeply moved by the spectacle he has just seen in the Ninth Ditch, and keeps on looking down into it. Virgil reproaches him and asks him why he is lingering. Dante explains that he kept on looking at the mutilated souls because he was expecting to see there one of his kinsmen. So Virgil tells him that while Dante was talking with Bertrand de Born, he noticed someone down there making threatening signs with his finger and that he heard the name Geri del Bello called. Dante then clarifies to Virgil Geri's gesture. Geri had been assassinated and nobody had yet vindicated him.

### 40-72

The two Poets arrive on the bridge over the Tenth and final Ditch of Malebolge. The laments of these sinners are so atrocious that Dante is obliged to place his hands over his ears in order not to hear them. If one could gather in one place all the sick of Valdichiana's, Maremma's and Sardinia's hospitals, one would have something similar to what Dante finds in that Ditch. Here are punished in various manners falsifiers of various kind.

### 73-120

Dante sees two sinners sitting propped against each other and full of scabs from head to foot. They are intent furiously to scratch each other with their nails in order to relieve their fierce itching. Dante speaks with both. One of the two is Griffolino d'Arezzo who died at the stake for having jestingly promised to make Alberto of Siena another Daedalus.

### 121-139

Dante takes this occasion to make jokes over the

caused Prince Henry to rebel against his father Henry II of England. Thus dividing head and body. In *De vulgari eloquentia* (II,ii,9) Dante praises Bertrand's poems.

Achitophel, famous counselor of King David, favored Absaloms rebellion and counseled the latter to kill David, his father. The famous last line of the Canto synthesizes the law of retribution. (See [contrapasso](#))

[Geri](#) was one of Dante's second cousins. He was still alive in 1280. It was believed that he had been murdered by a member of the Sacchetti's family. In Dante's times relatives of a murdered person had the legal right of vindication. But the customary vendetta for Geri's death was carried out only in 1310.

## EIGHTH CIRCLE.

**Tenth Ditch: The [Falsifiers](#)**, or those who perverted the physical world by means of deception. As in life they corrupted nature by their falsifications, so in death they are corrupted by some form of disease. There are four classes and all suffer from some disease. Falsifiers of things, from leprosy. Falsifiers of persons, from madness. Falsifiers of money, from drosy. Falsifiers of words, from stinking fever. Valdichiana and Maremma (in Tuscany) and parts of Sardinia were famous for malaria.

**First Class: Falsifiers of things.** [Griffolino](#) obtained money from Alberto by pretending that he could teach him how to fly. Alberto denounced him to the Bishop of Siena as a magician, and so he was burned. [Daedalus](#), Athenian, famous for the art of inventions among which that of flying.

[Capocchio](#) was apparently known by Dante. He was burned alive in [Siena](#) in 1293 for having practiced

foolishness and vanity of the Sieneſe. Another ſoul joins Dante with ironic remarks againſt the Sieneſe. He is Capocchio "whoſe alchemy could counterfeit fine metals"

[alchemy](#).

## CANTO 30

### 1-21

In order to give an idea of the fury of ſome of the ſinners puniſhed here, Dante recalls two clafſical myths relating to madness. The firſt, Athamas having become crazy, his wife Ino appeared to him as a lioness and his two children as her cubs; ſo he killed one of them. Taken by deſpair, Ino drowned herſelf and the other child. The ſecond relates to Hecuba. After her daughter Polyxena had been ſacrificed and her ſon Polydorus had been killed, Hecuba became mad and ſtarted barking like a dog

The two ſtories are told by Ovid in *Metamorphoſes*, reſpectively IV, 512-562 and XIII, 399-575.

### 22-45

More furious than Athamas and Hecuba, the Falsifiers of Perſons or impersonators run in the Ditch and bite other ſinners as rabid dogs. Dante ſees two of them running furioſly. One gets Capocchio by the nape and drags him around. He is Gianni Schicchi. Gianni in order to falſify a will pretended to be Buoso Donati. The other is "the ſhade of the deprived Myrrha" who, luſting after her father, diſguiſed herſelf in order to make love with him.

**Second Class: Falsifiers of perſons.** When [Buoso Donati](#) died, his nephew Simone perſuaded a famous Florentine impersonator, **Gianni Schicchi** of the Cavalcantiſ, to impersonate the dead man in order to dictate a will in Simon's favor. [Myrrha](#) is placed here becauſe of the fraud ſhe uſed to fulfill her deſire. The ſtory is told by Ovid (*Metamorphoſes*, X, 298-502).

### 46-90

Dante obſerves cloſely the Ditch and his attention is attracted by a ſinner with an inflated body, ſuffering from dropsy. He identifies himſelf as Maſter Adam and craves "one little drop of water". He ſays that the cool ſtreams deſcending from the green hills of Caſentino into the Arno river are always in front of his eyes--and the memory is part of his torment. He continues on by ſaying that there, in the Caſentino, he began the counterfeitiſg of the Florin, induced by the Counts Guidi of Romena.

**Third Class: Falsifiers of money.** [Maſter Adam de Anglia](#), of England, under order of Counts Guidi of Romena, counterfeitd Florentine currency, the famous Florin, by making them of twenty-one rather than twenty-four carat gold. Hiſtorically the outcome was a currency criſis in Northern Italy. Maſter Adam was burned at the ſtake in Florence in 1281.

### 91-99

Dante aſks Maſter Adam who are thoſe two ſinners near him ſuffering from raging fever. He is told that they are liars. One is Potiphar's wife who wrongly accuſed Joſeph. The other is Sinon, the falſe Greek from Troy.

**Class four: Falsifiers of word.** [Potiphar](#)'s wife tried to ſeducer Joſeph, ſon of Job. Then ſhe accuſed him of trying to ſeducer her (*Genesis* 39, 6-23). The Greek Sinon allowed the Trojans to take him priſoner and then convinced them to take the wooden horſe into Troy.

## CANTO 31

### 1-6

Because of the words used at the end of Canto 30 (first rebuking, and then comforting), Dante compares Virgil's tongue to Achilles' lance which first produced a wound and then healed it.

### 7-45

The two Poets cross the bank and are getting away from the last Ditch when Dante hears a bugle blast. It was louder than Roland's horn which warned Charlemagne of total Christian defeat. Looking ahead Dante believes he sees some tall towers. Virgil explains to him that they are not towers but giants standing around the central pit of Hell. When Dante can clearly see them his fear is increased as they are so big and look like the great towers of Montere ggioni's fortress.

### 46-81

Dante begins to see the features of some of the giants. The first is extremely big and pronounces incomprehensible words, as if in rage. Then Virgil tells Dante that the giant is Nimrod. Because of Nimrod's wicked idea to build Babel's tower the world has experienced the confusion of languages.

### 82-111

The Poets continue on and see another giant even more terrible than Nimrod. This giant "made the great attempt when giants alarmed the gods". His name is Ephialtes. Virgil tells Dante that another giant, Antaeus, will take them to the bottom of Hell, in the ninth circle.

### 112-145

Finally the two Poets arrive near Antaeus and Virgil asks him to help them reach the bottom of Hell. In silence Antaeus stretches out his hand, grasps Virgil and Dante and places them gently into the pit, which is called Cocytus.

The image of the magic [Achilles'](#) lance was a common place in medieval love poetry tradition.

In the *Chanson de Roland*, a medieval French epic, [Roland](#) was assigned to the rear guard on the return through the [Pyrenees](#). When the [Saracens](#) attacked, he refused to blow his horn for help, doing so only when he was dying and too late. [Montere ggioni](#) was a large castle near Siena built in 1213 and crowned by 14 towers. Some, half destroyed, are still visible.

[Nimrod](#), the first king of Babylon, is supposed to have built [Babel's tower](#). As a punishment God confused their tongues (narrated in *Genesis* XI,1-9). In early Christian tradition Nimrod was believed to be a giant.

[Ephialtes](#), son of Neptune, at nine and together with his brother, attempted to put mount Pelion on top of mount Ossa in order to ascend to the gods and make war with them. But [Apollo](#) killed both brothers.

[Antaeus](#), a Titan, was believed invincible until [Hercules](#) lifted him over his head and strangled him in mid-air. Cocytus is the frozen last circle of Hell.

## CANTO 32

### 1-15

Dante, having arrived in the Ninth Circle, would like to describe it in a suitable manner. But he confesses that the task is very difficult, because to represent it adequately he would need "rough and hoarse rhymes". Therefore he invokes the Muses to help him, and then he utters a sharp apostrophe against its sinners.

### 16-39

The two Poets continue walking on the ice of the last circle. In the first zone, called Caina, the sinners are immersed into the ice with the exception of their heads. When they raise their heads Dante can see tears freezing and dropping into icicles over their eyes.

### 40-69

Dante sees two sinners so close to each other that the hair of one is confused with that of the other. Pain and anger push them to butt each other like goats. Another spirit tells Dante that the two are brothers and are Alessandro and Napoleone, sons of count Alberto degli Alberti. The spirit identifies also other sinners and finally identifies himself. He is Camicione dei Pazzi.

### 70-123

Dante and Virgil proceed into the second part of the Ninth Circle, called Antenora, in which the traitors are plunged more deeply into the ice, but with their face up, and cannot move their heads. While Dante is walking, his foot kicks one of the faces. The spirit screams at Dante and mentions Montaperti. Dante wants to know his name. When the spirit refused to answer, Dante grabs him by the hair and threatens him. At this point another spirit nearby reveals that he is Bocca. Now Bocca reveals the name of the one who revealed his, as well as the name of other spirits punished there.

### 124-139

After this the two Poets see a horrible spectacle: two heads are frozen together in the ice, one on top of the other. The upper head gnaws the lower at the nape. Dante asks the gnawer who he is and why he does what he does.

## CANTO 33

### 1-78

At Dante's question, the sinner raises "his mouth from his fierce meal" and answering Dante tells him that for him to remember is renewing a despairing

### CIRCLE NINE. Cocytus.

[Cocytus](#) is a frozen lake where the sin of [Treachery](#) is punished. It is divided into four zones. A type of traitor is punished in each zone.

The **First Zone** is called [Caina](#). It is named after [Cain](#) who, according to *Genesis*, slew his brother Abel. Here **treachery to a relative** is punished.

Alessandro and Napoleone degli Alberti were one Guelf and the other Ghibelline. They killed each other over an inheritance. Camicione d' Pazzi murdered a relative of his.

The **Second Zone**, called [Antenora](#), is named after Antenor, a Trojan who betrayed his city to the Greeks. It is then reserved for **traitors of country or political party**. [Bocca degli Abati](#) is the traitor of [Montaperti](#). During the battle of 1260 Bocca cut the hand of the Florentine standard bearer. The standard fell, and without it the cavalry was soon routed.

The answer will be given in Canto 33.

his episode begins with line 124 of Canto 32. [Count Ugolino](#) of a noble Ghibelline family changed party and became a Guelf in order to promote the Gulfs of Pisa and became Pisa's mayor. In 1288 [Ruggieri degli](#)

pain. But if what he will say can bring infamy to the betrayer he is gnawing, he will weep but tell his story in his tears. He is Count Ugolino and the other is Archbishop Ruggieri. Trusting the agreement made with Ruggieri outside of Pisa, Ugolino returned to the city. But with a trick he was taken and put in prison with his sons and nephews. In prison Ugolino has a dream by which the future is revealed to him. He sees Ruggieri in the form of a hound hunting a wolf and his whelps (i. e. himself and his sons). Ruggieri the hound catches them and tears them apart with its sharp fangs. After the dream Ugolino wakes up and hears his sons crying and asking for bread. But food is not brought to the prisoners, the prison's door has been locked and the key thrown away. Ugolino suffers immensely to see his sons hungry and bites both of his hands out of grief. The children believe that he had done that out of hunger and offer themselves to him as food. In a week's time all of his children die of starvation. Ugolino, now blind, started groping over each and called them for two days; "then fasting had more force than grief"! At the end of the story, Ugolino grips Ruggieri's skull and start gnawing it

### 79-90

Dante bursts out with a violent invective against Pisa for having starved to death four innocent boys. In his wrath Dante wishes that the two islands of Capraia and Gorgona move and block the mouth of the Arno river so that it could flood Pisa and drown every living soul.

### 91-108

The two poets continue their voyage and enter into the Third Zone of Cocytus which is called Ptolomea. Dante here feels blasts of wind and Virgil tells him that soon he will know the cause that produces it.

### 109-150

Dante and Virgil walk among the punished souls. One of them asks Dante to remove the ice from his eyes. Dante promises to help him, and may he "go to the bottom of Hell" if he doesn't, provided the sinner reveals his name! Following Dante's promise, the sinner reveals his name as Fra Alberigo. Dante is much surprised as he knows that Fra Alberigo is still alive. Then Alberigo explains that Ptolomea has a special privilege: frequently the soul falls there as soon as it has committed treachery, before the person dies. And on earth a devil takes the place of the soul and inhabits the body until its natural death. Then he indicates to Dante another example: Branca d'Oria who killed his father-in-law. He has been in Ptolomea already for many years, and yet his body is still alive. Finally Alberigo reminds Dante of his

[Ubal dini](#), Archbishop of Pisa and others became the leaders of a popular revolt against Ugolino's party. Ugolino was out of town. He was promised a safe conduct if he returned to Pisa. So he did. But he was caught and put with two sons and two nephews of his in the Gualandi's tower. They were kept imprisoned for nine months. Then in 1289 the Archbishop ordered the tower locked up and the keys thrown away.

Capraia and Gorgona are two islands on the Tyrrhenian Sea, near the mouth of the Arno. In 1300 they were Pisan possession.

**Third Zone:** ia called [Ptolomea](#). It is the zone where **treachery to friends and guests** is punished. The source of wind is Satan himself.

[Fra Alberigo](#) of the Manfredi family from Faenza was a Jovial Friar. In 1285 he invited his brother and his son to a banquet and killed them both. [Branca d'Oria](#) of a noble Genoese family, in 1290 invited his father-in-law, [Michele Zanche](#), to a banquet and had him and his companions assassinated. Branca d'Oria died after 1325. Dante's unkept promise is sometimes taken as cruelty. But in fact keeping promise would have meant going against God's justice. In addition, Dante's promise was made in jest, as he knows that he is going to the bottom of Hell!

promise to open his eyes, but Dante refuses.

### 151-157

Branca d'Oria is a Genoese, and now Dante utters another invective against the Genoese, a people full of corruption and lacking any constraint of custom. They should be driven from earth!

## CANTO 34

### 1-67

The two Poets reach the last zone of the Ninth Circle, Judecca. Here the sinners lie wholly submerged in ice. Dante notices that the sinners are in various positions; some lying, some standing upright, or on their heads, some doubled-up. At the very center of Cocytus--which is also the center of earth--is Lucifer rising from the waist above the surface of the lake. Lucifer, or Dis, has three faces each of different color, and large wings like those of a bat. By flapping his huge wings he freezes Cocytus. In each of his three mouths he chews a sinner: he chews Judas who betrayed Christ, as well as Brutus and Cassius who betrayed Caesar.

### 68-139

The voyage through Hell is practically completed because by now "all has been seen". Virgil and Dante climb down Lucifer's body and then, suddenly, at Satan's navel, turn upside down and begin climbing up. When Dante sees Lucifer's legs turned upwards he is confused, but Virgil explains that they have passed the center of earth and are now in the southern hemisphere. Virgil reminds Dante that it is here that Lucifer fell down when he was hurled out of heaven. The Poets continue moving up following, countercurrent, a subterranean stream in order to reach the base of the mountain of Purgatory. From there the Poets come out of darkness "to see once again the stars".

The **Fourth zone** is called [Judecca](#). Here are punished the **traitors of benefactors**. It is named after [Judas](#) who betrayed Christ. Lucifer is the antithesis of God and the total expression of darkness and evil. His three faces are a travesty of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost, or Power Wisdom and Love. Judas on one side and Brutus and Cassius on the other represent the enemies of Church and Empire, the betrayers of spiritual and temporal principle designed by God to rule the human race. Dante's image of Lucifer is fashioned after a mosaic on the ceiling of Florence Baptistry.

When Lucifer fell all the land where the devil hit retreated under water and moved to the northern hemisphere, our hemisphere. However, the ground at the core of earth rushed upward, formed the cone-shaped mountain of Purgatory, and the space left became the cavity of Hell. It is believed that the subterranean stream is the water from the Purgatorial river Lethe which carries the memory of sin.