

## INFERNO XVIII

### OUTLINE

- 1-9 Malebolge as castle: wall, moats, bridges, pit  
10-18 similes: moats around castles and overarching bridges  
19-21 leftward movement after Geryon has departed  
22-25 first ditch: double file of sinners  
26-33 simile: bridge in Rome over Tiber during Jubilee Year  
34-39 the punishing demons with their whips  
40-51 Dante recognizes Venedico Caccianemico  
52-63 Venedico's pandering and that of other Bolognesi  
64-66 a demon smites him and sends him off  
67-74 Dante and Virgil mount to the crown of the ridge  
75-78 Virgil: now Dante can watch the other group of sinners  
79-99 view of the seducers: Jason  
100-108 the second ditch: sound of whining, stench  
109-114 to see within, they mount to the ridge's crown  
115-126 flattery: Alessio Interminiei of Lucca  
127-136 flattery: Thaïs the whore; abrupt ending of canto

## INFERNO XVIII

3       Luogo è in inferno detto Malebolge,  
tutto di pietra di color ferrigno,  
come la cerchia che dintorno il volge.

6       Nel dritto mezzo del campo maligno  
vaneggia un pozzo assai largo e profondo,  
di cui *suo loco* dicerò l'ordigno.

9       Quel cinghio che rimane adunque è tondo  
tra 'l pozzo e 'l piè de l'alta ripa dura,  
e ha distinto in dieci valli il fondo.

12      Quale, dove per guardia de le mura  
più e più fossi cingon li castelli,  
la parte dove son rende figura,

15      tale imagine quivi facean quelli;  
e come a tai fortezze da' lor sogli  
a la ripa di fuor son ponticelli,

18      così da imo de la roccia scogli  
movien che ricidien li argini e ' fossi  
infino al pozzo che i tronca e raccogli.

21      In questo luogo, de la schiena scossi  
di Gerion, trovammoci; e 'l poeta  
tenne a sinistra, e io dietro mi mossi.

24      A la man destra vidi nova pieta,  
novo tormento e novi frustatori,  
di che la prima bolgia era repleta.

27      Nel fondo erano ignudi i peccatori;  
dal mezzo in qua ci venien verso 'l volto,  
di là con noi, ma con passi maggiori,

3       There is a place in Hell called Malebolge,  
fashioned entirely of iron-colored rock,  
as is the escarpment that encircles it.

6       At the very center of this malignant space  
there yawns a pit, extremely wide and deep.  
I will describe its plan all in due time.

9       A path that circles like a belt around the base  
of that high rock runs round the pit,  
its sides descending in ten ditches.

12      As where concentric moats surround a castle  
to guard its walls, their patterns clear  
and governed by a meaningful design,

15      in such a pattern were these ditches shaped.  
And, just as narrow bridges issue from the gates  
of fortresses to reach the farthest bank,

18      so ridges stretched from the escarpment  
down across the banks and ditches  
into the pit at which they end and join.

21      Dropped from Geryon's back, this was the place  
in which we found ourselves. The poet kept  
to the left and I came on behind him.

24      To our right I saw a suffering new to me,  
new torments, and new scourgers,  
with whom the first ditch was replete.

27      The sinners in its depth were naked,  
those on our side of the center coming toward us,  
the others moving with us, but with longer strides,

30       come i Roman per l'essercito molto,  
           l'anno del giubileo, su per lo ponte  
           hanno a passar la gente modo colto,  
  
 33       che da l'un lato tutti hanno la fronte  
           verso 'l castello e vanno a Santo Pietro,  
           da l'altra sponda vanno verso 'l monte.  
  
 36       Di qua, di là, su per lo sasso tetro  
           vidi demon cornuti con gran ferze,  
           che li battien crudelmente di retro.  
  
 39       Ahi come facean lor levar le berze  
           a le prime percosse! già nessuno  
           le seconde aspettava né le terze.  
  
 42       Mentr' io andava, li occhi miei in uno  
           furo scontrati; e io sì tosto dissi:  
           "Già di veder costui non son digiuno."  
  
 45       Per ch'io a figurarlo i piedi affissi;  
           e 'l dolce duca meco si ristette,  
           e assentio ch'alquanto in dietro gissi.  
  
 48       E quel frustato celar si credette  
           bassando 'l viso; ma poco li valse,  
           ch'io dissi: "O tu che l'occhio a terra gette,  
  
 51       se le fazion che porti non son false,  
           Venedico se' tu Caccianemico.  
           Ma che ti mena a sì pungenti salse?"  
  
 54       Ed elli a me: "Mal volontier lo dico;  
           ma sforzami la tua chiara favella,  
           che mi fa sovvenir del mondo antico.  
  
 57       I' fui colui che la Ghisolabella  
           condussi a far la voglia del marchese,  
           come che suoni la sconcia novella.

30       just as, because the throngs were vast the year  
           of Jubilee, the Romans had to find a way  
           to let the people pass across the bridge,  
  
 33       so that all those on one side face the castle,  
           heading over to Saint Peter's,  
           these, on the other, heading toward the mount.  
  
 36       Here and there on the dark rock above them  
           I watched horned demons armed with heavy scourges  
           lashing them cruelly from behind.  
  
 39       Ah, how they made them pick their heels up  
           at the first stroke! You may be certain  
           no one waited for a second or a third.  
  
 42       While I went on my eye was caught  
           by one of them, and quickly I brought out:  
           'It seems to me I've seen that man before.'  
  
 45       And so I paused to make him out.  
           My gentle leader stopped with me,  
           and then allowed me to retrace my steps.  
  
 48       The scourged soul thought that he could hide  
           by lowering his face—to no avail.  
           I said: 'You there, with your eyes cast down,  
  
 51       'if I'm not mistaken in your features,  
           you're Venèdico Caccianemico.  
           What has brought you to such stinging torture?'  
  
 54       And he replied: 'Unwillingly I tell it,  
           moved only by the truth of what you've said,  
           which brings to mind the world that once I knew.  
  
 57       'It was I who urged Ghisolabella  
           to do the will of that marquis,  
           no matter how the foul tale goes around.

E non pur io qui piango bolognese;  
 anzi n'è questo loco tanto pieno,  
 60 che tante lingue non son ora apprese

a dicer 'sipa' tra Sàvena e Reno;  
 e se di ciò vuoi fede o testimonio,  
 63 rècati a mente il nostro avaro seno."

Così parlando il percosse un demonio  
 de la sua scuriada, e disse: "Via,  
 66 ruffian! qui non son femmine da conio."

I' mi raggiunsi con la scorta mia;  
 poscia con pochi passi divenimmo  
 69 là 'v' uno scoglio de la ripa uscia.

Assai leggermente quel salimmo;  
 e vòlti a destra su per la sua scheggia,  
 72 da quelle cerchie etterne ci partimmo.

Quando noi fummo là dov' el vaneggia  
 di sotto per dar passo a li sferzati,  
 75 lo duca disse: "Attienti, e fa che feggia

lo viso in te di quest' altri mal nati,  
 ai quali ancor non vedesti la faccia  
 78 però che son con noi insieme andati."

Del vecchio ponte guardavam la traccia  
 che venìa verso noi da l'altra banda,  
 81 e che la ferza similmente scaccia.

E 'l buon maestro, senza mia dimanda,  
 mi disse: "Guarda quel grande che vene,  
 84 e per dolor non par lagrime spanda:

quanto aspetto reale ancor ritene!  
 Quelli è Iasón, che per cuore e per senno  
 87 li Colchi del monton privati fène.

'I'm not the only Bolognese here lamenting.  
 This place is so crammed with them  
 60 that not so many tongues have learned to say

' "sipa" between the Sàvena and the Reno.  
 And if you'd like some confirmation,  
 63 bring our greedy dispositions back to mind.'

While he was speaking a demon struck him  
 with his lash and said: 'Away, pimp!  
 66 there are no women here to trick.'

Then I rejoined my escort. A few steps farther  
 and we came upon a place  
 69 where a ridge jutted from the bank.

This we ascended easily and,  
 turning to the right upon its jagged ledge,  
 72 we left behind their endless circling.

When we came to the point above the hollow  
 that makes a passage for the scourged,  
 75 my leader said: 'Stop, let them look at you,

'those other ill-born souls whose faces  
 you have not yet seen, since we have all  
 78 been moving in the same direction.'

From the ancient bridge we eyed the band  
 advancing toward us on the other side,  
 81 driven with whips just like the first.

And the good master, without my asking, said:  
 'See that imposing figure drawing near.  
 84 He seems to shed no tears despite his pain.

'What regal aspect he still bears!  
 He is Jason, who by courage and by craft  
 87 deprived the men of Colchis of the ram.

90 Ello passò per l'isola di Lenno  
poi che l'ardite femmine spietate  
tutti li maschi loro a morte dienno.

93 Ivi con segni e con parole ornate  
Isifile ingannò, la giovinetta  
che prima avea tutte l'altre ingannate.

96 Lasciolla quivi, gravida, soletta;  
tal colpa a tal martiro lui condanna;  
e anche di Medea si fa vendetta.

99 Con lui sen va chi da tal parte inganna;  
e questo basti de la prima valle  
sapere e di color che 'n sé assanna."

102 Già eravam là 've lo stretto calle  
con l'argine secondo s'incrocicchia,  
e fa di quello ad un altr' arco spalle.

105 Quindi sentimmo gente che si nicchia  
ne l'altra bolgia e che col muso scuffa,  
e sé medesma con le palme picchia.

108 Le ripe eran grommate d'una muffa,  
per l'alito di giù che vi s'appasta,  
che con li occhi e col naso facea zuffa.

111 Lo fondo è cupo sì, che non ci basta  
loco a veder senza montare al dosso  
de l'arco, ove lo scoglio più sovrasta.

114 Quivi venimmo; e quindi giù nel fosso  
vidi gente attuffata in uno sterco  
che da li uman privadi pareva mosso.

117 E mentre ch'io là giù con l'occhio cerco,  
vidi un col capo sì di merda lordo,  
che non parèa s'era laico o cherco.

90 'Then he ventured to the isle of Lemnos,  
after those pitiless, bold women  
put all the males among them to their death.

93 'There with signs of love and polished words  
he deceived the young Hypsipyle,  
who had herself deceived the other women.

96 'There he left her, pregnant and forlorn.  
Such guilt condemns him to this torment,  
and Medea too is thus avenged.

99 'With him go all who practice such deceit.  
Let that be all we know of this first ditch  
and of the ones it clenches in its jaws.'

102 Now we had come to where the narrow causeway  
intersects the second ridge to form  
a buttress for another arch.

105 From here we heard the whimpering of people  
one ditch away, snuffing with their snouts  
and beating on themselves with their own palms.

108 The banks, made slimy by a sticky vapor  
from below, were coated with a mould  
offending eyes and nose.

111 The bottom is so deep we could see nothing  
unless we climbed to the crown of the arch,  
just where the ridge is highest.

114 We went up, and from there I could see,  
in a ditch below, people plunged in excrement  
that could have come from human privies.

117 Searching the bottom with my eyes I saw  
a man, his head so smeared with shit  
one could not tell if he were priest or layman.



Quei mi sgridò: "Perché se' tu sì gordo  
di riguardar più me che li altri brutti?"  
120 E io a lui: "Perché, se ben ricordo,

già t'ho veduto coi capelli asciutti,  
e se' Alessio Interminei da Lucca:  
123 però t'adocchio più che li altri tutti."

Ed elli allor, battendosi la zucca:  
"Qua giù m'hanno sommerso le lusinghe  
126 ond' io non ebbi mai la lingua stucca."

Appresso ciò lo duca "Fa che pinghe,"  
mi disse, "il viso un poco più avante,  
129 sì che la faccia ben con l'occhio attinghe

di quella sozza e scapigliata fante  
che là si graffia con l'unghie merdose,  
132 e or s'accoscia e ora è in piedi stante.

Taide è, la puttana che rispuose  
al drudo suo quando disse 'Ho io grazie  
grandi apo te?': 'Anzi maravigliose!'  
136 E quinci sian le nostre viste sazie."

He railed: 'What whets your appetite to stare at me  
more than all the others in their filth?'  
120 And I answered: 'The fact, if I remember right,

'that once I saw you when your hair was dry—  
and you are Alessio Interminei of Lucca.  
123 That's why I eye you more than all the rest.'

Then he, beating on his pate:  
'I am immersed down here for the flattery  
126 with which my tongue was never cloyed.'

And then my leader said to me: 'Try to thrust  
your face a little farther forward,  
129 to get a better picture of the features

'of that foul, disheveled wench down there,  
scratching herself with her filthy nails.  
132 Now she squats and now she's standing up.

'She is Thaïs, the whore who, when her lover asked:  
'Have I found favor with you?'  
answered, "Oh, beyond all measure!"  
136 And let our eyes be satisfied with that.'

1–18. The extended introductory passage interrupts the narrative in order to set the new scene: Malebolge, the eighth Circle, with its ten varieties of fraudulent behaviors. Only in *Inferno* does an equal number of cantos (17 and 17) create a precise center for a *cantica* in the space between two cantos, and we have just passed it. The last canto ended with a sort of “comic” conclusion to Dante’s dangerous voyage on Geryon. He has now traversed precisely half of the literary space devoted to the underworld. Thus, fully half of the *cantica*, Cantos XVIII to XXXIV, is dedicated to the sins of Fraud. That division tells us something about the poet’s view of human behavior, namely that it is better typified by the worst of sins than by the lesser ones.

The poetry of Malebolge, studied by Sanguineti (Sang.1962.1), is strikingly self-confident. One has the feeling that Dante, having finished his apprenticeship, now has achieved a level of aesthetic performance that may have surprised even him. In the seventh canto he had conjoined two kinds of sinners, the avaricious and the prodigal; but these are two sides of the same sin. Here for the first time, as something of a *tour de force*, he includes two entirely separate categories of sin in a single canto, one of them itself subdivided into two groups, as in Canto VII—all of this in 115 lines. The precision of the operation is noteworthy, and may be represented as follows:

(1) <i>panders &amp; seducers</i>	(2) <i>flatterers</i>
disposition of both (22–39)	disposition (100–114)
modern exemplar (52–66)	modern exemplar (115–126)
classical exemplar (82–99)	classical exemplar (127–136)

The hellscape offers a gray stone circular wall surrounding a stone “field,” which in turn surrounds a pit (the “keep” of this “castle”); the field is divided into ten valleys, which resemble moats set around a castle. The analogy is complete, but works in reverse, since a castle rises above its surroundings, while this “castle” is a hole leading into hell. Our first view of Malebolge (the name is a Dantean coinage made up of words meaning “evil” and “pouches”) makes it seem like a vast, emptied stadium, e.g., the Colosseum, which Dante might have seen in 1301 if he indeed visited Rome then, or the arena of Verona, which he probably saw at least by

1304. The former hypothesis is attractive in that the second image of the canto is also modeled on Roman architecture: the bridge over the Tiber between the Vatican and the city.

19–21. The narrative is now joined to the action concluding the last canto and the poets resume their leftward circling movement.

22–27. The panders, moving from left to right as Dante views them, are moving in a direction contrary to his; the seducers, moving from his right to his left, and thus moving in parallel with him, are going faster than he; but then he has no demons lashing him with whips.

28–33. The simile, reflecting the Roman invention of two-way traffic in 1300 for the crowds thronging to the holy places, on the bridge across the Tiber, from the city (to St. Peter’s, after they pass Castel Sant’Angelo) and back again (to the area of Monte Giordano, just off the Tiber), has caused some to argue that Dante had been in Rome during the Jubilee. It is more likely that he was in fact there in 1301 and heard tell of this modern wonder of crowd control. That the first city that Malebolge calls to mind is Rome in the Jubilee Year is not without its ironic thrust, especially since it had been Pope Boniface VIII, so hated by Dante, who proclaimed this great event (the first in the Church’s history).

35. In his commentary to the passage Benvenuto da Imola suggests that the panders are punished by horned devils because their actions resulted in the cuckoldry of others.

50. Venedico was an important political figure of Bologna in the second half of the thirteenth century. His sin was in selling his own sister to Opizzo of Este (see *Inf.* XII.111). He actually died in 1302, although Dante obviously believed he had died before 1300.

58–61. Venedico’s pleasantry insists that there are more Bolognesi in this zone of hell than currently populate the city itself. “Sipa” is ancient dialectal Bolognese for “yes,” and thus the phrase means “have grown up speaking Bolognese dialect” between the rivers that mark the eastern and western confines of the city.

66. The demon’s rough remark is variously understood: either “there are no women here to defraud” (as Venedico did his sister), or “there are no

women here for sale" (to offer to Dante). And there may also be a hint of slang words for female genitalia. In our translation we have tried to keep both of the first meanings possible.

72. The circlings of the whipped sinners, not of the ditches themselves, are almost certainly what is referred to, just as Francesco da Buti, in his commentary to this passage, said centuries ago. However, it was only some eighty years ago that Enrico Bianchi (Bian.1921.1) brought such a comprehension back to the verse, thereby increasing its power: the reference is to the Florentine custom of whipping a condemned man along the route to his execution. Most contemporary commentators accept this reading.

73–78. At the high point of the bridge over the ditch on their way toward the next *bolgia* the travelers stop to observe the second set of sinners in this one, whom they have not been able to examine because these were going along in the same direction as were they, and at a faster clip.

83–85. Like Capaneus (*Inf.* XIV.46–48), the heroic Jason is allowed to keep some of his dignity and his stoical strength.

86–96. Jason, who will be remembered in *Paradiso* in a far more positive light, as the precursor of Dante in his having taken a great voyage and returned with the golden fleece (*Par.* II.16–18; XXV.7; XXXIII.94–96), is here presented as the classical exemplar of the vile seducer. Dante has Virgil condense the lengthy narrative of Jason's exploits found in Ovid (*Metam.* VII.1–424) into two details, the seductions of Hypsipyle (daughter of the king of Lemnos) and of Medea (daughter of the king of Colchis).

For the resonance at v. 91 of Beatrice's description of Virgilian utterance as "parola ornata" see the note to *Inf.* II.67. As for Jason's *segni* (signs of love), Dante may be thinking of his ability to move Medea by tears as well as words (see *Metam.* VII.169).

100–114. The second ditch is filled with supernatural excrement (it only seems to have come from the toilets of humans). What do flatterers do? It is unnecessary to repeat the slang phrases that are used in nearly all languages to characterize their utterance. What they did above, they do below, wallowing in excrement, their faces ingesting it as animals guzzle food from their troughs (see v. 104).

122. Alessio Intermini is the first Lucchese whom we encounter, but there will be others, below. Dante seems systematically to include in hell representatives of all the major Tuscan cities.

133–135. Thaïs is a courtesan in Terence's comic play *Eunuchus*, and had a reputation even into the Middle Ages as a flatterer. Whether Dante is citing Terence directly (most currently dispute this) or through Cicero (*De amicitia* XXVI.98—a text that Dante assuredly did know and which explicitly associates Thaïs with flattery, though there and in Terence she is the one flattered, not the flatterer) is a matter that still excites argument. For the most recent claims for Dante's knowledge of Terence see Villa (*Vill.*1984.1); but see also the countering arguments of Barański (*Bara.*1993.1), pp. 230–38.



## INFERNO XXVII

### OUTLINE

- 1-6 one flame departs, another comes  
7-15 simile: the new flame as brazen Sicilian bull  
16-18 Guido da Montefeltro: his difficulty producing words  
19-30 Guido questions Virgil about Romagna  
31-33 Virgil directs Dante to speak to his fellow Italian  
34-54 Dante reports on Romagna's troubled present  
55-57 Dante offers fame in exchange for Guido's identity  
58-66 Guido agrees because he believes Dante is damned  
67-129 Guido's autobiography:  
67-72 soldier, friar, dupe of Boniface  
73-78 the covert ways of "the fox" are renowned  
79-84 old age and his failure to furl his sails  
85-111 Boniface's stratagem, Guido's evil advice  
112-123 his death; Francis and the fallen Cherub  
124-129 Guido's descent to the underworld  
130-132 the departure of Guido's flame-covered shade  
133-136 the poets move to the bridge over the ninth *bolgia*

## INFERNO XXVII

Già era dritta in sù la fiamma e queta  
per non dir più, e già da noi sen già  
3 con la licenza del dolce poeta,

quand' un'altra, che dietro a lei venìa,  
ne fece volger li occhi a la sua cima  
6 per un confuso suon che fuor n'uscìa.

Come 'l bue cicilian che mugghiò prima  
col pianto di colui, e ciò fu dritto,  
9 che l'avea temperato con sua lima,

mugghiava con la voce de l'afflitto,  
sì che, con tutto che fosse di rame,  
12 pur el pareva dal dolor trafitto;

così, per non aver via né forame  
dal principio nel foco, in suo linguaggio  
15 si convertian le parole grame.

Ma poscia ch'ebber colto lor viaggio  
su per la punta, dandole quel guizzo  
18 che dato avea la lingua in lor passaggio,

udimmo dire: "O tu a cu' io drizzo  
la voce e che parlavi mo lombardo,  
21 dicendo 'Istra ten va, più non t'adizzo,'

perch' io sia giunto forse alquanto tardo,  
non t'incresca restare a parlar meco;  
24 vedi che non incresce a me, e ardo!

Se tu pur mo in questo mondo cieco  
caduto se' di quella dolce terra  
27 latina ond' io mia colpa tutta reco,

The flame now stood erect and still,  
meaning to speak no more, and was departing  
3 with the gentle poet's leave,

when another flame, coming close behind,  
caused our eyes to fix upon its tip,  
6 drawn by the gibberish that came from it.

As the Sicilian bull that bellowed first  
with the cries of him whose instrument  
9 had fashioned it—and that was only just—

used to bellow with the victim's voice  
so that, although the bull was made of brass,  
12 it seemed transfixed by pain,

thus, having first no course or outlet  
through the flame, the mournful words  
15 were changed into a language all their own.

But once the words had made their way  
up to the tip, making it flicker  
18 as the voice had done when it had formed them,

we heard it say: 'O you at whom I aim my voice  
and who, just now, said in the Lombard tongue:  
21 "Now go your way, I ask you nothing more,"

'though I've arrived, perhaps, a little late,  
let it not trouble you to stay and speak with me.  
24 Though I am in the flame, as you can see, it irks me not.

'If you are only a short while fallen  
into this blind world from that sweet land  
27 of Italy, from which I bring down all my sins,

30 dimmi se Romagnuoli han pace o guerra;  
 ch'io fui d'i monti là intra Orbino  
 e 'l giogo di che Tever si diserra."

33 Io era in giuso ancora attento e chino,  
 quando il mio duca mi tentò di costa,  
 dicendo: "Parla tu; questi è latino."

36 E io, ch'avea già pronta la risposta,  
 senza indugio a parlare incominciai:  
 "O anima che se' là giù nascosta,

39 Romagna tua non è, e non fu mai,  
 senza guerra ne' cuor de' suoi tiranni;  
 ma 'n palese nessuna or vi lasciai.

42 Ravenna sta come stata è molt' anni:  
 l'aguglia da Polenta la si cova,  
 sì che Cervia ricuopre co' suoi vanni.

45 La terra che fè già la lunga prova  
 e di Franceschi sanguinoso mucchio,  
 sotto le branche verdi si ritrova.

48 E 'l mastin vecchio e 'l nuovo da Verrucchio,  
 che fecer di Montagna il mal governo,  
 là dove soglion fan d'i denti succhio.

51 Le città di Lamone e di Santerno  
 conduce il lioncel dal nido bianco,  
 che muta parte da la state al verno.

54 E quella cu' il Savio bagna il fianco,  
 così com' ella sie' tra 'l piano e 'l monte,  
 tra tirannia si vive e stato franco.

57 Ora chi se', ti priego che ne conte;  
 non esser duro più ch'altri sia stato,  
 se 'l nome tuo nel mondo tegna fronte."

30 'tell me if Romagna lives in peace or war.  
 I came from where the mountains stand between  
 Urbino and the ridge from which the Tiber springs.'

33 I still stood bending down to hear,  
 when my leader nudged my side and said:  
 'It's up to you to speak—this one is Italian.'

36 And I, who had my answer ready,  
 without delay began to speak:  
 'O soul that is hidden from my sight down there,

39 'your Romagna is not, and never was,  
 free of warfare in her rulers' hearts.  
 Still, no open warfare have I left behind.

42 'Ravenna remains as it has been for years.  
 The eagle of Polenta broods over it  
 so that he covers Cervia with his wings.

45 'The town that once withstood the lengthy siege,  
 making of the French a bloody heap,  
 is now again beneath the green claws of the lion.

48 'The elder mastiff of Verrucchio and the younger,  
 who between them had harsh dealing with Montagna,  
 sharpen their teeth to augers in the customary place.

51 'The young lion on a field of white,  
 who rules Lamone's and Santerno's cities,  
 changes sides between the summer and the snows.

54 'And the city whose flank the Savio bathes:  
 as she lives between tyranny and freedom,  
 so she lies between the mountain and the plain.

57 'But now, I beg you, tell us who you are.  
 Be no more grudging than another's been to you,  
 so may your name continue in the world.'

60 Poscia che 'l foco alquanto ebbe ruggiato  
al modo suo, l'aguta punta mosse  
di qua, di là, e poi diè cotal fiato:

63 "S'i' credesse che mia risposta fosse  
a persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
questa fiamma staria senza più scosse;

66 ma però che già mai di questo fondo  
non tornò vivo alcun, s'i' odo il vero,  
senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

69 Io fui uom d'arme, e poi fui cordigliero,  
credendomi, sì cinto, fare ammenda;  
e certo il creder mio venia intero,

72 se non fosse il gran prete, a cui mal prenda!,  
che mi rimise ne le prime colpe;  
e come e *quare*, voglio che m'intenda.

75 Mentre ch'io forma fui d'ossa e di polpe  
che la madre mi diè, l'opere mie  
non furon leonine, ma di volpe.

78 Li accorgimenti e le coperte vie  
io seppi tutte, e sì menai lor arte,  
ch'al fine de la terra il suono uscie.

81 Quando mi vidi giunto in quella parte  
di mia etade ove ciascun dovrebbe  
calar le vele e raccoglièr le sarte,

84 ciò che pria mi piacèa, allor m'increbbe,  
e pentuto e confesso mi rendei;  
ahi miser lasso! e giovato sarebbe.

87 Lo principe d'i novi Farisei,  
avendo guerra presso a Laterano,  
e non con Saracin né con Giudei,

60 When the fire had done its roaring for a while,  
after its fashion, the point began to quiver  
this way and that, and then gave breath to this:

63 'If I but thought that my response were made  
to one perhaps returning to the world,  
this tongue of flame would cease to flicker.

66 'But since, up from these depths, no one has yet  
returned alive, if what I hear is true,  
I answer without fear of being shamed.

69 'A warrior was I, and then a corded friar,  
thinking, cinctured so, to make amends.  
And surely would my hopes have come to pass

72 'but for the Great Priest—the devil take him!—  
who drew me back to my old ways.  
And I would like to tell you how and why.

75 'While I still kept the form in flesh and bones  
my mother gave me, my deeds were not  
a lion's but the actions of a fox.

78 'Cunning stratagems and covert schemes,  
I knew them all, and was so skilled in them  
my fame rang out to the far confines of the earth.

81 'When I saw I had reached that stage of life  
when all men ought to think  
of lowering sail and coiling up the ropes,

84 'I grew displeased with what had pleased me once.  
Repentant and shriven, I became a friar.  
And woe is me! it would have served.

87 'But he, Prince of the latter-day Pharisees,  
engaged in battle near the Lateran  
and not with either Saracen or Jew,



ché ciascun suo nimico era Cristiano,  
e nessun era stato a vincer Acri  
90 né mercatante in terra di Soldano,

né sommo officio né ordini sacri  
guardò in sé, né in me quel capestro  
93 che solea fare i suoi cinti più macri.

Ma come Costantin chiese Silvestro  
d'entro Siratti a guerir de la lebbre,  
96 così mi chiese questi per maestro

a guerir de la sua superba febbre;  
domandommi consiglio, e io tacetti  
99 perché le sue parole parver ebbre.

E' poi ridisse: 'Tuo cuor non sospetti;  
finor t'assolvo, e tu m'insegna fare  
102 sì come Penestrino in terra getti.

Lo ciel poss' io serrare e diserrare,  
come tu sai; però son due le chiavi  
105 che 'l mio antecessor non ebbe care.'

Allor mi pinser li argomenti gravi  
là 've 'l tacer mi fu avviso 'l peggio,  
108 e dissi: 'Padre, da che tu mi lavi

di quel peccato ov' io mo cader deggio,  
lunga promessa con l'attender corto  
111 ti farà triunfar ne l'alto seggio.'

Francesco venne poi, com' io fu' morto,  
per me; ma un d'i neri cherubini  
114 li disse: 'Non portar; non mi far torto.

Venir se ne dee giù tra ' miei meschini  
perché diede 'l consiglio frodolente,  
117 dal quale in qua stato li sono a' crini;

'for all his enemies were Christian—  
not one of them had gone to conquer Acre  
90 or traffic in the Sultan's lands—

'paid no heed, for his part, to the highest office  
or his holy orders, nor, for mine,  
93 to the cord that used to keep its wearers lean.

'As Constantine once had Sylvester summoned  
from Soracte to cure his leprous sores,  
96 so this man called on me to be his doctor

'and cure him of the fever of his pride.  
He asked me for advice, but I kept silent  
99 because his words were like a drunkard's words.

'And then he spoke again: "Let not your heart mistrust:  
I absolve you here and now if you will teach me  
102 how I can bring Praeneste to the ground.

"I have the power, as well you know, to lock  
and unlock Heaven, because the keys are two  
105 for which the pope before me had no care."

'His threatening tactics brought me to the point  
at which the worse course seemed the one of silence.  
108 And so I said: "Father, since you cleanse me

"of the sin that I must even now commit:  
*Promising much with scant observance*  
111 will seal your triumph on the lofty throne."

'The moment I was dead, Francis came for me.  
But one of the dark Cherubim cried out:  
114 "No, wrong me not by bearing that one off.

"He must come down to serve among my minions  
because he gave that fraudulent advice.  
117 From then till now I've dogged his footsteps.

120 ch'assolver non si può chi non si pente,  
né pentere e volere insieme puossi  
per la contradizion che nol consente.'

123 Oh me dolente! come mi riscossi  
quando mi prese dicendomi: 'Forse  
tu non pensavi ch'io löico fossi!'

126 A Minòs mi portò; e quelli attorse  
otto volte la coda al dosso duro;  
e poi che per gran rabbia la si morse,

129 disse: 'Questi è d'i rei del foco furo';  
per ch'io là dove vedi son perduto,  
e sì vestito, andando, mi rancuro."

132 Quand'elli ebbe 'l suo dir così compiuto,  
la fiamma dolorando si partio,  
torcendo e dibattendo 'l corno aguto.

136 Noi passamm' oltre, e io e 'l duca mio,  
su per lo scoglio infino in su l'altr' arco  
che cuopre 'l fosso in che si paga il fio  
a quei che scommettendo acquistan carco.

120 "One may not be absolved without repentance,  
nor repent and wish to sin concurrently—  
a simple contradiction not allowed."

123 'Oh, wretch that I am, how I shuddered  
when he seized me and said: "Perhaps  
you didn't reckon I'd be versed in logic."

126 'He carried me to Minos, who coiled his tail  
eight times around his scaly back  
and, having gnawed it in his awful rage,

129 'said: "Here comes a sinner for the thieving fire."  
And so, just as you see me, I am damned,  
cloaked as I am. And as I go, I grieve.'

132 Once he had brought his words to this conclusion,  
the weeping flame departed,  
twisting and tossing its pointed horn.

136 We continued on our way, my guide and I,  
over the ridge and up the arch that spans  
the ditch where those are paid their due  
who, for disjoining, gather up their load.

1–2. Ulysses' speech ends, his tongue of fire erect (i.e., not waving about [see *Inf.* XXVI.85–89]) and stilled.

3. This innocent detail—Virgil's dismissal of Ulysses—will resurface at v. 21 with the addition of rather striking information about the language of Virgil's last words to Ulysses, uttered but not recorded here.

4–6. The next flame-enclosed shade, who will turn out to be a modern-day Ulysses, Guido da Montefeltro, was well known enough that he never has to be identified in more than indirect ways (vv. 67–78). Born ca. 1220, Guido was one of the great Ghibelline captains of the last third of the thirteenth century, winning a number of important victories for the nonetheless eventually unsuccessful Ghibelline cause. He was reconciled to the Church in 1286, but then took up his soldiering against the Guelphs once again, finally desisting only in 1294. In 1296 he joined the Franciscan order (v. 67). However, in the following year Pope Boniface VIII cajoled him into reentering the world of military affairs, this time working against the Ghibellines (the Colonna family, which held the fortress of Palestrina, Roman Praeneste, as detailed in the text [vv. 85–111]). Guido died in 1298 in the Franciscan monastery at Assisi.

While other pairs of preceding cantos contain those who had committed the same sin (VII–VIII [the wrathful]; X–XI [heretics]; XV–XVI [sodomites]; XXIV–XXV [thieves]), only XXVI and XXVII treat two major figures guilty of the same sin, perhaps suggesting how closely Guido and Ulysses are related in Dante's imagination.

7–15. This simile is derived either from various histories (Pietro di Dante mentions Orosius and Valerius Maximus) or from Ovid, *Ars amatoria* I.653–656. The ancient tyrant of Agrigento (in Sicily), Phalaris, had the Athenian Perillus construct for him a brazen bull in which he could roast his victims alive. Their screams were transformed into what resembled the bellowings of a bull. Once the instrument of torture was finished, Phalaris ordered that Perillus be its first victim, thus testing his handicraft. It worked. Ovid's moral to the story (*Ars* I.655–656) seems to be echoed in Dante's verse 8: "there is no law more just than that the craftsman of death should die by his own handicraft."

16–18. These verses make clear for the first time how the mechanics of speech of the fraudulent counselors work; their words are formed by their tongues, within their fires, and then produced by the tips of their flames. When Guido first appeared (v. 6) he was apparently only mumbling about his pain within his flame.

19–21. Guido's address to Virgil not only insists that the Roman poet was speaking his (native—see *Inf.* I.68) Lombard, i.e., north Italian, dialect, but then offers in evidence his exact words. What are we to understand about the language in which Virgil first addressed Ulysses (*Inf.* XXVI.72–75)? Was it the same as this? Or is this, as seems more likely, the colloquial manner in which he sends him away? The entire problem has vexed many a commentator, and no simple resolution has as yet emerged.

25–27. Perhaps because he cannot see clearly from within his flame, Guido cannot tell whether Virgil (or Dante, for that matter) is a living soul or a dead fellow-sinner, just now come down from Italy to spend eternity here. The reason for Dante's insistence on this detail will be made plain when Guido reveals himself only because he does not believe that Dante will ever resurface to tell his miserable story.

28. When Guido died (1298), the peace in Romagna had not yet been confirmed, as it was the following year. The region of Romagna is situated in the eastern north-central part of Italy.

33. Not only is Guido an Italian (*latino*), he is that Italian whom Dante had designated as most noble (*lo nobilissimo nostro latino*) in *Convivio* IV.xxviii.8. Commentators have been concerned about this apparent contradiction (for an attempt to mitigate it see Pertile [Pert.1982.1], pp. 171–75). If, however, Dante had changed his mind about a number of his positions in *Convivio*, as others believe, there is no reason to find the contradiction anything less than intentional. Further, he may not have known of Guido's involvement with Boniface when he wrote the passage praising him in *Convivio*. See note to vv. 106–111.

Virgil's passing the questioning of Guido (a modern) over to Dante reminds us of his insisting on it for Ulysses (an ancient) in the previous canto.

37–39. Dante's reference to Romagna answers Guido's first question: there is peace—of a sort—there now.



40–54. Dante now enlightens Guido (and only an expert in the political and geographical lore of the region would understand his elliptical speech) about the condition of eight cities and fortified towns of Romagna, governed by various tyrants: Ravenna, Cervia, Forlì, Verrucchio, Rimini, Faenza, Imola, and Cesena. Guido had been in military action in many of them, with mixed results.

55–57. Having answered some of the concerns of Guido (whom he as yet does not recognize), Dante asks for a similar favor, offering fame in the world as a reward.

61–66. Guido's response, made familiar to English readers by T. S. Eliot as the epigraph to *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, makes it clear that, for him, report among the living would bring infamy, not fame. Since he believes that Dante is a damned soul, and thus unable to regain the world of the living, he will speak.

67. Guido sums up his life in a single line: he went from bad to good. In fact, he went from bad to good to bad again. Dante may have reflected that his own life was exactly the opposite in its movements, from good to bad, but then from bad to good. Guido did not have a Beatrice to lead him back to the true path, only a Boniface.

70–72. Boniface VIII, according to Guido, led him from his life of religious retreat back into political machinations. Like Francesca da Rimini, Guido da Montefeltro blames his fall upon another; like her, he will tell Dante the reasons for it. See *Inf.* V.119, where Dante asks Francesca to tell "a che e come" (how and by what signs) she came into Love's power; Guido will tell Dante "e come e quare" (Latin "why," more precisely "in what respect" [how and why]) the reasons for his fall into perdition.

75. According to contemporary documents, Guido was actually referred to as "the fox." His quality of *astutia*, or "cunning," further identifies him with Ulysses (see note to *Inf.* XXVI.58–63).

79–81. Guido's nautical metaphors clearly relate him, perhaps more plainly than before, to Ulysses. For the curious notice on the part of Filippo Villani (in his life of Guido Bonatti) that Guido da Montefeltro was "full of all cunning [*astutia*]" and that he was known among the Italians as

"the new Ulysses" see Hollander (*Holl.* 1980.1), p. 142. This would suggest either that, in Dante's day, Guido was actually referred to in this way, or that Filippo, a great reader of Dante, is freely interpreting the reason for the juxtaposition of these two great figures in *Inferno*.

82–84. Guido speaks of his contrition, confession, and satisfaction as though they were the merest of conveniences to attain an end. Do we believe, on the strength of this account, that he had actually fooled God?

85–93. Guido's vicious slam of Boniface, with its concomitant enthusiasm for the abandoned devotion to crusading, is not in any respect at odds with Dante's own thoughts. Boniface is attacking Palestrina and its Christian inhabitants, none of whom had joined the Saracens in their retaking of Acre in 1291, until then the only remaining Christian possession in the Holy Land, or gone there only to do business with the enemy. Instead of attacking the infidel (or backsliding Christians) he moves against his coreligionists.

Boniface cares nothing for Christians, according to Guido (and Dante). Not only does he not oppose the heathen in order to make war on his own, he does not honor his own holy orders, nor those of Guido the friar. The use of the term *capestro* (cord) here has implications for those who believe that the *corda* at *Inferno* XVI.106 is a reference to Dante's status as a Franciscan. (See note to *Inf.* XVI.106–108.)

94–97. In the fourth century, Constantine, suffering from leprosy, had Pope Sylvester I brought to him from his cave on Soracte (where he was in hiding because of Constantine's persecution of Christians) to cure him. When the pontiff did so, Constantine converted to Christianity (and ended up in paradise, according to Dante [*Par.* XX.55–60]); but he also out of gratitude was reputed to have given Sylvester authority over the western empire, centered in the city of Rome. (See note to *Inf.* XIX.115–117.)

102. Penestrino is modern Palestrina, not far from Rome, and was ancient Praeneste. The Colonna family were in rebellion against Boniface's authority and had defended themselves in this fortress.

103–105. Boniface's claim is utterly false, as Guido will learn. His reference to Celestine V here makes it seem all the more likely that it is he who is referred to in *Inferno* III.59–60.



106–111. Silence as a defensive weapon against this pope was probably the only way out; but his imposing insistence was too much for Guido, and he makes his bargain.

A continuing debate follows verse 110. Did Dante read these words in chroniclers who preceded him (e.g., Riccobaldo of Ferrara, Francesco Pipino of Bologna, both of whom wrote before 1313, if we are not sure exactly when), or did they get them from Dante? Some contemporary commentators (e.g., Bosco/Reggio) favor the precedence of Riccobaldo's chronicle, perhaps written between 1308 and 1313, and believe that Dante's account (and revision of his former positive view of Guido) derive from it.

112–114. Markulin (Mark.1982.1) considers the possibility that Guido has invented the battle between St. Francis and the black Cherub (a member of the second highest rank of angels, associated with knowledge). Discomfort with the scene has been abroad for a while. Castelvetro did not hide his annoyance, seeing that Dante had portrayed the soul of Francis as having made an error in thinking that Guido was to be saved and thus could not possibly have been sent from heaven by God (and was consequently wasting his time), for which reasons he criticizes Dante for not speaking with greater reverence.

Guido's son Buonconte will be caught up in a similar struggle between devil and angel, with the angel winning (*Purg.* V.104–105). Such a scene may find justification in medieval popularizing art, but Castelvetro is right to complain about its theological absurdities. On the other hand, Dante is writing a poem and not a treatise. That he repeats the motif would seem to indicate that we are meant to take it "seriously." See note to *Inferno* XXIII.131.

116. Perhaps the most discussed issue in these cantos is developed from this verse. What is "fraudulent advice" (*consiglio frodolente*) precisely? Is it the sin that condemns Guido? Is Ulysses condemned for the same sin? Fraudulent counsel is giving someone evil advice (whether or not it is effective advice) or acting in such fraudulent ways as to lead others into harming themselves. Since Virgil, in Canto XI.52–60, leaves the sins of the eighth and ninth *bolgia* unnamed, this is the only indication we have for a clear determination of the sin punished in these two cantos. Any other solution seems less satisfactory, if there have been many who have been eager to try to find one.

118–120. While Dante, in *Convivio* III.xiii.2, clearly states that fallen angels cannot philosophize, since love is a basic requirement of true philosophizing and they are without love, it is clear that they can use logic, one of the tools of philosophy.

124. This fallen angel does the "right thing" and stops his descent with his victim at Minos. See note to *Inferno* XXI.39.

128–132. Unlike Ulysses, who ends his speech with a certain majesty, Guido insists upon his bitterness, realizing eternally his foolishness in his having given over his chance for love and salvation when he did the bidding of Boniface. The canto opens with Ulysses' flame calm and steady (vv. 1–2) and ends with that of Guido writhing.