

INFERNO

CANTO VII

'Pape Satàn, Pape Satàn, aleppe!'
burst out Plutus in his raucous voice.
And the courteous, all-discerning sage, 3
to comfort me, said: 'Do not be overcome
by fear. However powerful he may be,
he'll not prevent our climbing down this cliff.' 6
Then he turned to that bloated face
and said: 'Silence, accursèd wolf!
Let your fury feed itself inside you. 9
'Not without sanction is this journey down the pit.
It is willed on high, where Michael
did avenge the proud rebellion.' 12
As sails, swollen by the wind,
fall in a tangle when the mainmast snaps,
so fell that cruel beast to the ground. 15
Into the fourth hollow we made our way,
descending the dismal slope
that crams in all the evil of the universe. 18
Ah, Justice of God, who heaps up
such strange punishment and pain as I saw there?
And why do our sins so waste us? 21
Just as the waves clash above Charybdis,
one breaking on the other when they meet,
so here the souls move in their necessary dance. 24
Here the sinners were more numerous than elsewhere,
and they, with great shouts, from opposite sides
were shoving burdens forward with their chests. 27
They crashed into each other, turned
and beat retreat, shoving their loads and shouting:
'Why do you hoard?' or 'Why do you squander?' 30
Thus they proceeded in their dismal round
on both sides toward the opposite point,
taunting each other with the same refrain. 33

Once at that point, each group turned back
 along its semi-circle to the next encounter.
 And I, my heart pierced almost through, 36
 said: 'Master, now explain to me
 who these people are. Were those with tonsured heads,
 the ones there to our left, all clerics?' 39
 'All of them had such squinting minds
 in their first lives,' he said,
 'they kept no measure in their spending. 42
 'Their voices howl this clear enough
 just as they reach the twin points on the circle
 where opposing sins divide them. 45
 'These were clerics who have no lid of hair
 upon their heads, and popes and cardinals,
 in whom avarice achieves its excess.' 48
 And I: 'Master, in such a crew as this
 I ought to recognize at least a few
 who were befouled with these offenses.' 51
 And he to me: 'You muster an empty thought.
 The undiscerning life that made them foul
 now makes them hard to recognize. 54
 'The two groups will collide forever.
 These will rise from the grave
 with fists tight, these with hair cropped. 57
 'Ill-giving and ill-keeping have stolen
 the fair world from them and set them to this scuffle.
 As for that, I prettify no words for it. 60
 'Now you see, my son, what brief mockery
 Fortune makes of goods we trust her with,
 for which the race of men embroil themselves. 63
 'All the gold that lies beneath the moon,
 or ever did, could never give a moment's rest
 to any of these wearied souls.' 66
 'Master,' I said, 'tell me more: this Fortune
 whom you mention, who is she that holds
 the world's possessions tightly in her clutches?' 69
 And he to me: 'O foolish creatures,
 what great ignorance besets you!
 I'll have you feed upon my judgment of her: 72

'He whose wisdom transcends all made the heavens and gave them guides, so that all parts reflect on every part	75
'in equal distribution of the light. Just so, He ordained for worldly splendors a general minister and guide	78
'who shifts those worthless goods, from time to time, from race to race, from one blood to another beyond the intervention of human wit.	81
'One people comes to rule, another languishes, in keeping with her judgment, as secret as a serpent hidden in the grass.	84
'Your wisdom cannot stand against her. She foresees, she judges, she maintains her reign, as do the other heavenly powers.	87
'Her mutability admits no rest. Necessity compels her to be swift, and frequent are the changes in men's state.	90
'She is reviled by the very ones who most should praise her, blaming and defaming her unjustly.	93
'But she is blessed and does not hear them. Happy with the other primal creatures, she turns her sphere, rejoicing in her bliss.	96
'Now we must descend to greater anguish. For every star that rose when I set out is sinking now, and we must not linger here.'	99
We crossed the circle to the other bank, beside a spring that bubbles up and flows into a channel it has hewn itself.	102
The water was darker than the deepest purple. Accompanied by its murky waves we began our strange descent.	105
This dreary stream, once it has reached these malignant, ashen slopes, drains out into the swamp called Styx.	108
And I, my gaze transfixed, could see people with angry faces in that bog, naked, their bodies smeared with mud.	111

They struck each other with their hands,
their heads, their chests and feet,
and tore each other with their teeth. 114

The good master said: 'Son, now you see
the souls of those whom anger overcame.
And I would have you know for certain 117

'that plunged beneath these waters,
as your eyes will tell you, are souls whose sighs
with bubbles make the water's surface seethe. 120

'Fixed in the slime they say: "We were sullen
in the sweet air that in the sun rejoices,
filled as we were with slothful fumes. 123

"Now we are sullen in black mire."
This hymn they gurgle in their gullets,
for they cannot get a word out whole.' 126

Thus we made our circle round that filthy bog,
keeping between the bank and swamp,
fixing our gaze on those who swallow mud. 129

And we came to the foot of a tower at last. 130