

PURGATORIO

CANTO V

I had already parted from those shades,
following the footsteps of my guide,
when one behind me, pointing with his finger, 3
cried: 'Look how the sun's rays on the ground
are cut off to his left
and how he moves and seems like one alive.' 6
Hearing these words, I turned to look at them
and saw that they were staring in amazement
at me, at me and at the interrupted light. 9
'Is your mind so distracted,' asked the master,
'that you have slowed your pace?
Why do you care what they are whispering? 12
'Just follow me and let the people talk.
Why can't you be like a sturdy tower
that does not tremble in the fiercest wind. 15
'For any man who lets one thought--
and then another--take him over
will soon lose track of his first goal.' 18
What could I answer but 'I come'?
I said it, blushing with such shame
as might make one worthy of his pardon. 21
And all this time in front of us
a group of shades advanced across the slope,
chanting *Miserere* line by line. 24
When they perceived my body stopped
the rays of the sun from shining through,
their voices faded to a hoarse and drawn-out 'Oh!' 27
and two of them, as messengers,
ran out to meet us and insisted:
'Tell us what you can of your condition.' 30
My master answered: 'When you go back
you may report to those who sent you:
this man's body is true flesh. 33

'If they stopped because they saw his shadow,
 as I suppose, they have their answer.
 It may profit them to do him honor.' 36

Never have I seen falling stars streak
 across the placid sky nor, at nightfall,
 lightning pulse within the clouds of August 39

as swiftly as these two ran upward
 and, when they reached the others, they all,
 like an unruly band, turned and charged toward us. 42

'These people crowding us are many
 and they have come to seek your favor,' said the poet,
 'but keep on walking, listening as you go.' 45

'O soul who go to blessedness
 in the body you were born to,' they called
 as they came up, 'here pause a while 48

'to see if one of us is known to you
 that you may carry news of him into the world.
 Ah, why do you go on? Why don't you stop? 51

'Sinners to the final hour,
 we were all at the point of violent death
 when a light from Heaven brought us understanding, 54

'so that, repenting and forgiving,
 we parted from our lives at peace with God,
 who with desire to see Him wrings our hearts.' 57

And I replied: 'However hard I gaze into your faces,
 none do I recognize. But if in anything
 I can please you, spirits born for bliss, 60

'by the very peace I seek
 from world to world, following the steps
 of such a guide, that I will do.' 63

And one of them began: 'Each of us trusts
 in your good offices without your oath,
 provided lack of power does not thwart your will. 66

'Therefore, speaking before the others do,
 I beg you, should you ever see the region
 between Romagna and King Charles's land, 69

'that you be kind enough to seek in Fano
 heartfelt prayers for me
 to help me purge my grievous sins. 72

'There I was born, but the deep wounds
 that poured my blood out with my life
 were given me among the sons of Antenor, 75
 'where I most thought myself secure.
 He of Este had it done, who was incensed
 against me more than justice warranted. 78
 'Had I but gone on to La Mira,
 leaving Oriago, where I was found and taken,
 I would still be back there where men breathe. 81
 'I fled to the marsh. Entrapped in reeds
 and mire I fell, and in that mud
 I watched a pool of blood form from my veins.' 84
 Then another spoke: 'Pray, so may the desire
 be satisfied that draws you to this mountain,
 do you with gracious pity help with mine. 87
 'I was of Montefeltro, I am Buonconte.
 Not Giovanna nor another has a care for me,
 so that I move among the rest with downcast brow.' 90
 And I to him: 'What force or chance
 took you so far from Campaldino
 that your burial-place was never found?' 93
 'Ah,' he replied, 'at Casentino's border
 runs a stream called Archiano
 that springs above the Hermitage among the Apennines. 96
 'To where its name is lost I made my way,
 wounded in the throat, fleeing on foot,
 and dripping blood across the plain. 99
 'There I lost sight and speech.
 I ended on the name of Mary and there I fell,
 and only my flesh remained. 102
 'I will tell the truth--you tell it to the living.
 God's angel took me, and he from Hell cried out:
 "O you from Heaven, why do you rob me? 105
 "'You carry off with you this man's eternal part.
 For a little tear he's taken from me,
 but with the remains I'll deal in my own way." 108
 'Surely you know how a column of moist air,
 rising to colder heights, condenses
 and once again is changed to water. 111

'That evil will, seeking only evil, he joined with intellect, and with his natural powers he roused the fog and wind.	114
'Then, when the day was spent, he shrouded the valley from Pratomagno to the alps in mist, and darkened the sky with clouds	117
'so that the pregnant air was turned to water. The rain fell and the overflow that earth could not absorb rushed to the gullies	120
'and, gathering in surging torrents, poured headlong down the seaward stream with so much rage nothing could hold it back.	123
'At its mouth the blood-red Archiano found my frozen corpse and swept it down the Arno, undoing at my chest the cross	126
'my arms had made when I was overcome by pain. It spun me past its banks and to the bottom, then covered and enclosed me with its spoils.'	129
'Pray, once you have gone back into the world and are rested from the long road,' the third spirit followed on the second,	132
'please remember me. I am La Pia. Siena made me, in Maremma I was undone. He knows how, the one who, to marry me,	135
first gave the ring that held his stone.'	136