

CANTO 22

*Mock heroic opening—Ciampolo caught, interrogated, escapes—the
pilgrim and Virgil escape*

- 1 I have seen knights setting forth, beginning
 assaults and standing muster, and sometimes
 retreating to save themselves;
- 4 I have seen mounted men coursing your city, O
 Aretines, I have seen foragers riding, tournaments
 striking, and jousts running,
- 7 sometimes with trumpets, sometimes with bells,
 with drums or signals from the tower, with things
 both our own and foreign:
- 10 but never at so strange a pipe have I seen
 horsemen or foot-soldiers setting forth, nor a ship at
 a sign from land or star.
- 13 We were walking with the ten demons. Ah, fierce
 company! but in church with the saints, in the tavern
 with the gluttons.
- 16 My attention was all given to the pitch, to see
 every condition of the moat and of the people burned
 in it.
- 19 As dolphins do, when they signal to sailors,
 arching their spines, to take measures to save their
 ship:
- 22 so from time to time, to lessen the pain, a sinner
 would show his back and hide it in less than a flash.
- 25 And as at the edge of a ditch the bullfrogs sit with
 only their snouts showing, hiding their feet and thick
 bodies:
- 28 so on every side did the sinners, but as Curly
 Beard came near, like frogs they withdrew into the
 boiling.

31 I saw one wait, and my heart still makes me
shudder at it, as sometimes one frog stays while the
other jumps;

34 and Scratching Dog, who was closest, hooked his
grapple in his pitchy locks and drew him up, so that
he seemed to me like an otter.

37 I had learned all their names, they made such an
impression on me when they were chosen and when
they called to each other.

40 "O Ruby Face, see that you get your nails in him
and tear his skin off!" all those cursed ones were
shouting at once.

43 And I: "My master, see if you can discover who
this wretch is who has come into the hands of his
enemies."

46 My master stood alongside him; he asked him
where he was from, and he replied: "I was born in
the kingdom of Navarre.

49 My mother placed me in the service of a lord; she
had generated me by a wastrel, destroyer of his
wealth and of himself.

52 Then I was in the household of good king
Thibaut; and there I took to barratry, for which I
square accounts in this heat."

55 And Big Pig, from whose mouth on each side
came a tusk like a boar's, let him feel how one of
them could rip.

58 Among bad cats had the mouse arrived; but Curly
Beard enclosed him with his arms, and said: "Stay
over there, while I have him gripped."

61 Then he turned his face toward my master; "Ask
again," he said, "if you want to know more from him
before someone does him in."

64 My leader therefore: "Now say: among the other
sinners under the pitch, do you know any who is
Italian?" And he: "I left one,

67 a moment ago, who was from near there. Would
I were still hidden with him, I'd not fear claw or
crook!"

70 And Love Notch said: "We've been patient too
long," and he hooked one arm with his pruning knife
and pulled, tearing out a muscle.

73 Little Big Dragon, too, wanted to hook him below,
at the legs; at which their decurion whirled about
with an evil look.

76 When they had quieted down a little, without
delay my master asked the soul, who was still gazing
at his wound:

79 "Who was he you say you should not have left for
the shore?" and he replied, "It was Brother Gomita,
82 the one from Gallura, vessel of every fraud, who
had his master's enemies in his hand and treated
them so that each is thankful to him:

85 he took their money and let them go scot free, as
he tells it; and in his other duties, too, he was not a
small barrator, but a champion.

88 Master Michel Zanche of Logodoro keeps
company with him; and their tongues never tire of
speaking about Sardinia.

91 Oh me, look at this other one snarling; I would
say more, but I'm afraid he's getting ready to scratch
my scurf."

94 And the great officer, turning to Butterfly, whose
eyes were bulging to strike, said: "Get over there,
wicked bird!"

97 "If you want to see or hear," the terrified wretch
began again, "Tuscans or Lombards, I can make them
come;

100 but let the Evil Claws stand a little apart, so they
won't be frightened of their cruelty; and I, sitting
right here,

103 for one that I am, will make seven come when I
whistle, as is our custom to do when one of us is a
lookout."

106 At that Evil Dog lifted his snout, shaking his head,
and said: "Listen to the trick he's thought of, so he
can jump back in!"

- 109 Therefore he, who had a great wealth of snares,
replied: "I am really very tricky, if I procure more
suffering for my own kind."
- 112 Harlequin could not hold back and, against the
others, told him: "If you go down, I won't come after
you at a gallop,
115 but beating my wings above the pitch. Let's leave
the ridge and hide behind the bank, and we'll see if
all by yourself you can outdo us."
- 118 O you who read, you will hear strange sport: each
of them turned his eyes toward the other bank, and
he first who had been most unwilling.
- 121 The Navarrese chose his moment well, planted his
feet on the ground, and in one point jumped and
escaped their design.
- 124 For that each felt the stab of guilt, but most of all
he who had caused the fault; so he moved, crying:
"You're caught!"
- 127 But it did no good, for his wings could not
outspeed the other's fear; the shade dove under, and
he straightened his breast to fly back up:
- 130 not otherwise does the duck suddenly disappear
when the falcon approaches, and he goes back up,
angry and ruffled.
- 133 Trample Frost, angered by the trick, was flying
just behind him, hoping the soul would escape, eager
to have a scrap;
- 136 and when the barrator had disappeared, he turned
his talons against his fellow, and grappled with him
above the ditch.
- 139 But the other was a full-grown hawk to grapple
him, and both of them fell into the boiling pool.
- 142 The heat was a quick ungrappler; but not for that
could they come forth, they had so enlimed their
wings.
- 145 Curly Beard, grieving with his fellows, sent four
flying to the inner bank with their hooks, and quickly
enough,

148 on this side and on that, they flew to their posts;
they held out their hooks toward the viscous ones,
who were already cooked within their crusts.

151 And we left them thus entangled.

