

CANTO 26

*Denunciation of Florence—eighth bolgia: counselors of fraud—Ulysses
and Diomedes—Ulysses' last voyage*

- 1 Rejoice, Florence, since you are so great that on
sea and land you beat your wings, and your name
spreads through Hell!
- 4 Among the thieves I found five such citizens of
yours that I feel shame, and you do not rise to
honor by them.
- 7 But if near morning one dreams the truth, you
will feel, a short time from now, something of what
Prato, not to speak of others, desires for you;
10 and if it had already come, it would not be early.
Would it already were, since it must come! for it will
weigh on me more, the older I grow.
- 13 We left, and up along the steps made for us
earlier by the projecting bourns, my leader mounted,
drawing me after him;
- 16 and as we pursued our solitary way among the
splinters and rocks of the ridge, our feet could not
proceed without our hands.
- 19 Then I grieved, and now I grieve again, when I
consider what I saw, and I rein in my wit more than
is my custom,
- 22 that it may not run without virtue guiding it, so
that, if a good star or something better has given me
what is good, I may not deprive myself of it.
- 25 As many fireflies as the peasant—resting on the
hillside in the season when he who lights the world
least hides from us his face,
- 28 when the fly gives way to the mosquito—sees
down along the valley, perhaps where he harvests
and plows:

31 with so many flames the eighth pocket was all
shining, as I perceived when I was where I could
see its depths.

34 And as he who avenged himself with the bears
saw Elijah's chariot departing, when the horses rose
so steeply to Heaven

37 that he could not follow them with his eyes so as
to see more than the flame alone, like a little cloud,
rising up:

40 so each moves along the throat of the ditch, for
none displays its theft, and every flame steals away a
sinner.

43 I was standing erect on the bridge in order to see,
so that if I had not grasped a projection, I would
have fallen without being pushed.

46 And my leader, who saw me so intent, said:
"Within the fires are the spirits; each is swathed in
that which burns him inwardly."

49 "My master," I replied, "hearing you I am surer;
but already it seemed to me that such was the case,
and already I wanted to ask you:

52 who is in that fire that comes so divided above
that it seems to be rising from the pyre where
Eteocles was put with his brother?"

55 He answered me: "There within are punished
Ulysses and Diomedes; thus together they go to
punishment as they went to anger.

58 And within their flame they bemoan the deceit of
the horse that made the gate to send forth the
Romans' noble seed;

61 there within they weep for the art that makes
Deidamia, though dead, still grieve for Achilles; and
there they bear the punishment for the Palladium."

64 "If they can speak within those flames," I said,
"master, much do I beg you, and beg again that
each prayer may be worth a thousand,

67 that you not refuse to wait until the horned flame
comes here: see that I bend toward it with desire!"

70 And he to me: "Your prayer is worthy of much
praise, and therefore I grant it; but see that your
tongue restrain itself.

73 Let me speak, for I have conceived what you
wish; for perhaps they would shun, because
they were Greeks, your words."

76 When the flame had come to where my leader
thought it the time and place, in this form I heard
him speak:

79 "O you who are two within one fire, if I deserved
from you while I lived, if I deserved from you
greatly or little

82 when in the world I wrote my high verses, do not
move away; but let one of you tell where, lost, he
went to die."

85 The greater horn of the ancient flame began to
shake, murmuring, like one a wind belabors;

88 then, moving its peak here and there, as if it were
a tongue that spoke, it cast out a voice and said:
"When

91 I departed from Circe, who held me back more
than a year there near Gaeta, before Aeneas gave it
that name,

94 neither the sweetness of a son, nor compassion for
my old father, nor the love owed to Penelope, which
should have made her glad,

97 could conquer within me the ardor that I had to
gain experience of the world and of human vices and
worth;

100 but I put out on the deep, open sea alone, with
one ship and with that little company by which I had
not been deserted.

103 The one shore and the other I saw as far as Spain,
as far as Morocco, and the island of the Sardinians
and the others whose shores are bathed by that sea.

106 I and my companions were old and slow when we
came to that narrow strait which Hercules marked
with his warnings

109 so that one should not go further; on the right
hand I had left Seville, on the other I had already left
Ceuta.

112 ‘O brothers,’ I said, ‘who through a hundred
thousand perils have reached the west, to this so
brief vigil

115 of our senses that remains, do not deny the
experience, following the sun, of the world without
people.

118 Consider your sowing: you were not made to live
like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge.’

121 My companions I made so sharp for the voyage,
with this little oration, that after it I could hardly
have held them back;

124 and, turning our stern toward the morning, of our
oars we made wings for the mad flight, always
gaining on the left side.

127 Already all the stars of the other pole I saw at
night, and our own pole so low that it did not rise
above the floor of the sea.

130 Five times renewed, and as many diminished, had
been the light beneath the moon, since we had
entered the deep pass,

133 when there appeared to us a mountain, dark in
the distance, and it seemed to me higher than any I
had seen.

136 We rejoiced, but it quickly turned to weeping; for
from the new land a whirlwind was born and struck
the forequarter of the ship.

139 Three times it made the ship to turn about with all
the waters, at the fourth to raise its stern aloft and
the prow to go down, as it pleased another,

142 until the sea had closed over us.”

