***Purgatorio* (from the Divine Comedy) – Canto 28 (lines 1-51)**

***Dante Alighieri***

          Longing now to search in and around

          The heavenly woods — dense and green with life —

          Which softened the new sunlight for my eyes,

          Not waiting any longer, I left the cliff,

5        Making my slow, slow way on level ground,

          Over the soil which everywhere spread fragrance.

          A sweetly scented breeze, which did not vary

          Within itself, struck me across the forehead

          With no more force than would a gentle wind.

10       The branches quivering at its touch all bent

          Spontaneously in the direction where

          The holy mountain casts its shadow first;

          Yet the trees weren't so swayed from standing straight

          That little birds among the topmost boughs

15       Had to leave off the practice of their art,

          But with their song they welcomed, full of joy,

          The early morning hours among the leaves

          Which kept up an accompaniment to their rhymes,

          As sound accumulates from branch to branch

**Aeolus** – king of the winds

**Sirocco** – a warm wind that blows into Southern Europe from North Africa

20       Through the pine forest on the shore of Chiassi

          When Aeolus lets the Sirocco loose.

          Now my slow steps had brought me on so far

          Into the ancient woodland that I could

          Not see back to the point where I had entered —

25       And look! a stream stopped me from going farther.

          With its little waves it bent toward the left

          The grass that sprouted up along its bank.

          All of the clearest waters here on earth

          Would seem to carry clouds of sediment

30       Compared to that stream which keeps nothing hidden,

          Although its dark, dark waters flow beneath

          The ever-present shade which never lets

          A beam of sun or moon to glimmer there.

          I stayed my feet and passed my eyes across

35       The far side of the river to survey

          The lush variety of blossoming boughs,

          And I saw there — as something suddenly

          Appears that causes such astonishment

          It drives all other thought out of the mind —

40       A woman all alone, who walked along

          Singing, and picking flower after flower,

          For her whole path was painted with their colours.

          "Ah, lovely lady, you who warm yourself

          In rays of love, if I am to believe

45       Those looks which often witness to the heart,"

          I said to her, "may you be pleased to come

          Forward toward this river, close enough

          That I may comprehend what you are singing.

          "You make me remember where and what

**Proserpine,** the daughter of Ceres, was kidnapped by Pluto. She was later allowed to return to earth, but on the condition that she must spend each winter in the underworld.

50       Proserpine was when her mother lost her,

          And she too lost the flowers of the spring."