In that part of the young year when the sun
begins to warm its locks beneath Aquarius
and nights grow shorter, equaling the days,
when hoarfrost mimes the image of his white
sister upon the ground—but not for long,
because the pen he uses is not sharp-
the farmer who is short of fodder rises
and looks and sees the fields all white, at which
he slaps his thigh, turns back into the house,
and here and there complains like some poor wretch
who doesn't know what can be done, and then
goes out again and gathers up new hope
on seeing that the world has changed its face
in so few hours, and he takes his staff
and hurries out his flock of sheep to pasture.
So did my master fill me with dismay
when I saw how his brow was deeply troubled,
and then the plaster soothed the sore as quickly;
for soon as we were on the broken bridge,
my guide turned back to me with that sweet manner
I first had seen along the mountain's base.

And he examined carefully the ruin;
then having picked the way we would ascend,
he opened up his arms and thrust me forward.

And just as he who ponders as he
hastens forward, he would not let me
rest a moment, yet by the hand he helped me
for a moment, and I could go ahead,
for without a path for those with cloaks of lead,
I, with support—
who's ready for the step ahead
so, as he lifted me up toward the summit
of a great crag, he'd see another spur,
saying: "That is the one you will grip next,
but try it first to see if it is firm."

That was no path for those with cloaks of lead,
for he and I
embarazosos, pues apenás
podíamos, espíritu
- y yo impelido por su fuerza, trepar por
aquel montón de escombros;

- a no ser porque la pendiente era más corta por la
margin inferior que por la de fuera, no sé de él qué
hubiera sido,

- pero yo no hubiera adelantado un paso. Y como el
círculo todo declina hacia la boca del profundo
pozo, cada Foso se halla en tal conformidad,

- que una márgen es alta y otra baja,
de suerte que pudimos ganar la cima, donde
sobresale más la última piedra.

Tan falta de aliento estaba mi pecho cuando llegué
arriba, que no siéndome posible respirar, hubo de
sentarme en el primer rellano.

- Fuerza es que en lo sucesivo sacadas esa desidia,
deje mi Maestro, porque ni entre mutillas
plumas ni bajo dobles se adquiere fama;
Sanza la qual chi sua vita consuma,
cotal vestigio in terra di sé lascia,
qual fummo in aere e in acqua la schiuma.
E però leva sù; vinci l'ambascia
con l'animo che vince ogne battaglia,
se col suo grave corpo non s'accascia.
Più lunga convien che si saglia;
non basta da costoro esser partito.
Se tu mi 'ntendi, or fa sì che ti vaglia".

Leva' mi allor, mostrandomi fornitó
meglio di l'una ch'è non mi sentia,
e dissi: "Va; ch'è son forte e ardito".
Su per lo scoglio prendemmo la via,
ch'era ronchioso, stretto e malevolve,
ed erò più assai che quel di pria.
Parlando andava per non parer flevoie;
onde una voce uscì di l'altro fosso,
a parole formar disconvenevole.
Non so che disse, ancor che sovra l'uno fossi
de l'arco già che varca quivi;
ma chi parlava ad ire parea mosso.
Io era volto in giù, ma li occhi vivi
non poteano ire al fondo per lo scuro;
per ch'io: "Maestro, procura tu arrivi
dal'altro cinghio e dismontiam lo muro;
poi mi fu la bolgia
Noi discendemmo il ponte da la testa
si de' seguir con l'opera tacendo".
se non lo far; ché la dimanda onesta
è l'unico risposta che l'io posso:
"Go on, for I am strong and confident."
We took our upward way upon the ridge,
with crags more jagged, narrow, difficult,
and much more steep than we had crossed before.
I spoke as we went on, not to seem weak;
at this, a voice came from the ditch beyond-a
voice that was not suited to form words.
I know not what he said, although I was
already at the summit of the bridge
that crosses there; and yet he seemed to move.
I had bent downward, but my living eyes
could not see to the bottom through that dark;
at which I said: "O master, can we reach
the other belt? Let us descend the wall,
for as I hear and cannot understand,
so I see down but can distinguish nothing."
"The only answer that I give to you
is doing it," he said. "A just request
is to be met in silence, by the act."
We then climbed down the bridge, just at the end
where it runs right into the eighth embankment,
and now the moat was plain enough to me;
and there within I saw a dreadful swarm
of serpents so extravagant in form-
remembering them still drains my blood from me.

Then I arose and showed myself far better
equipped with breath than I had been before:
"Go on, for I am strong and confident."
Therefore, get up; defeat your breathlessness
with spirit that can win all battles if
the body's heaviness does not deter it.
A longer ladder still is to be climbed;
it's not enough to have left them behind;
if you have understood, now profit from it."

Levyte entónces, mostrándome más alentado
de lo que realmente estaba, y dije: - Vamos, que ya
me siento fuerte y animoso.-
Y seguimós marchando por la roca erizada,
estrecha, intransitable, y mucho más escasobra que
la primera.

Iba yo hablando para no parecer tan débil,
cuando del otro fosó salió una voz que no acertaba a
articular palabras.
Lo que decía no sé, a pesar de que me hallaba en lo
más alto del arco que servía de puente; mas el que
hablaba parecía estar encolerizado.
Miré hacia abajo, pero mis vivos ojos nada podían
distinguir en el fondo a causa de la oscuridad;
por lo cual dije :Maestro, procura llegar
a aquel otro borde, y bajemos por la pendiente,
pues así como desde aquí oigo, pero no entiendo,
del mismo modo veo, pero nada distingo.
- A eso, dijo, te responderé haciendo lo que deseas;
que a las demandas justas debe accederse con
eficaz silencio.
Bajamos el puente por el extremo en que se une al
octavo dique, y desde allí pude descubrir el fosó,
en cuyo interior vi hacinadas multitúd de horribles
serpientes, pero de tan diversa especie, que la
sangre se me hiela aún al recordarlo.

Que no se glorie más Libia de sus arenas, porque si
produce quedúlidos, yácculos, farlas, cencros y
anfibias,
jamás mostró animales tan pozoñosos ni tan
dañinos, díun juntándose los de Etiopía y los del país
que existe sobre el mar Roso.
Entre aquellos cruelos y horribros reptiles corrian
desnudas y esparcidas algunas almas, sin
esperanza alguna de hallar reparo en que
guarecerse ni heliotropio con que hacerse
invisibles.

Tenían ligadas atrás las manos con serpientes,
que introduciendo la cola y la cabeza por sus riñones,
iban a entlazarles por delante.
Contra uno que estaba próximo a nosotros se lanzó
una culebra, clavándosele en el sitio en que el
cuello se une con las espaldas.

No se escribe una O ni una I tan pronto como aquel
infeliz se inflamó, comenzó a arder y cayó
convertido totalmente en cenizas;
e poi che fu a terra si distruotro,
la polver si raccolse per sé stessa
e 'n quel medesmo ritornò di butto.

Così per l'irrigno il savi si confesca
che la fenice more e poi rinascia,
quando al cinquecontesimo anno appressa;
erba né biado in sua vita non pasce,
ma sol d'incenso lagrime e d'amomato,
e nardo e mirra sono l'ultime fasce.
E quel che quel che cade, e non sa como,
per forza di demon ch'a terra ti tira,
o d'altra oppilazione che lega l'omo,
quando si leva, che întorno si mira
tutto smarrito de la grande angoscia
che quando fui de l'altra vita tolto.
Ne la
miseria dove tu mi vedi,
mi peccato curiosa
ma drizzò verso me l'animo e 'l volto,
ch'io 'l vidi omo di sangue e di crucci”.

Si leva, che 'ntorno si mira
tutto smarrito de la grande angoscia
che quando fui de l'altra vita tolto.
E poi disse: “Più mi duolo che tu m' hai colto
ne la miseria dove tu mi vedi,
ché quando fui de l'altra vita tolto.
Io non posso negar quel che tu chiedi;
in giù son messo tanto perché io fui
profonda sima in mezzo per ser
falsamente già fu apposto altrui.
Ma perché di tal vista tu non godi,
lo qual ch'io nel mio cuore
rimembrance have left a trace
bene, and among the people of their kind.

And when he lay, undone, upon the ground,
the dust of him collected by itself
and instantly returned to what it was:

and just so, it is asserted by great sages,
that, when it reaches its five-hundredth year,
the phoenix dies and then is born again;
lifelong it never feeds on grass or grain,
only on drops of incense and amomum;
its final winding sheets are nard and myrrh.
And just as he who falls, and knows not how-by
demon's force that drags him to the ground
or by some other hindrance that binds man-who,
when he rises, stares about him, all
bewildered by the heavy anguish he
has suffered, sighing as he looks around;
so did this sinner stare when he arose.
Oh, how severe it is, the power of God
that, as its vengeance, showers down such blows!
My guide then asked that sinner who he was;
to this he answered: “Not long since, I rained
from Tuscany into this savage maw.
Mule that I was, the bestial life pleased me
and not the human; I am Vanni Fucci,
beast; and the den that suited me-Pistola.”
And I to Virgil: “Tell him not to slip
away, and ask what sin has thrust him here;
I knew him as a man of blood and anger.”

The sinner heard and did not try to feign
but turned his mind and face, intent, toward me;
and coloring with miserable shame,
he said: “I suffer more because you've caught me
in this, the misery you see, than I
suffered when taken from the other life.
I can't refuse to answer what you ask:
I am set down so far because I robbed
the sacristy of its fair ornaments,
and someone else was falsely blamed for that.
But lest this sight give you too much delight,
if you can ever leave these lands of darkness,
open your ears to my announcement, hear:
Pistola first will strip herself of Blacks,
then Florence will renew her men and manners.

From Val di Magra, Mars will draw a vapor
which turbid clouds will try to wrap; the clash
between them will be fierce, impetuous,
a tempest, fought upon Campo Piceno,
until that vapor, vigorous, shall crack
the mist, and every White be struck by it.

And I have told you this to make you grieve."
Credits

Italian: D. Alighieri, La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata, ed. by G. Petrocchi (Florence, 1994) from the website www.danteonline.it by the Società dantesca italiana.


Spanish: D. Alighieri, La Divina Comedia, ed. by Cayetano Rosell (Barcelona, 1870).

Commemorating the 700th anniversary of the death of Dante Alighieri, Toronto Salutes Dante features more than thirty Canada-based guests who read Dante’s Inferno in various languages, several for the first time. In addition to ten different Italian dialects, there are represented American Sign Language, Arabic, Bulgarian, English, Farsi, French, German, Latin, Mandarin, Portuguese, Québécois, Russian, Sanskrit, Slovak, Spanish, Stoney Nakoda, Swedish, Thai, and Ukrainian. In 15-minute clips, well-known personalities of Canadian public and cultural life, professors, and students at the University of Toronto, and members of the Italo-Canadian community share their voices and fresh memories of the most important Italian author in world literature. Listen to Dante’s Inferno as you have never heard it before on the Department of Italian Studies’ Youtube channel from March 25th to June 2021.

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