

# Toronto Salutes Dante

## *Inferno XXV* in Italian and English

### Italian

### English

Al fine de le sue parole il ladro  
le mani alzò con amendue le fische,  
gridando: "Togli, Dio, ch'a te le squadro!".

Da indi in qua mi fuor le serpi amiche,  
perch'una li s'avvolse allora al collo,  
come dicesse 'Non vo' che più diche';

e un'altra a le braccia, e rilegollo,  
ribadendo sé stessa sì dinanzi,  
che non potea con esse dare un crollo.

Ahi Pistoia, Pistoia, ché non stanzi  
d'incenerarti sì che più non duri,  
poi che 'n mal fare il seme tuo avanzi?

Per tutt'i cerchi de lo 'nferno scuri  
non vidi spirto in Dio tanto superbo,  
non quel che cadde a Tebe giù da' muri.

El si fuggì che non parlò più verbo;  
e io vidi un centauro pien di rabbia  
venir chiamando: "Ov'è, ov'è l'acerbo?".

Maremma non cred'io che tante n'abbia,  
quante bisce elli avea su per la groppa  
infin ove comincia nostra labbia.

Sovra le spalle, dietro da la coppa,  
con l'ali aperte li giacea un draco;  
e quello affuoca qualunque s'intoppa.

Lo mio maestro disse: "Questi è Caco,  
che, sotto 'l sasso di monte Aventino,  
di sangue fece spesse volte laco.

Non va co' suoi fratei per un cammino,  
per lo furto che frodolente fece  
del grande armento ch'elli ebbe a vicino;

onde cessar le sue opere biece  
sotto la mazza d'Ercule, che forse  
gliene diè cento, e non sentì le diece".

Mentre che sì parlava, ed el trascorse,  
e tre spiriti venner sotto noi,  
de' quai né io né 'l duca mio s'accorse,

se non quando gridar: "Chi siete voi?";  
per che nostra novella si ristette,  
e intendemmo pur ad essi poi.

Io non li conoscea; ma ei seguette,  
come suol seguitar per alcun caso,  
che l'un nomar un altro convenette,

dicendo: "Cianfa dove fia rimaso?";  
per ch'io, acciò che 'l duca stesse attento,  
mi puosi 'l dito su dal mento al naso.

Se tu se' or, lettore, a creder lento  
ciò ch'io dirò, non sarà meraviglia,  
ché io che 'l vidi, a pena il mi consento.

Com'io tenea levate in lor le ciglia,  
e un serpente con sei piè si lancia  
dinanzi a l'uno, e tutto a lui s'appiglia.

Co' piè di mezzo li avvinse la pancia  
e con li anterior le braccia prese;  
poi li addentò e l'una e l'altra guancia;

When he had finished with his words, the thief  
raised high his fists with both figs cocked and cried:  
"Take that, o God; I square them off for you!"

From that time on, those serpents were my friends,  
for one of them coiled then around his neck,  
as if to say, "I'll have you speak no more";

another wound about his arms and bound him  
again and wrapped itself in front so firmly,  
he could not even make them budge an inch.

Pistoia, ah, Pistoia, must you last:  
why not decree your self-incineration,  
since you surpass your seed in wickedness?

Throughout the shadowed circles of deep Hell,  
I saw no soul against God so rebel,  
not even he who fell from Theban walls.

He fled and could not say another word;  
and then I saw a Centaur full of anger,  
shouting: "Where is he, where's that bitter one?"

I do not think Maremma has the number  
of snakes that Centaur carried on his haunch  
until the part that takes our human form.

Upon his shoulders and behind his nape  
there lay a dragon with its wings outstretched;  
it sets ablaze all those it intercepts.

My master said: "That Centaur there is Cacus,  
who often made a lake of blood within  
a grotto underneath Mount Aventine.

He does not ride the same road as his brothers  
because he stole-and most deceitfully-  
from the great herd nearby; his crooked deeds

ended beneath the club of Hercules,  
who may have given him a hundred blows-  
but he was not alive to feel the tenth."

While he was talking so, Cacus ran by  
and, just beneath our ledge, three souls arrived;  
but neither I nor my guide noticed them

until they had cried out: "And who are you?"  
At this the words we shared were interrupted,  
and we attended only to those spirits.

I did not recognize them, but it happened,  
as chance will usually bring about,  
that one of them called out the other's name,

exclaiming: "Where was Cianfa left behind?"  
At this, so that my guide might be alert,  
I raised my finger up from chin to nose.

If, reader, you are slow now to believe  
what I shall tell, that is no cause for wonder,  
for I who saw it hardly can accept it.

As I kept my eyes fixed upon those sinners,  
a serpent with six feet springs out against  
one of the three, and clutches him completely.

It gripped his belly with its middle feet,  
and with its forefeet grappled his two arms;  
and then it sank its teeth in both his cheeks;

li diretani a le cosce distese,  
e miseli la coda tra 'mbedue  
e dietro per le ren sù la ritese.

Ellera abbarbicata mai non fue  
ad alber sì, come l'orribil fiera  
per l'altrui membra avviticchiò le sue.

Poi s'appiccar, come di calda cera  
fossero stati, e mischiar lor colore,  
né l'un né l'altro già pareva quel ch'era:

come procede innanzi da l'ardore,  
per lo papiro suso, un color bruno  
che non è nero ancora e 'l bianco more.

Li altri due 'l riguardavano, e ciascuno  
gridava: "Omè, Agnel, come ti muti!  
Vedi che già non se' né due né uno".

Già eran li due capi un divenuti,  
quando n'apparver due figure miste  
in una faccia, ov'eran due perduti.

Fersi le braccia due di quattro liste;  
le cosce con le gambe e 'l ventre e 'l casso  
divenner membra che non fuor mai viste.

Ogne primaio aspetto ivi era casso:  
due e nessun l'immagine perversa  
parea; e tal sen gio con lento passo.

Come 'l ramarro sotto la gran fersa  
dei dì canicular, cangiando sepe,  
folgore par se la via attraversa,

sì pareva, venendo verso l'epe  
de li altri due, un serpentello acceso,  
livido e nero come gran di pepe;

e quella parte onde prima è preso  
nostro alimento, a l'un di lor trafisse;  
poi cadde giuso innanzi lui disteso.

Lo trafitto 'l mirò, ma nulla disse;  
anzi, co' piè fermati, sbadigliava  
pur come sonno o febbre l'assalisse.

Elli 'l serpente e quei lui riguardava;  
l'un per la piaga e l'altro per la bocca  
fummavan forte, e 'l fummo si scontrava.

Taccia Lucano omai là dov'e' tocca  
del misero Sabello e di Nasidio,  
e attenda a udir quel ch'or si scocca.

Taccia di Cadmo e d'Aretusa Ovidio,  
ché se quello in serpente e quella in fonte  
converte poetando, io non lo 'nvidio;

ché due nature mai a fronte a fronte  
non trasmutò sì ch'amendue le forme  
a cambiar lor materia fosser pronte.

Insieme si rispuosero a tai norme,  
che 'l serpente la coda in forza fesse,  
e 'l feruto ristrinse insieme l'orme.

Le gambe con le cosce seco stesse  
s'appiccar sì, che 'n poco la giuntura  
non faceva segno alcun che si paresse.

Togliea la coda fessa la figura  
che si perdeva là, e la sua pelle  
si faceva molle, e quella di là dura.

Io vidi intrar le braccia per l'ascelle,  
e i due piè de la fiera, ch'eran corti,  
tanto allungar quanto accorciavan quelle.

it stretched its rear feet out along his thighs  
and ran its tail along between the two,  
then straightened it again behind his loins.

No ivy ever gripped a tree so fast  
as when that horrifying monster clasped  
and intertwined the other's limbs with its.

Then just as if their substance were warm wax,  
they stuck together and they mixed their colors,  
so neither seemed what he had been before;

just as, when paper's kindled, where it still  
has not caught flame in full, its color's dark  
though not yet black, while white is dying off.

The other two souls stared, and each one cried:  
"Ah me, Agnello, how you change! Just see,  
you are already neither two nor one!"

Then two heads were already joined in one,  
when in one face where two had been dissolved,  
two intermingled shapes appeared to us.

Two arms came into being from four lengths;  
the thighs and legs, the belly and the chest  
became such limbs as never had been seen.

And every former shape was canceled there:  
that perverse image seemed to share in both-  
and none; and so, and slowly, it moved on.

Just as the lizard, when it darts from hedge  
to hedge, beneath the dog days' giant lash,  
seems, if it cross one's path, a lightning flash,

so seemed a blazing little serpent moving  
against the bellies of the other two,  
as black and livid as a peppercorn,

Attacking one of them, it pierced right through  
the part where we first take our nourishment;  
and then it fell before him at full length.

The one it had transfixed stared but said nothing;  
in fact he only stood his ground and yawned  
as one whom sleep or fever has undone.

The serpent stared at him, he at the serpent;  
one through his wound, the other through his mouth  
were smoking violently; their smoke met.

Let Lucan now be silent, where he sings  
of sad Sabellus and Nasidius,  
and wait to hear what flies off from my bow.

Let Ovid now be silent, where he tells  
of Cadmus, Arethusa; if his verse  
has made of one a serpent, one a fountain,

I do not envy him; he never did  
transmute two natures, face to face, so that  
both forms were ready to exchange their matter.

These were the ways they answered to each other:  
the serpent split its tail into a fork;  
the wounded sinner drew his steps together.

The legs and then the thighs along with them  
so fastened to each other that the juncture  
soon left no sign that was discernible.

Meanwhile the cleft tail took upon itself  
the form the other gradually lost;  
its skin grew soft, the other's skin grew hard.

I saw the arms that drew in at his armpits  
and also saw the monster's two short feet  
grow long for just as much as those were shortened.

Poscia li piè di rietro, insieme attorti,  
diventaron lo membro che l'uom cela,  
e 'l misero del suo n'avea due porti.

Mentre che 'l fummo l'uno e l'altro vela  
di color novo, e genera 'l pel suso  
per l'una parte e da l'altra il dipela,

l'un si levò e l'altro cadde giuso,  
non torcendo però le lucerne empie,  
sotto le quai ciascun cambiava muso.

Quel ch'era dritto, il trasse ver' le tempie,  
e di troppa matera ch'in là venne  
uscir li orecchi de le gote scempie;

ciò che non corse in dietro e si ritenne  
di quel soverchio, fé naso a la faccia  
e le labbra ingrossò quanto convenne.

Quel che giacëa, il muso innanzi caccia,  
e li orecchi ritira per la testa  
come face le corna la lumaccia;

e la lingua, ch'avëa unita e presta  
prima a parlar, si fende, e la forcuta  
ne l'altro si richiude; e 'l fummo resta.

L'anima ch'era fiera divenuta,  
suffolando si fugge per la valle,  
e l'altro dietro a lui parlando sputa.

Poscia li volse le novelle spalle,  
e disse a l'altro: "'l vo' che Buoso corra,  
com' ho fatt'io, carpon per questo calle".

Così vid'io la settima zavorra  
mutare e trasmutare; e qui mi scusi  
la novità se fior la penna abborra.

E avvegna che li occhi miei confusi  
fossero alquanto e l'animo smagato,  
non poter quei fuggirsi tanto chiusi,

ch'i' non scorgessi ben Puccio Sciancato;  
ed era quel che sol, di tre compagni  
che venner prima, non era mutato;

l'altr'era quel che tu, Gaville, piagni.

The serpent's hind feet, twisted up together,  
became the member that man hides; just as  
the wretch put out two hind paws from his member.

And while the smoke veils each with a new color,  
and now breeds hair upon the skin of one,  
just as it strips the hair from off the other,

the one rose up, the other fell; and yet  
they never turned aside their impious eyelamps,  
beneath which each of them transformed his snout:

he who stood up drew his back toward the temples,  
and from the excess matter growing there  
came ears upon the cheeks that had been bare;

whatever had not been pulled back but kept,  
superfluous, then made his face a nose  
and thickened out his lips appropriately.

He who was lying down thrust out his snout;  
and even as the snail hauls in its horns,  
he drew his ears straight back into his head;

his tongue, which had before been whole and fit  
for speech, now cleaves; the other's tongue, which had  
been forked, now closes up; and the smoke stops.

The soul that had become an animal,  
now hissing, hurried off along the valley;  
the other one, behind him, speaks and spits.

And then he turned aside his new-made shoulders  
and told the third soul: "I'd have Buoso run  
on all fours down this road, as I have done."

And so I saw the seventh ballast change  
and recharge; may the strangeness plead for me  
if there's been some confusion in my pen.

And though my eyes were somewhat blurred, my mind  
bewildered, those three sinners did not flee  
so secretly that I could not perceive

Puccio Sciancato clearly, he who was  
the only soul who'd not been changed among  
the three companions we had met at first;

the other one made you, Gaville, grieve.

## Credits

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

English: D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, ed. by Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley, 1980) from the website [www.danteonline.it](http://www.danteonline.it) by the Società dantesca italiana.

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 Anishinaabemowin, 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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