

Toronto Salutes Dante

Inferno XXVI in Italian and English

Italian

English

Godi, Fiorenza, poi che se' sì grande
che per mare e per terra batti l'ali,
e per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!

Be joyous, Florence, you are great indeed,
for over sea and land you beat your wings;
through every part of Hell your name extends!

Tra li ladron trovai cinque cotali
tuoi cittadini onde mi ven vergogna,
e tu in grande orranza non ne sali.

Among the thieves I found five citizens
of yours-and such, that shame has taken me;
with them, you can ascend to no high honor.

Ma se presso al mattin del ver si sogna,
tu sentirai, di qua da picciol tempo,
di quel che Prato, non ch'altri, t'agogna.

But if the dreams dreamt close to dawn are true,
then little time will pass before you feel
what Prato and the others crave for you.

E se già fosse, non saria per tempo.
Così foss'ei, da che pur esser dee!
ché più mi graverà, com' più m'attempo.

Were that already come, it would not be,
too soon-and let it come, since it must be!
As I grow older, it will be more heavy.

Noi ci partimmo, e su per le scalee
che n'avea fatto iborni a scender pria,
rimontò 'l duca mio e trasse mee;

We left that deep and, by protruding stones
that served as stairs for our descent before,
my guide climbed up again and drew me forward;

e proseguendo la solinga via,
tra le schegge e tra ' rocchi de lo scoglio
lo piè senza la man non si spedia.

and as we took our solitary path
among the ridge's jagged spurs and rocks,
our feet could not make way without our hands.

Allor mi dolsi, e ora mi ridoglio
quando drizzo la mente a ciò ch'io vidi,
e più lo 'ngegno affreno ch'i' non soglio,

It grieved me then and now grieves me again
when I direct my mind to what I saw;
and more than usual, I curb my talent,

perché non corra che virtù nol guidi;
sì che, se stella bona o miglior cosa
m' ha dato 'l ben, ch'io stessi nol m'invidi.

that it not run where virtue does not guide;
so that, if my kind star or something better
has given me that gift, I not abuse it.

Quante 'l villan ch'al poggio si riposa,
nel tempo che colui che 'l mondo schiara
la faccia sua a noi tien meno ascosa,

As many as the fireflies the peasant
(while resting on a hillside in the season
when he who lights the world least hides his face),

come la mosca cede a la zanzara,
vede lucciole giù per la vallea,
forse colà dov'e' vendemmia e ara:

just when the fly gives way to the mosquito,
sees glimmering below, down in the valley,
there where perhaps he gathers grapes and tills-

di tante fiamme tutta risplendea
l'ottava bolgia, sì com'io m'accorsi
tosto che fui là 've 'l fondo pareo.

so many were the flames that glittered in
the eighth abyss; I made this out as soon
as I had come to where one sees the bottom.

E qual colui che si vengìo con li orsi
vide 'l carro d'Elia al dipartire,
quando i cavalli al cielo erti levorsi,

Even as he who was avenged by bears
saw, as it left, Elijah's chariot-
its horses rearing, rising right to heaven-

che nol potea sì con li occhi seguire,
ch'el vedesse altro che la fiamma sola,
sì come nuvoletta, in sù salire:

when he could not keep track of it except
by watching one lone flame in its ascent,
just like a little cloud that climbs on high

tal si move ciascuna per la gola
del fosso, ché nessuna mostra 'l furto,
e ogne fiamma un peccatore invola.

so, through the gullet of that ditch, each flame
must make its way; no flame displays its prey,
though every flame has carried off a sinner.

Io stava sovra 'l ponte a veder surto,
sì che s'io non avessi un ronchion preso,
caduto sarei giù sanz'esser urto.

I stood upon the bridge and leaned straight out
to see; and if I had not gripped a rock,
I should have fallen off-without a push.

E 'l duca, che mi vide tanto atteso,
disse: "Dentro dai fuochi son li spirti;
catun si fascia di quel ch'elli è inceso".

My guide, who noted how intent I was,
told me: "Within those fires there are souls;
each one is swathed in that which scorches him."

"Maestro mio", rispuos'io, "per udirti
son io più certo; ma già m'era avviso
che così fosse, e già voleva dirti:

"My master," I replied, "on hearing you,
I am more sure; but I'd already thought
that it was so, and I had meant to ask:

chi è 'n quel foco che vien sì diviso
di sopra, che par surger de la pira
dov'Eteòcle col fratel fu miso?".

Who is within the flame that comes so twinned
above that it would seem to rise out of
the pyre Eteocles shared with his brother?"

Rispuose a me: "Là dentro si martira
Ulisse e Diomede, e così insieme
a la vendetta vanno come a l'ira;

e dentro da la lor fiamma si geme
l'agguato del caval che fé la porta
onde uscì de' Romani il gentil seme.

Piangevisi entro l'arte per che, morta,
Deïdamìa ancor si duol d'Achille,
e del Palladio pena vi si porta".

"S'ei posson dentro da quelle faville
parlar", diss'io, "maestro, assai ten priego
e ripriego, che 'l priego vaglia mille,

che non mi facci de l'attender niego
fin che la fiamma cornuta qua vegna;
vedi che del disio ver' lei mi piego!".

Ed elli a me: "La tua preghiera è degna
di molta loda, e io però l'accetto;
ma fa che la tua lingua si sostegna.

Lascia parlare a me, ch'i' ho concetto
ciò che tu vuoi; ch'ei sarebbero schivi,
perch'e' fuor greci, forse del tuo detto".

Poi che la fiamma fu venuta quivi
dove parve al mio duca tempo e loco,
in questa forma lui parlare audivi:

"O voi che siete due dentro ad un foco,
s'io meritai di voi mentre ch'io vissi,
s'io meritai di voi assai o poco

quando nel mondo li alti versi scrissi,
non vi movete; ma l'un di voi dica
dove, per lui, perduto a morir gissi".

Lo maggior corno de la fiamma antica
cominciò a crollarsi mormorando,
pur come quella cui vento affatica;

indi la cima qua e là menando,
come fosse la lingua che parlasse,
gittò voce di fuori e disse: "Quando

mi diparti' da Circe, che sottrasse
me più d'un anno là presso a Gaeta,
prima che sì Enëa la nomasse,

né dolcezza di figlio, né la pieta
del vecchio padre, né 'l debito amore
lo qual dovea Penelopè far lieta,

vincer potero dentro a me l'ardore
ch'i' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto
e de li vizi umani e del valore;

ma misi me per l'alto mare aperto
sol con un legno e con quella compagna
picciola da la qual non fui disertò.

L'un lito e l'altro vidi infin la Spagna,
fin nel Morrocco, e l'isola d'i Sardi,
e l'altre che quel mare intorno bagna.

Io e' compagni eravam vecchi e tardi
quando venimmo a quella foce stretta
dov'Ercule segnò li suoi riguardi

acciò che l'uom più oltre non si metta;
da la man destra mi lasciai Sibilia,
da l'altra già m'avea lasciata Setta.

"O frati," dissi, "che per cento milia
perigli siete giunti a l'occidente,
a questa tanto picciola vigilia

He answered me: "Within that flame, Ulysses
and Diomedes suffer; they, who went
as one to rage, now share one punishment.

And there, together in their flame, they grieve
over the horse's fraud that caused a breach-
the gate that let Rome's noble seed escape.

There they regret the guile that makes the dead
Deidamia still lament Achilles;
and there, for the Palladium, they pay."

"If they can speak within those sparks," I said,
"I pray you and repray and, master, may
my prayer be worth a thousand pleas, do not

forbid my waiting here until the flame
with horns approaches us; for you can see
how, out of my desire, I bend toward it."

And he to me: "What you have asked is worthy
of every praise; therefore, I favor it.
I only ask you this: refrain from talking.

Let me address them-I have understood
what you desire of them. Since they were Greek,
perhaps they'd be disdainful of your speech."

And when my guide adjudged the flame had reached
a point where time and place were opportune,
this was the form I heard his words assume:

"You two who move as one within the flame,
if I deserved of you while I still lived,
if I deserved of you much or a little

when in the world I wrote my noble lines,
do not move on; let one of you retell
where, having gone astray, he found his death."

The greater horn within that ancient flame
began to sway and tremble, murmuring
just like a fire that struggles in the wind;

and then he waved his flame-tip back and forth
as if it were a tongue that tried to speak,
and flung toward us a voice that answered: "When

I sailed away from Circe, who'd beguiled me
to stay more than a year there, near Gaeta-
before Aeneas gave that place a name-

neither my fondness for my son nor pity
for my old father nor the love I owed
Penelope, which would have gladdened her,

was able to defeat in me the longing
I had to gain experience of the world
and of the vices and the worth of men.

Therefore, I set out on the open sea
with but one ship and that small company
of those who never had deserted me.

I saw as far as Spain, far as Morocco,
along both shores; I saw Sardinia
and saw the other islands that sea bathes.

And I and my companions were already
old and slow, when we approached the narrows
where Hercules set up his boundary stones

that men might heed and never reach beyond:
upon my right, I had gone past Seville,
and on the left, already passed Ceüta.

'Brothers,' I said, 'o you, who having crossed
a hundred thousand dangers, reach the west,
to this brief waking-time that still is left

d'i nostri sensi ch'è del rimanente
non vogliate negar l'esperienza,
di retro al sol, del mondo senza gente.

Considerate la vostra semenza:
fatti non foste a viver come bruti,
ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza".

Li miei compagni fec'io sì aguti,
con questa orazion picciola, al cammino,
che a pena poscia li avrei ritenuti;

e volta nostra poppa nel mattino,
de' remi facemmo ali al folle volo,
sempre acquistando dal lato mancino.

Tutte le stelle già de l'altro polo
vedea la notte, e 'l nostro tanto basso,
che non surgëa fuor del marin suolo.

Cinque volte raccesso e tante casso
lo lume era di sotto da la luna,
poi che 'ntrati eravam ne l'alto passo,

quando n'apparve una montagna, bruna
per la distanza, e parvemi alta tanto
quanto veduta non avëa alcuna.

Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto;
ché de la nova terra un turbo nacque
e percosse del legno il primo canto.

Tre volte il fé girar con tutte l'acque;
a la quarta levar la poppa in suso
e la prora ire in giù, com'altrui piacque,
infin che 'l mar fu sovra noi richiuso".

unto your senses, you must not deny
experience of that which lies beyond
the sun, and of the world that is unpeopled.

Consider well the seed that gave you birth:
you were not made to live your lives as brutes,
but to be followers of worth and knowledge.'

I spurred my comrades with this brief address
to meet the journey with such eagerness
that I could hardly, then, have held them back;

and having turned our stern toward morning, we
made wings out of our oars in a wild flight
and always gained upon our left-hand side.

At night I now could see the other pole
and all its stars; the star of ours had fallen
and never rose above the plain of the ocean.

Five times the light beneath the moon had been
rekindled, and, as many times, was spent,
since that hard passage faced our first attempt,

when there before us rose a mountain, dark
because of distance, and it seemed to me
the highest mountain I had ever seen.

And we were glad, but this soon turned to sorrow,
for out of that new land a whirlwind rose
and hammered at our ship, against her bow.

Three times it turned her round with all the waters;
and at the fourth, it lifted up the stern
so that our prow plunged deep, as pleased an Other,
until the sea again closed-over us."

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.

English: D. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, ed. by Allen Mandelbaum (Berkeley, 1980) from the website 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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