Una medesma lingua pria mi morse,
si che mi tinse l'una e l'altra guancia,
e poi la medicina mi riporse;

sicché odio che sola far la lancia
d'Achille e del suo padre esser cagione
prima di trista e poi di buona mancia.

Noi demmo il dosso al misero vallone
su per la ripa che 'l cinge dintorno,
attraversando sanza alcun sermone.

Quiv'era men che notte e men che giorno,
si che 'l viso m'andava innanzi poco;
ma io sentì sonare un alto corno,
tanto ch'avevrebbe ogne tuon fatto fioco,
che, contra sé la sua via seguitando,
dirizzò i occhi miei tutti ad un loco.

Dopo la dolorosa rota, quando
Carlo Magno perde la santa gesta,
non sòno sì terribilmente Orlando.

Poco portai in là volta la testa,
che me parve veder molte alte torri;
ond'io: "Maestro, dici che terra è questa?".

Ed eli a me: "Però che tu trascorri
per la tenebre troppo da la lunghi,
avven che poi nel maginar abborri.

Tu vedrai ben, se tu là ti congiungi,
che me parve veder molte alte torri,
però alquanto più te stesso pungi".

Poi caramente mi prese per mano
e disse: "Pria che noi sìamo più avanti,
accò ch'I fatto men ti paia strano,
sappi che non son torri, ma giganti,
e son nel pozzo intorno da la ripa
da l'umbilico in giù tutti quanti".

Come quando la nebbia si dissipa,
lo sguardo a poco a poco raffigura
cioché cela l'aura grossa e scura,
pù e più appressando ver' la sponda,
fuggiemi errore e cresciemi paura;

però che, come su la cerchia tonda
Montebergioni di torri si corona,
cosi la proda che 'l pozzo circonda
torreggiavan di mezza la persona
li orribili giganti, cui minaccia
Giove del cielo ancora quando tuona.

E io scorgeva già d'alcan la faccia,
le spalle e 'l petto e del ventre gran parte,
e per le coste giù ambo le braccia.

Natura certo, quando lasciò l'arte
di sì fatti animali, assai fé bene
per tòrre tali essecutori a Marte.

E s'ella d'elefanti e di balene
non si pente, chi guarda sottilmente,
pù giusta e più discreta la ne tene;

Here it was less than night and less than day,
so that my sight could only move ahead
slightly, but then I heard a bugle blast
so strong, it would have made a thunder clap
seem faint; at this, my eyes-which doubled back
upon their path-turned fully toward one place.

Not even Roland's horn, which followed on
the sad defeat when Charlemagne had lost
his holy army, was as dread as this.

I'd only turned my head there briefly when
I seemed to make out many high towers; then
I asked him: "Master, tell me, what's this city?"

And he to me: "It is because you try
to penetrate from far into these shadows
that you have formed such faulty images.

When you have reached that place, you shall see clearly
how much the distance has deceived your sense;
and, therefore, let this spur you on your way."

Then lovingly he took me by the hand
and said: "Before we have moved farther on,
so that the fact may seem less strange to you,
i'd have you know they are not towers, but giants,
and from the navel downward, all of them
are in the central pit, at the embankment."

Just as, whenever mists begin to thin,
when, gradually, vision finds the form
that in the vapor-thickened air was hidden,
so I pierced through the dense and darkened fog;
as I drew always nearer to the shore,
my error fled from me, my terror grew;

for as, on its round wall, Montebergione
is crowned with towers, so there towered here,
above the bank that runs around the pit,
with half their bulk, the terrifying giants,
whom Jove still menaces from Heaven when
he sends his bolts of thunder down upon them.

And I could now make out the face of one,
his shoulders and his chest, much of his belly,
and both his arms that hung along his sides.

Surely when she gave up the art of making
such creatures, Nature acted well indeed,
depriving Mars of instruments like these.

And if she still produces elephants
and whales, whoever sees with subtlety
holds her-for this-to be more just and prudent;
ché dove l'argomento de la mente
s'aggiunge al mal volere e a la possa,
nessun riparo vi può far la gente.

La faccia sua mi parea lunga e grossa
come la pina di San Pietro a Roma,
e a sua proporzione eran l'altre ossa;
sì che la ripa, ch'era perizoma
dal mezzo in giù, ne mostrava ben tanto
di sovra, che di giugnere a la chioma
tre Frison s'avervien dato mal vanto;
però ch'i' ne vedea trenta gran palmi
dal loco in giù dov'orno affibbia 'l manto.

"Raphèl mal amècche zabi almi!",
cominciò a gridar la fiera bocca,
cui non si convenia più dolci salmi.

E 'l duca mio ver' lui: "Anima sciocca,
tienti col corno, e con quel ti disfog
quando i giganti fer paura a' dèi
Fìalte ha nome, e fece le gran prov
disse 'l mio duca, "ond'elli ha cotal merto
si ravvolgìa infino al giro quinto
dal collo i'd'una catena che 'l tenea avvint
di sinistra; e al trar d'un balestr
Facemmo adunque più lungo vïagg
come 'l suo ad altrui, ch'a nullo è noto"
"Questo superbo volle esser espert
di sovra, che di giugnere a la chiom
Però ch'i' ne vedea trenta gran palm
ale vòto; ché così è a lui ciascun linguag
ch'el tien legato, o anima confusa
questi è Nembrotto per lo cui mal cot
Poi disse a me
E io a lui: "S'esser puote, io vorre
when called to shake a tower so robust
Non fu tremoto già tanto rubesto,
ché scottesse una torre così forte,
come Fialte a scoustersi fu presto.

Allor temet'to più che mai la morte,
e non v'era mestier più che la dotta,
s'i'o non avessi viste le ritorte.

Noi procedemmo più avante allotta,
e venimmo ad Anteo, che ben cinque alle,
senza la testa, uscia fuor de la grotta.

for where the mind's acutest reasoning
is joined to evil will and evil power,
there human beings can't defend themselves.

His face appeared to me as broad and long
as Rome can claim for its St. Peter's pine cone;
his other bones shared in that same proportion;
so that the bank, which served him as an apron
down from his middle, showed so much of him
above, that three Frislanders would in vain
have boasted of their reaching to his hair;
for downward from the place where one would buckle
a mantle, I saw thirty spans of him.

"Raphèl mal amècche zabi almi,
 began to bellow that brute mouth, for which
no sweeter psalms would be appropriate.

And my guide turned to him: "O stupid soul,
keep to your horn and use that as an outlet
when rage or other passion touches you!

Look at your neck, and you will find the strap
that holds it fast; and see, bewildered spirit,
how it lies straight across your massive chest.

And then to me: "He is his own accuser;
for this is Nimrod, through whose wicked thought
one single language cannot serve the world.

Leave him alone-let's not waste time in talk;
for every language is to him the same
as his to others-no one knows his tongue."

So, turning to the left, we journeyed on
and, at the distance of a bow-shot, found
another giant, far more huge and fierce.

Who was the master who had tied him so,
I cannot say, but his left arm was bent
behind him and his right was bent in front,
both pinioned by a chain that held him tight
down from the neck; and round the part of him
that was exposed, it had been wound five times.

"This giant in his arrogance had tested
his force against the force of highest Jove,"
my guide said, "so he merits this reward.

His name is Ephialtes; and he showed
tremendous power when the giants frightened
the gods; the arms he moved now move no more."

And to him: "If it is possible,
I'd like my eyes to have experience
of the enormous one, Briareus."

At which he answered: "You shall see Antaeus
nearby. He is unfettered and can speak;
he'll take us to the bottom of all evil.

The one you wish to see lies far beyond
and is bound up and just as huge as this one,
and even more ferocious in his gaze."

No earthquake ever was so violent
when called to shake a tower so robust,
as Ephialtes quick to shake himself.

Then I was more afraid of death than ever;
that fear would have been quite enough to kill me,
had I not seen how he was held by chains.

And we continued on until we reached
Antaeus, who, not reckoning his head,
stood out above the rock wall full five ells.

"Eli stessi s'accusa;
questi è Nembrotto per lo cui mal cot
Poi disse a me: "Eli stessi s'accusa;
questi è Nembrotto per lo cui mal cot
pur un linguaggio nel mondo non s'usa
Lasciànlo stare e non parliamo a vòto; ché così è a lui ciascun linguag
E i duca mio ver' lui: "Anima sciocca,
tienti col corno, e con quel ti disfog
quand'ira o altra passïon ti tocca
Look at your neck, and you will find the strap
that holds it fast; and see, bewildered spirit,
how it lies straight across your massive chest.

And then to me: "He is his own accuser;
for this is Nimrod, through whose wicked thought
one single language cannot serve the world.

Leave him alone-let's not waste time in talk;
for every language is to him the same
as his to others-no one knows his tongue."
"O tu che ne la fortunata valle
che fece Scipio di gloria reda,
recasti già mille leon per preda,
e che, se fossi stato a ’l alta guerra
de’ tuol fratelli, ancor par che si creda
ch’avrebbero vinto i figli de la terra:
mettergiù, e non ten veneghi schifo,
dove Cocito la freddura serra.
Non ci fare ira a Tizio né a Tifo:
questi può dar di quel che qui si brama;
Ancor ti puo nel mondo render fama,
ch’il vive, e lunga vita ancor aspetta
se ’nnanzi tempo grazia a sé nol chiama.”

Così disse ’l maestro; e quelli in fretta
le man distese, e prese ’l duca mio,
on’d’Ercule sentì già grande stretta.
Virgilio, quando prender si sentio,
disse a me: “Fatti qua, sì ch’io ti prenda”;
poi fece si ch’un fascio era elli e io.
Qual pare a riguardar la Carisenda
sotto ’l chinato, quando un nuvol vad
sovr’essa sì, ched ella incontro penda:
Ma lievemente al fondo che divora
Lucifero con Giuda, ci sposò;
ne, si chinato, fi fece dimora,
e come albero in nave si levò.

"O you, who lived within the famous valley
(where Scipio became the heir of glory
when Hannibal retreated with his men),
who took a thousand lions as your prey
and had you been together with your brothers
in their high war, it seems some still believe
the sons of earth would have become the victors
do set us down below, where cold shuts in
Coytus, and do not disdain that task.

Don’t send us on to Tityus or Typhon;
this man can give you what is longed for here;
therefore bend down and do not curl your lip.
He still can bring you fame within the world,
for he’s alive and still expects long life,
unless grace summon him before his time.

"So said my master; and in haste Antæus
stretched out his hands, whose massive grip had once been felt by Hercules, and grasped my guide.
And Virgil, when he felt himself caught up,
called out to me: "Come here, so I can hold you,”
then made one bundle of himself and me.
Just as the Garisenda seems when seen beneath the leaning side, when clouds run past
and it hangs down as if about to crash,
so did Antæus seem to me as I watched him bend over me-a moment when
I’d have preferred to take some other road.
But gently-on the deep that swallows up both Lucifer and Judas—he placed us;
nor did he, so bent over, stay there long,
but, like a mast above a ship, he rose.

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.

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.

From an original idea of Elisa Brilli, George Ferzoco, and Nicholas Terpstra, and thanks to the invaluable work of Alice Martignoni and Nattapol Ruangsri (Research Assistants). Sponsored by the Department of Italian Studies, the Emilio Goggio Chair in Italian Studies at the University of Toronto, the Istituto Italiano di Cultura di Toronto, and Villa Charities.