

# Toronto Salutes Dante

## *Inferno XXXI* in Italian and English

### Italian

### English

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

così od'io che solea 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 senza alcun sermone.

Quiv'era men che notte e men che giorno,  
sì che 'l viso m'andava innanzi poco;  
ma io senti' sonare un alto corno,

tanto ch'avrebbe ogne tuon fatto fioco,  
che, contra sé la sua via seguitando,  
dirizzò li occhi miei tutti ad un loco.

Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando  
Carlo Magno perdé la santa gesta,  
non sonò sì terribilmente Orlando.

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

Ed egli a me: "Però che tu trascorri  
per le tenebre troppo da la lungi,  
avvien che poi nel maginare abborri.

Tu vedrai ben, se tu là ti congiungi,  
quanto 'l senso s'inganna di lontano;  
però alquanto più te stesso pungi".

Poi caramente mi prese per mano  
e disse: "Pria che noi siam più avanti,  
acciò che 'l fatto men ti paia strano,

sappi che non son torri, ma giganti,  
e son nel pozzo intorno da la ripa  
da l'ombelico in giuso tutti quanti".

Come quando la nebbia si dissipa,  
lo sguardo a poco a poco raffigura  
ciò che cela 'l vapor che l'aere stipa,

così forando l'aura grossa e scura,  
più e più appressando ver' la sponda,  
fuggiemi errore e cresciemi paura;

però che, come su la cerchia tonda  
Montereggion di torri si corona,  
così 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'alcun 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 esecutori a Marte.

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

The very tongue that first had wounded me,  
sending the color up in both my cheeks,  
was then to cure me with its medicine-

as did Achilles' and his father's lance,  
even as I have heard, when it dispensed  
a sad stroke first and then a healing one.

We turned our backs upon that dismal valley  
by climbing up the bank that girdles it;  
we made our way across without a word.

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, Montereggione  
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'aggiugne al mal volere e a la possa,  
nessun riparo vi può far la gente.

La faccia sua mi pareva 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 sopra, che di giugnere a la chioma

tre Frison s'averien dato mal vanto;  
però ch'i' ne vedea trenta gran palmi  
dal loco in giù dov'omo affibbia 'l manto.

"Raphèl mai amècche zabì 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 disfoga  
quand'ira o altra passìon ti tocca!

Cércati al collo, e troverai la soga  
che 'l tien legato, o anima confusa,  
e vedi lui che 'l gran petto ti dogà".

Poi disse a me: "Elli stessi s'accusa;  
questi è Nembrotto per lo cui mal coto  
pur un linguaggio nel mondo non s'usa.

Lasciànlo stare e non parliamo a vòto;  
ché così è a lui ciascun linguaggio  
come 'l suo ad altrui, ch'a nullo è noto".

Facemmo adunque più lungo viaggio,  
vòlta a sinistra; e al trar d'un balestro  
trovammo l'altro assai più fero e maggio.

A cigner lui qual che fosse 'l maestro,  
non so io dir, ma el tenea soccinto  
dinanzi l'altro e dietro il braccio destro

d'una catena che 'l tenea avvinto  
dal collo in giù, sì che 'n su lo scoperto  
si ravigliava infino al giro quinto.

"Questo superbo volle esser esperto  
di sua potenza contra 'l sommo Giove",  
disse 'l mio duca, "ond'elli ha cotal merto.

Fialte ha nome, e fece le gran prove  
quando i giganti fer paura a' dèi;  
le braccia ch'el menò, già mai non move".

E io a lui: "S'esser puote, io vorrei  
che de lo smisurato Briareo  
esperienza avesser li occhi mei".

Ond'ei rispuose: "Tu vedrai Anteo  
presso di qui che parla ed è disciolto,  
che ne porrà nel fondo d'ogne reo.

Quel che tu vuò veder, più là è molto  
ed è legato e fatto come questo,  
salvo che più feroce par nel volto".

Non fu tremoto già tanto rubesto,  
che scotesse una torre così forte,  
come Fialte a scuotersi fu presto.

Allor temett'io più che mai la morte,  
e non v'era mestier più che la dotta,  
s'io 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 Frieslanders 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 mai amècche ,zabì 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 I 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.

"O tu che ne la fortunata valle  
che fece Scipion di gloria reda,  
quand'Anibàl co' suoi diede le spalle,

recasti già mille leon per preda,  
e che, se fossi stato a l'alta guerra  
de' tuoi fratelli, ancor par che si creda

ch'avrebber vinto i figli de la terra:  
mettine giù, e non ten vegna schifo,  
dove Cocito la freddura serra.

Non ci fare ire a Tizio né a Tifo:  
questi può dar di quel che qui si brama;  
però ti china e non torcer lo grifo.

Ancor ti può nel mondo render fama,  
ch'el 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,  
ond'Ercule sentì già grande stretta.

Virgilio, quando prender si sentio,  
disse a me: "Fatti qua, sì ch'io ti prenda";  
poi fece sì ch'un fascio era elli e io.

Qual pare a riguardar la Carisenda  
sotto 'l chinato, quando un nuvol vada  
sovr'essa sì, ched ella incontro penda:

tal parve Antèo a me che stava a bada  
di vederlo chinare, e fu tal ora  
ch'i' avrei voluto ir per altra strada.

Ma lievemente al fondo che divora  
Lucifero con Giuda, ci sposò;  
né, sì chinato, lì 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  
Cocytus, 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 Antaeus  
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 Antaeus 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](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](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8p8p8p8p8p8p8p8p8p8p8) from March 25th to June 2021.

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