

Toronto Salutes Dante

Inferno XXXIV in Italian, English, and Stoney Nakoda (lines 127-39)

Italian	English	Stoney Nakoda
"Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni verso di noi; però dinanzi mira", disse 'l maestro mio, "se tu 'l discerni".	'The banners of the King of Hell advance on us. Look straight before you and see if you can make him out,' my master said.	
Come quando una grossa nebbia spira, o quando l'emisperio nostro annotta, par di lungi un molin che 'l vento gira, veder mi parve un tal dificio allotta; poi per lo vento mi ristrinsi retro al duca mio, ché non lì era altra grotta.	As when a thick mist rises, or when our hemisphere darkens to night, one may discern a distant windmill by its turning sails, it seemed to me I saw such a contrivance. And, to avoid the wind, I drew in close behind my leader: there was nowhere else to hide.	
Già era, e con paura il metto in metro, là dove l'ombre tutte eran coperte, e trasparien come festuca in vetro.	Now—and I shudder as I write it out in verse— I was where the shades were wholly covered, showing through like bits of straw in glass.	
Altre sono a giacere; altre stanno erte, quella col capo e quella con le piante; altra, com'arco, il volto a' piè rinverte.	Some are lying down, still others stand erect: some with heads, some with footsoles up, some bent like bows, their faces to their toes.	
Quando noi fummo fatti tanto avante, ch'al mio maestro piacque di mostrarmi la creatura ch'ebbe il bel sembiante, d'innanzi mi si tolse e fé restarmi, "Ecco Dite", dicendo, "ed ecco il loco ove convien che di fortezza t'armi".	When we had gotten far enough along that my master was pleased to let me see the creature who was once so fair of face, he took a step aside, then brought me to a halt: 'Look there at Dis! And see the place where you must arm yourself with fortitude.'	
Com'io divenni allor gelato e fioco, nol dimandar, lettore, ch'i' non lo scrivo, però ch'ogne parlar sarebbe poco.	Then how faint and frozen I became, reader, do not ask, for I do not write it, since any words would fail to be enough.	
Io non mori' e non rimasi vivo; pensa oggimai per te, s' hai fior d'ingegno, qual io divenni, d'uno e d'altro privo.	I did not die, nor did I stay alive. Imagine, if you have the wit, what I became, deprived of both.	
Lo 'mperador del doloroso regno da mezzo 'l petto uscia fuor de la ghiaccia; e più con un gigante io mi convegno, che i giganti non fan con le sue braccia: vedi oggimai quant'esser dee quel tutto ch'a così fatta parte si confaccia.	The emperor of the woeful kingdom rose from the ice below his breast, and I in size am closer to a giant than giants are when measured to his arms. Judge, then, what the whole must be that is proportional to such a part.	
S'el fu si bel com'elli è ora brutto, e contra 'l suo fattore alzò le ciglia, ben dee da lui procedere ogne lutto.	If he was fair as he is hideous now, and raised his brow in scorn of his creator, he is fit to be the source of every sorrow.	
Oh quanto parve a me gran maraviglia quand'io vidi tre facce a la sua testa! L'una dinanzi, e quella era vermicchia;	Oh, what a wonder it appeared to me when I perceived three faces on his head. The first, in front, was red in color.	
I'altr'eran due, che s'aggiugnieno a questa sovresso 'l mezzo di ciascuna spalla, e sé giugnieno al loco de la cresta: e la destra parea tra bianca e gialla; la sinistra a vedere era tal, quali vegnon di là onde 'l Nilo s'avvalla.	Another two he had, each joined with this, above the midpoint of each shoulder, and all the three united at the crest. The one on the right was a whitish yellow, while the left-hand one was tinted like the people living at the sources of the Nile.	
Sotto ciascuna uscivan due grand'ali, quanto si convenia a tanto uccello: vele di mar non vid'io mai cotali.	Beneath each face two mighty wings emerged, such as befit so vast a bird: I never saw such massive sails at sea.	
Non avean penne, ma di vispistrello era lor modo; e quelle svolazzava, sì che tre venti si movean da ello: quindi Cocito tutto s'aggelava. Con sei occhi piangëa, e per tre menti gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava.	They were featherless and fashioned like a bat's wings. When he flapped them, he sent forth three separate winds, the sources of the ice upon Cocytus. Out of six eyes he wept and his three chins dripped tears and drooled blood-red saliva.	

Da ogne bocca dirompea co' denti
un peccatore, a guisa di maciulla,
sì che tre ne facea così dolenti.

A quel dinanzi il mordere era nulla
verso 'l graffiar, che talvolta la schiena
rimanea de la pelle tutta brulla.

"Quell'anima là sù c' ha maggior pena",
disse 'l maestro, "è Giuda Scariotto,
che 'l capo ha dentro e fuor le gambe mena.

De li altri due c' hanno il capo di sotto,
quel che pende dal nero ceffo è Bruto:
vedi come si storce, e non fa motto!;

e l'altro è Cassio, che par sì membruto.
Ma la notte risurge, e oramai
è da partir, ché tutto avem veduto".

Com'a lui piacque, il collo li avvinghiai;
ed el prese di tempo e loco poste,
e quando l'ali fuoro aperte assai,

appigliò sé a le vellute coste;
di vello in vello giù discese poscia
tra 'l folto pelo e le gelate croste.

Quando noi fummo là dove la coscia
si volge, a punto in sul grosso de l'anche,
lo duca, con fatica e con angoscia,

volse la testa ov'elli avea le zanche,
e aggrappossi al pel com'om che sale,
sì che 'n inferno i' credea tornar anche.

"Attienti ben, ché per cotali scale",
disse 'l maestro, ansando com'uom lasso,
"conviensi dipartir da tanto male".

Poi uscì fuor per lo fóro d'un sasso
e puose me in su l'orlo a sedere;
appresso porse a me l'accorto passo.

Io levai li occhi e credetti vedere
Lucifero com'io l'avea lasciato,
e vidili le gambe in sù tenere;

e s'io divenni allora travagliato,
la gente grossa il pensi, che non vede
qual è quel punto ch'io avea passato.

"Lèvati sù", disse 'l maestro, "in piede:
la via è lunga e 'l cammino è malvagio,
e già il sole a mezza terza riede".

Non era camminata di palagio
là 'veravam, ma natural burella
ch'avea mal suolo e di lume disagio.

"Prima ch'io de l'abisso mi divella,
maestro mio", diss'io quando fui dritto,
"a trarmi d'erro un poco mi favella:

ov'è la ghiaccia? e questi com'è fitto
sì sottosopra? e come, in sì poc'ora,
da sera a mane ha fatto il sol tragitto?".

Ed elli a me: "Tu imagini ancora
d'esser di là dal centro, ov'io mi presi
al pel del vermo reo che 'l mondo fóra.

Di là fosti cotanto quant'io scesi;
quand'io mi volsi, tu passasti 'l punto
al qual si traggon d'ognе parte i pesi.

E se' or sotto l'emisperio giunto
ch'è contraposto a quel che la gran secca
coverchia, e sotto 'l cui colmo consunto

With his teeth, just like a hackle
pounding flax, he champed a sinner
in each mouth, tormenting three at once.

For the one in front the gnawing was a trifle
to the clawing, for from time to time
his back was left with not a shred of skin.

'That soul up there who bears the greatest pain,'
said the master, 'is Judas Iscariot, who has
his head within and outside flails his legs.

'As for the other two, whose heads are dangling down,
Brutus is hanging from the swarthy snout—
see how he writhes and utters not a word!—

'and from the other, Cassius, so large of limb.
But night is rising in the sky. It is time
for us to leave, for we have seen it all.'

At his request I clasped him round the neck.
When the wings had opened wide enough
he chose the proper time and place

and took a handhold on those hairy flanks.
Then from hank to hank he clambered down
between the thick pelt and the crusted ice.

When we had come to where the thighbone
swivels, at the broad part of the hips,
my leader, with much strain of limb and breath,
turned his head where Satan had his shanks
and clung to the hair like a man climbing upward,
so that I thought we were heading back to Hell.

'Hold on tight, for by such rungs as these,'
said my master, panting like a man exhausted,
'must we depart from so much evil.'

Then out through an opening in the rock he went,
setting me down upon its edge to rest.
And then, with quick and cautious steps, he joined me.

I raised my eyes, thinking I would see
Lucifer still the same as I had left him,
but saw him with his legs held upward.

And if I became confused, let those dull minds
who fail to see what point I'd passed
comprehend what I felt then.

The master said to me: 'Get to your feet,
for the way is long and the road not easy,
and the sun returns to middle tierce.'

It was not the great hall of a palace,
where we were, but a natural dungeon,
rough underfoot and wanting light.

'Master, before I tear myself from the abyss,'
I said once I had risen,
'say a few words to rid me of my doubt.'

'Where is the ice? Why is this one fixed now
upside down? And how in so few hours
has the sun moved from evening into morning?'

And he to me: 'You imagine you are still
beyond the center, where I grasped the hair
of the guilty worm by whom the world is pierced.

'So you were, as long as I descended,
but, when I turned around, you passed the point
to which all weights are drawn from every side.'

'You are now beneath the hemisphere
opposite the one that canopies the landmass—
and underneath its zenith that Man was slain

fu l'uom che nacque e visse sanza pecca;
tu haï i piedi in su picciola spera
che l'altra faccia fa de la Giudecca.

Qui è da man, quando di là è sera;
e questi, che ne fé scala col pelo,
fitto è ancora sì come prim'era.

Da questa parte cadde giù dal cielo;
e la terra, che pria di qua si sporse,
per paura di lui fé del mar velo,

e venne a l'emisperio nostro; e forse
per fuggir lui lasciò qui loco vòto
quella ch'appar di qua, e sù ricorse".

Luogo è là giù da Belzebù remoto
tanto quanto la tomba si distende,
che non per vista, ma per suono è noto

d'un ruscelletto che quivi discende
per la buca d'un sasso, ch'elli ha rosso,
col corso ch'elli avvolge, e poco pende.

Lo duca e io per quel cammino ascoso
intrammo a ritornar nel chiaro mondo;
e sanza cura aver d'alcun riposo,
salimmo sù, el primo e io secondo,
tanto ch'i' vidi de le cose belle
che porta 'l ciel, per un pertugio tondo.

E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.

'who without sin was born and sinless lived.
You have your feet upon a little sphere
that forms Judecca's other face.

'Here it is morning when it is evening there,
and the one whose hair provided us a ladder
is fixed exactly as he was before.

'It was on this side that he fell from Heaven.
And the dry land that used to stand, above,
in fear of him immersed itself in water

'and fled into our hemisphere. And perhaps
to escape from him the land we'll find above
created this lacuna when it rushed back up.'

As far as one can get from Beelzebub,
in the remotest corner of this cavern,
there is a place one cannot find by sight,

but by the sound of a narrow stream that trickles
through a channel it has cut into the rock
in its meanderings, making a gentle slope.

Into that hidden passage my guide and I
entered, to find again the world of light,
and, without thinking of a moment's rest,
we climbed up, he first and I behind him,
far enough to see, through a round opening,
a few of those fair things the heavens bear.

Then we came forth, to see again the stars.

Beezlebub îge zedâhâ tehasîrh chowakî ti cha mehen
hnâgabi ze ako mâkocî he cha yukâch, ko hûyagabisî ka,
waptaptan cha edâhâ nârhûbi hûnâ

gasâksâ ye ze hechen îpabin nen orhnora garha hûnâ ze
ohnâ haharhch. Hneheyasî ka.

Mîta hûga ze gici mâkocî ozâzâ hâ nen îhnibi chiyaga,
châgu aîthiyâ wîge cha ohnâ îgubinch. Yaberhegesîwîja

îgaginibich, iyeton, zehâ miye, mârhiya gaki dagu dohâ
wathtethte aye ga hûmagesî zethkas oînâpe mîmâ cha
ohnâ.

Zehâ îhnibi wan akes îgakidabi chiyaga yarhyarha îgen.

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 Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander (New York, 2001) from the website www.danteonline.it by the Società dantesca italiana.

Stoney Nakoda: The lines 127-139 were translated by Trent Fox, PhD student at the University of Calgary and member of the Stoney Nakoda Nation.

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