

Toronto Salutes Dante

Inferno VII in Italian and English

Italian

English

"Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!",
cominciò Pluto con la voce chioccia;
e quel savio gentil, che tutto seppe,

disse per confortarmi: "Non ti nocchia
la tua paura; ché, poder ch'elli abbia,
non ci torrà lo scender questa roccia".

Poi si rivolse a quella 'nfiata labbia,
e disse: "Taci, maladetto lupo!
consuma dentro te con la tua rabbia.

Non è senza cagion l'andare al cupo:
vuolsi ne l'alto, là dove Michele
fé la vendetta del superbo strupo".

Quali dal vento le gonfiate vele
caggiono avvolte, poi che l'alber fiacca,
tal cadde a terra la fiera crudele.

Così scendemmo ne la quarta lacca,
pigliando più de la dolente ripa
che 'l mal de l'universo tutto insacca.

Ahi giustizia di Dio! tante chi stipa
nove travaglie e pene quant'io viddi?
e perché nostra colpa sì ne scipa?

Come fa l'onda là sovra Cariddi,
che si frange con quella in cui s'intoppa,
così convien che qui la gente riddi.

Qui vid'ì gente più ch'altrove troppa,
e d'una parte e d'altra, con grand'urli,
voltando pesi per forza di poppa.

Percotèansi 'ncontro; e poscia pur lì
si rivolgea ciascun, voltando a retro,
gridando: "Perché tieni?" e "Perché burli?"

Così tornavan per lo cerchio tetro
da ogne mano a l'opposito punto,
gridandosi anche loro ontoso metro;

poi si volgea ciascun, quand'era giunto,
per lo suo mezzo cerchio a l'altra giostra.
E io, ch'avea lo cor quasi compunto,

dissi: "Maestro mio, or mi dimostra
che gente è questa, e se tutti fuor cerci
questi chercurti a la sinistra nostra".

Ed elli a me: "Tutti quanti fuor guerci
sì de la mente in la vita primaia,
che con misura nullo spendio ferci.

Assai la voce lor chiaro l'abbaia,
quando vegnono a' due punti del cerchio
dove colpa contraria li dispaia.

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E io: "Maestro, tra questi cotali
dovre' io ben riconoscere alcuni
che furo immondi di cotesti mali".

Ed elli a me: "Vano pensiero aduni:
la sconoscente vita che i fé sozzi,
ad ogne conoscenza or li fa bruni.

"Pape Satàn, pape Satàn aleppe!"
so Plutus, with his grating voice, began.
The gentle sage, aware of everything,

said reassuringly, "Don't let your fear
defeat you; for whatever power he has,
he cannot stop our climbing down this crag."

Then he turned back to Plutus' swollen face
and said to him: "Be quiet, cursed wolf!
Let your vindictiveness feed on yourself.

His is no random journey to the deep:
it has been willed on high, where Michael took
revenge upon the arrogant rebellion."

As sails inflated by the wind collapse,
entangled in a heap, when the mast cracks,
so that ferocious beast fell to the ground.

Thus we made our way down to the fourth ditch,
to take in more of that despondent shore
where all the universe's ill is stored.

Justice of God! Who has amassed as many
strange tortures and travails as I have seen?
Why do we let our guilt consume us so?

Even as waves that break above Charybdis,
each shattering the other when they meet,
so must the spirits here dance their round dance.

Here, more than elsewhere, I saw multitudes
to every side of me; their howls were loud
while, wheeling weights, they used their chests to push.

They struck against each other; at that point,
each turned around and, wheeling back those weights,
cried out: "Why do you hoard?" "Why do you squander?"

So did they move around the sorry circle
from left and right to the opposing point;
again, again they cried their chant of scorn;

and so, when each of them had changed positions,
he circled halfway back to his next joust.
And I, who felt my heart almost pierced through,

requested: "Master, show me now what shades
are these and tell me if they all were clerics-
those tonsured ones who circle on our left."

And he to me: "All these, to left and right
were so squint-eyed of mind in the first life-
no spending that they did was done with measure.

Their voices bark this out with clarity
when they have reached the two points of the circle
where their opposing guilts divide their ranks.

These to the left-their heads bereft of hair-
were clergymen, and popes and cardinals,
within whom avarice works its excess."

And I to him: "Master, among this kind
I certainly might hope to recognize
some who have been bespattered by these crimes."

And he to me: "That thought of yours is empty:
the undiscerning life that made them filthy
now renders them unrecognizable.

In eterno verranno a li due cozzi:
questi resurgeranno del sepolcro
col pugno chiuso, e questi coi crin mozzi.

Mal dare e mal tener lo mondo pulcro
ha tolto loro, e posti a questa zuffa:
qual ella sia, parole non ci appulcro.

Or puoi, figliuol, veder la corta buffa
d'i ben che son commessi a la fortuna,
per che l'umana gente si rabuffa;

ché tutto l'oro ch'è sotto la luna
e che già fu, di quest'anime stanche
non potrebbe farne posare una".

"Maestro mio", diss'io, "or mi di anche:
questa fortuna di che tu mi tocche,
che è, che i ben del mondo ha sì tra branche?".

E quelli a me: "Oh creature sciocche,
quanta ignoranza è quella che v'offende!
Or vo' che tu mia sentenza ne 'mbocche.

Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende,
fece li cieli e diè lor chi conduce
sì, ch'ogne parte ad ogne parte splende,

distribuendo igualmente la luce.
Similemente a li splendor mondani
ordinò general ministra e duce

che permutasse a tempo li ben vani
di gente in gente e d'uno in altro sangue,
oltre la difension d'i senni umani;

per ch'una gente impera e l'altra langue,
seguendo lo giudicio di costei,
che è occulto come in erba l'angue.

Vostro saver non ha contasto a lei:
questa provvede, giudica, e persegue
suo regno come il loro li altri dèi.

Le sue permutazion non hanno triegue:
necessità la fa esser veloce;
sì spesso vien chi vicenda consegue.

Quest'è colei ch'è tanto posta in croce
pur da color che le dovrien dar lode,
dandole biasmo a torto e mala voce;

ma ella s'è beata e ciò non ode:
con l'altre prime creature lieta
volve sua sfera e beata si gode.

Or discendiamo omai a maggior pietà;
già ogne stella cade che saliva
quand'io mi mossi, e 'l troppo star si vieta".

Noi ricidemmo il cerchio a l'altra riva
sovr'una fonte che bolle e riversa
per un fossato che da lei deriva.

L'acqua era buia assai più che persa;
e noi, in compagnia de l'onde bige,
intrammo giù per una via diversa.

In la palude va c' ha nome Stige
questo tristo ruscel, quand'è disceso
al piè de le maligne piagge grige.

E io, che di mirare stava inteso,
vidi genti fangose in quel pantano,
ignude tutte, con sembiante offeso.

Queste si percoltean non pur con mano,
ma con la testa e col petto e coi piedi,
troncandosi co' denti a brano a brano.

For all eternity they'll come to blows:
these here will rise up from their sepulchers
with fists clenched tight; and these, with hair cropped close.

Ill giving and ill keeping have robbed both
of the fair world and set them to this fracas-
what that is like, my words need not embellish.

Now you can see, my son, how brief's the sport
of all those goods that are in Fortune's care,
for which the tribe of men contend and brawl;

for all the gold that is or ever was
beneath the moon could never offer rest
to even one of these exhausted spirits."

"Master," I asked of him, "now tell me too:
this Fortune whom you've touched upon just now-
what's she, who clutches so all the world's goods?"

And he to me: "O unenlightened creatures,
how deep-the ignorance that hampers you!
I want you to digest my word on this.

Who made the heavens and who gave them guides
was He whose wisdom transcends everything;
that every part may shine unto the other,

He had the light apportioned equally;
similarly, for wordly splendors, He
ordained a general minister and guide

to shift, from time to time, those empty goods
from nation unto nation, clan to clan,
in ways that human reason can't prevent;

just so, one people rules, one languishes,
obeying the decision she has given,
which, like a serpent in the grass, is hidden.

Your knowledge cannot stand against her force;
for she foresees and judges and maintains
her kingdom as the other gods do theirs.

The changes that she brings are without respite:
it is necessity that makes her swift;
and for this reason, men change state so often.

She is the one so frequently maligned
even by those who should give praise to her-
they blame her wrongfully with words of scorn.

But she is blessed and does not hear these things;
for with the other primal beings, happy,
she turns her sphere and glories in her bliss.

But now let us descend to greater sorrow,
for every star that rose when I first moved
is setting now; we cannot stay too long."

We crossed the circle to the other shore;
we reached a foaming watercourse that spills
into a trench formed by its overflow.

That stream was even darker than deep purple;
and we, together with those shadowed waves,
moved downward and along a strange pathway.

When it has reached the foot of those malign
gray slopes, that melancholy stream descends,
forming a swamp that bears the name of Styx.

And I, who was intent on watching it,
could make out muddied people in that slime,
all naked and their faces furious.

These struck each other not with hands alone,
but with their heads and chests and with their feet,
and tore each other piecemeal with their teeth.

Lo buon maestro disse: "Figlio, or vedi
l'anime di color cui vinse l'ira;
e anche vo' che tu per certo credi

che sotto l'acqua è gente che sospira,
e fanno pullular quest'acqua al summo,
come l'occhio ti dice, u' che s'aggira.

Fitti nel limo dicon: "Tristi fummo
ne l'aere dolce che dal sol s'allegra,
portando dentro accidioso fummo:

or ci attristiam ne la belletta negra".
Quest'inno si gorgoglian ne la strozza,
ché dir nol posson con parola integra".

Così girammo de la lorda pozza
grand'arco, tra la ripa secca e 'l mézzo,
con li occhi vòlti a chi del fango ingozza.

Venimmo al piè d'una torre al da sezzo.

The kindly master told me: "Son, now see
the souls of those whom anger has defeated;
and I should also have you know for certain

that underneath the water there are souls
who sigh and make this plain of water bubble,
as your eye, looking anywhere, can tell.

Wedged in the slime, they say: 'We had been sullen
in the sweet air that's gladdened by the sun;
we bore the mist of sluggishness in us:

now we are bitter in the blackened mud.'
This hymn they have to gurgle in their gullets,
because they cannot speak it in full words."

And so, between the dry shore and the swamp,
we circled much of that disgusting pond,
our eyes upon the swallows of slime.

We came at last upon a tower's base.

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 American Sign Language, 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/UC...) from March 25th to June 2021.

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