

ILLUSTRATIONS OF DANTE'S PURGATORY

1. CATON

Dante and Virgil coming out of the Inferno traverse the natural underground passageway and find themselves on the beach of an island of the Antarctic Hemisphere upon which the mountain of Purgatory is placed. Here they meet Caton (*"lunga la barba e di pel bianco mista"*). (Long is the beard and of mixed white hair). The latter's suicide in order not to fall into the hands of Caesar, is considered a sacrifice calculated to teach the world the incomparable price of truth (*"libertà vo' cercando ch'è sì cara / come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta"*). (*"I go seeking freedom that is so dear / as he who knows for you life denies"*). (Purgatory I, 13-51).

2. DANTE SURROUNDED BY A REED

After the meeting with Caton, Dante and Virgil run toward the marine that trembles at the first lights of sunrise, victorious over the blue sullenness of night, Virgil in a place still in the darkness, gathers with his hands the dew drops and washes the face of the student. Then together on the beach he girds the poet with a reed that, admirable so to speak, pulled off, prodigiously multiplies. (Purgatory I, 118-136).

3. THE ANGEL NOCCHIERO

The angel of God is at abaft of a swift and rapid embarkation for the divine virtue. With its wings lifted high up, it penetrates the sky by he who reaches the miraculous power. Transports more than one hundred souls who, sitting in the boat, recite the psalm of the Hebrews when they were freed from slavery in Egypt (*"In exitu Israel de Aegypto"*). (*"In the exodus of Israel from Egypt"*). (Purgatory II, 317-51).

4. MEETING WITH CASELLA

On the shores of the small island of Purgatory, after Caton, the two poets meet Casella, Florentine musician who sings *"Amor che nella mente mi ragiona."* (*Love that in the mind reasons with me*). (Purgatory II, 76-117).

5. MANFREDI

King of Sicily, died in the battle of Benevento in the year 1266, is at the foot of the mountain, among the first formation, with the dead out of the grace of the church. They wait outside of Purgatory thirty times the time during which they were excommunicated from the church. (Purgatory III).

Upon awakening, Dante notices that he is no longer in the pleasant Valletta. He kneels and confesses to the angel who engraves seven P's on his forehead, symbol of the seven sins that must be expiated in the seven frames of the Purgatory (IX, 103-132). Two paintings have been executed: one with the angel incising the seven P's, and the other with the angel and the two poets at the opening of the door of purification.

6. BELACQUA

Following the indication of the excommunicated souls, Dante and Virgil begins the climb along a narrow and particularly steep path. Under the shade of a large rock are lying the souls of the negligent for laziness. Among these is the soul

of Belacqua, a very lazy Florentine lutist, known to Dante (Purgatory IV, 88-108).

7. BONCONTE DA MONTEFELTRO

In the second formation of souls are Jacopo del Cassero, Buonconte da Montefeltro, Pia dei Tolomei, Sordello and many more. In the air is heard the singing of *"Miserere mei, Deus..."*. We are still in the Anti-Purgatory among the souls that died violently, pardoning. They suffer the pain of waiting outside of the Purgatory as many years as they had lived. (Purgatory V, 8-129).

8. PIA DEI TOLOMEI

Sad and delicate is the story of Pia dei Tolomei who was killed by her husband, and she pardons him at the end of life: *"Deh, quando sarai tornato al mondo / e riposato de la lunga via... / ricordati di me che son la Pia. / Siena mi fe', disfecemi Maremma: / salsi colui che inanellata pria, / disponando, m'avea con la sua gemma."* (*"Oh, please, when you are in the world again, / and are quite rested from your journey here... / Oh, please remember me! I am called Pia. / Siena gave me life, Maremma death, / as he knows who began it when he put / his gem upon my finger, pledging faith."*) (Mark Musa, Purgatory V, 130-136).

Pia went to be wife of Mello dei Pannocchieschi who closed her in his castle of Stone (near Massa Marittima) and went to have her killed (some say it was for an infidelity that she committed, some say it was because he wanted to remarry). Pia is one of the most feminine and gentle figures of our poetry: all discretion, delicacy, and kindness.

9. VIRGIL AND SORDELLO

Other souls crowd around Dante begging for suffrage. Back on the road, the two poets meet Sordello who embraces Virgil because he is from Mantova. To this spectacle of love of country, Dante's thought runs painfully to the condition of Italy and Florence. (Purgatory VI, 58-75). In David's illustration, Sordello appears nude while embracing Virgil while Dante observes.

10. THE ENVIOUS ONES

In the second frame, covered by livid cilices, with sewn eyelids, with iron they must keep each other standing, they watch too much the condition of others. Among the examples of charity is Maria at the wedding of Cana, while among those of envy is Cain who killed his brother Abel. The angel of compassion rubs off the second P on Dante's forehead and sings *"Beati misericordes"* (*"Blessed are the Compassionate"*).

11. THE IRASCIBLES

The irascibles walk in dense and unbreathable smoke in the third formation (or cornice) because they let offuscate the sight of the smoke of anger. Among the souls of a certain relevance is Marco Lombardo. There are examples of meekness and examples of punished anger; at the end the angel of peace rubs off the third P on Dante's forehead while singing *Beati pacifici* (*Blessed are the Peaceful*).

12. THE SOUR ONES

The sour ones run with anguish in the fourth formation because they were lazy during their lifetime in doing their duties. Among these are the Abbey of San Zeno. Examples of solicitude are followed by examples of sourness and in the end the angel of solicitude rubs off the fourth P on Dante's forehead. After having heard the sour ones, Dante falls asleep and dreams of the woman Balba.

13. THE ANNUNCIATION

The Annunciation is an example of humility for these souls of the first frame, the arrogants, who walk bent under the heavy-weights, for their desire to elevate themselves above the others. *"Ecce ancilla Domini"* (*Here is the Lord's servant*) the singing that resounds in the sunny warm air. The angel of humility erases the first P on Dante's forehead and sings *"Beati pauperes spiritu..."* (*Blessed are the poor of spirit...*) Among the examples of arrogants is Lucifer who precipitates from heaven and forms the immense funnel of the inferno.

14. MISERS AND PRODIGALS

In the fifth formation, the misers and the prodigals, face down on the ground had hands and feet tied for they had their heart stuck on the ground and did not do worthy deeds. Among them, Adriano V, Ugo Capeto and Statius. Virgil explains to Dante the dream (the mermaid is the symbol of avarice, of the gullet and lust). The angel of justice rubs the fifth P off Dante's forehead and sings *"Beata qui lugent..."* (*Blessed be those who are mourning...*).

15. THE GREEDY

The greedy are the fourth formation and suffer fame and seven near fruit trees on which water falls but doesn't descend on the earth and cannot be touched, for they are too easily satiated in life. Among the souls purifying are Forese Donati, Bonagguinta da Lucca, Pope Martino IV and others. The two mystic trees resound examples of temperance, followed by examples of greed (the Centaurs drunk, Gideon and the Hebrews covetous). The angel of abstinence rubs off the sixth P and sings: *"Beati qui esuriunt justitiam..."* (*Blessed be those who suffer for the justice.*)

16. THE LUSTFUL

In the Seventh Formation are the lustful who walk among the burning flames, crying and embracing each other, for their life burned with concupiscence. The souls cry examples of chastity (The Virgin Mary who says to Saint Gabriel: *"Virum non cognosco"* *"I do not know a man"*) and of lust (Sodom and Gomorra burnt - Pasifae lustful mother of the Minotaur - woman and bull coupled together). Among the souls are seen Guido Guinizelli and Arnaldo Daniello. (Purgatory XXV, XXVI, XXVII). Virgil, Dante and Statius go through the flames and come out to earthly Paradise: surprised by the night, they fall asleep and Dante dreams of Lia (active - Rachel: contemplative) who gathers flowers. Awakened, Virgil takes leave. The angel of chastity rubs off the seventh P on Dante's forehead and sings *"Beati mundo corde..."* (*Blessed are those who have a pure heart...*).



Vice Consul of Italy Antonio De Santis with Orazio Tanelli at Ivo David's Exhibition at the Public Library, Union, NJ, 1995.

17. MATELDA

Matelda is a woman of extraordinary beauty who appears to Dante in the Terrestrial Paradise. Alone, somewhat solitary, she walks on the shores singing and selecting flowers. A beautiful picture is that of Ivo David who unites a chromatura of Fusionistic colors with the spring beauty of the landscape that transports to a metaphysical and spiritual world. Matelda is pictorially represented with an angelic lady who accompanies Dante before the apparition of Beatrice and the disappearance of Virgil. Doré, Blake, Koch, Rossetti and Flaxman form the stylistic precedents for Ivo David. The purgated souls drink the water of the river Lete to forget the evil; where the angels sing: *"Benedictus qui venit"* and one of the ladies sings *"Veni, sponsa, de Libano"* (*Come, bride, from Lebanon*) (Purgatory XXVIII, 22-42).

18. IMMERSION INTO THE LETHE

(Purgatory XXXI, 91-102). Here Dante finds himself in the water of the Lethe immersed to the throat. Matelda flows lightly on the water, drags behind the Poet and exhorts him to keep close to her. The beautiful lady successively kisses him on the head and immerses him in the water, forcing him to drink.

19. THE PROSTITUTE AND THE GIANT

The griffon ties the cart of the Church to a bare tree, the latter immediately blossoms again. On the cart, at the place of Beatrice appears a prostitute and next to her a giant with who she kisses. But then the giant glagellates her when he notices that she had turned and looked at Dante, unties the cart from the plant and pushes it into the forest. (Purgatory XXXII, 142-160).

20. THE WATER OF THE EUNOE

Matelda is the Countess of Tuscany and leads Dante to Beatrice in the Terrestrial Paradise (Purgatory XXVIII, 124-135). The Poet is renewed just as the plant that blossoms with new leaves in the spring, and he feels pure and ready to ascend to the stars. Ivo David offers us a sublimation of Matelda as a beautiful nymph in a spring landscape.