



Synopsis

1. CANTO I

Marco and Ermanna, the two Virgil-guides, before the door to the tomb.

Each spectator is Dante, the *Everyman* who together with the citizens' chorus represents humanity "on its way".

The poem of immortality begins next to the poet's mortal remains. Our "dark, lost life" has ahead of it the enigma of death, physical and spiritual, of which the "forest" is an allegory.

2. CANTO II

Now everyone is on the way, like Dante and Virgil in the second canto, the canto of doubts and fear of the undertaking.

We stop in front of the basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo where there is a little girl: Beatrice. Dante is now definitively reassured and has dispelled all his anxieties. The procession then proceeds towards the Rasi Theatre, formerly the Romanesque church of Santa Chiara.

3. CANTO III

The spectators follow the two guides to the gate of the Rasi Theatre. Above the gate, in the walled-up window, are the words: THROUGH ME YOU PASS, which allude to the first *terzina* of canto III:

"THROUGH ME YOU PASS INTO THE CITY OF WOE / THROUGH ME YOU PASS INTO ETERNAL PAIN / THROUGH ME YOU GO AMONG THE PEOPLE LOST FOR AYE."

Similar inscriptions could be found above church entrances, but this is the gate of hell. A sign that Dante presents hell to us as an anti-church, an overturned place.

On the threshold Marco and Ermanna take the spectators by hand, one by one, as Virgil does with Dante, to lead them into "secret things". Once inside, the spectators find themselves in the midst of a chaos of "various tongues, horrible speech": a group of soldiers treats the spectators as if they were hostages: the commander recites Renaud's monologue from Simone Weil's *Venice Saved*, transfiguration of a demon assassin and ferryman, at once Charon and Minos.

4. CANTO V

Marco reads the definition of hell given by Jacopo Alighieri. Ermanna recites Ezra Pound's *Francesca*. Paolo and Francesca are tossed around in the infernal storm.

5. CANTO VII

Clash between the avaricious and the prodigal. Ermanna recites *Rabuffa*, a 'rhythmic' rewriting of Boccaccio's comment on canto VII.

6. CANTO IX

The Furies, together with demons, impede access to the city of Dis. Intervention of the angel allows them to proceed.

7. CANTO X

The city of Dis. Among the graves, the Guelph Dante meets the Ghibelline Farinata degli Uberti. Next to him, Cavalcante Cavalcanti.

8. CANTO XII

River Phlegethon. Ermanna recites *Ma ficca gli occhi a valle*, a rewriting from Dante and Boccaccio. In the river of blood, naked tortured bodies, like dark and bloody shadows: those who were violent to their fellow men, murderers and tyrants.

9. CANTO XV

Pier Paolo Pasolini appears: he is “our” Brunetto Latini. Malacoda and his demons burst in.

10. CANTO XIII

Half of the public go to see the woods of the suicides, where we find the Harpies and Pier delle Vigne. Ermanna recites *Invidia*, a rewriting from Boccaccio.

11. CANTOS XVII, XVIII, XIX

The other half of the public enters the theatre offices: Malebolge. In the first: a pimp with a young woman in a suit. Buying and selling. In the second: a young and corrupt pope with his secretary. The recorded voice of Don Giovanni Montanari reciting Dante’s invective against simoniacal popes. In the third: a dull-witted usurer types figures into an inactive computer. The recorded voices of Ermanna and Ezra Pound recite the latter’s *Cantos XLV* on usury.

12. CANTO XXI

We go down by the river of boiling pitch where demons with claws fish for “barterers”, those who exploited their political positions to steal public money. Dante himself was (unjustly) accused by the Florence Municipality of accepting bribes and condemned to burning at the stake.

13. CANTO XXIV

In the bolgia of the serpent-humans. Vanni Fucci and thieves like him, furious madmen bound in straitjackets.

14. CANTO XXVI

Ulysses.

15. CANTO XXXII

Marco recalls an anecdote by Benvenuto da Imola on the secrets of Dantesque rhythm. Revealing of the frozen lake of Cocytus where traitors are imprisoned.

16. CANTO XXXIII

Count Ugolino.

17. CANTO XXXIV

We come to the end of hell. The apse of the mediaeval church of Santa Chiara. Lucifer. The image of absolute evil. Hypocrisy of the good, the greatest hypocrisy.

18. *thence issuing we again beheld the stars*

Marco Martinelli and Ermanna Montanari Virgil-guides

Roberto Magnani Charon – Renaud

Laura Redaelli Coryphaeus of the Furies

Luigi Dadina Farinata degli Uberti

Gianni Plazzi Cavalcante Cavalcanti

Massimiliano Rassu Malacoda

Alessandro Argnani Pier delle Vigne

Alessandro Renda Ulysses