

DANTE ALIGHIERI
1265-1321
THE DIVINE COMEDY
CANTICLE I INFERNO
Midcoast Senior College
Fall I 2024
George Young



Dante Reading his Commedia
Domenico di Michelino, 1465;

SYLLABUS

Dante's *Inferno*
George M. Young
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co-host Nora Bishop bishon@gmail.com
Mondays Sept 9 - Oct 21 1:00-2:30
UMA Brunswick Center, Room 101

READING SCHEDULE

NO CLASS OCT. 14 , ZOOM CLASS OCT 21

Sept. 9. INTRO. Cantos I-IV: The Dark Wood, Entrance to Hell, Limbo

Sept. 16. Cantos V-IX: Lust, Gluttony, Avarice, Arrogance

Sept. 23 Cantos X-XVI: Heresy, Sodomy, Violence,

Sept. 30. Cantos XVII-XXII: Usury, Fraud,

Oct. 7. Cantos XXIII-XXVIII: Discord, Hypocrisy, Theft

Oct. 14 NO CLASS Indigenous People's Day

Oct. 21 ZOOM Cantos XXIX-XXXIV Treachery, Exit. SUMMARY

Welcome to everyone in the class!

I recommend that before each meeting you read all the cantos assigned for that day. You are welcome to use any translation or edition of the work, but my references in class will be to the edition translated by John Ciardi. For each class I'll speak a bit about biographical, historical, and literary background, but emphasis will be on class discussion of what the poem is saying and how it is being said. Sometimes we'll also examine relevant works of art, including illustrations of *Inferno* done by William Blake and Gustave Doré.

The Dartmouth Dante Project (<https://dante.dartmouth.edu/>) offers a great list of print and video resources far beyond the scope of our brief course. For our purposes I would especially recommend the following:

Introductions by translators to their translations, in the versions by: John Ciardi, Dorothy Sayers, Allen Mandelbaum, John D. Sinclair, Mark Musa, and Bowdoin's own Henry W. Longfellow.

Book length biographical and literary studies: Giovanni Boccaccio, *A Life of Dante*. (The first important study,) Alessandro Barbero, *Dante, A Life*. (A very detailed presentation of social and biographical information), Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice: A Study in Dante*. (A sensitive study of the mystical side of Dante's vision by a member of the J. R. R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis group, The Inklings) Wallace Fowlie, *A Reading of Dante's Inferno*. (A good, immersive study,) Guy P. Raffa, *The Complete Danteworlds: A Reader's Guide to the Divine Comedy*. (All you ever wanted to know, and more,) Matthew Pearl, *The Dante Club*. (For fun, a mystery novel set in Cambridge, MA)

Videos: *Dante: Inferno to Paradise | Part One: The Inferno | Episode 1* (Available through Maine PBS Passport , created by Ric Burns (brother of Ken Burns) Outstanding, but requires membership in Maine PBS.
<https://video.mainepublic.org/show/dante-inferno-to-paradise/>

PBS Preview For a tempting look, several brief clips: <https://video.mainepublic.org/video/preview-2sxf5s/>

Another good one: *Perspective: How Dante Provided a New World*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bkh2xILmKzY>.

A third also good, by Romana Cortese: *Dante's Life, Exile, and Legacy*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbYNkYqY5zQ>

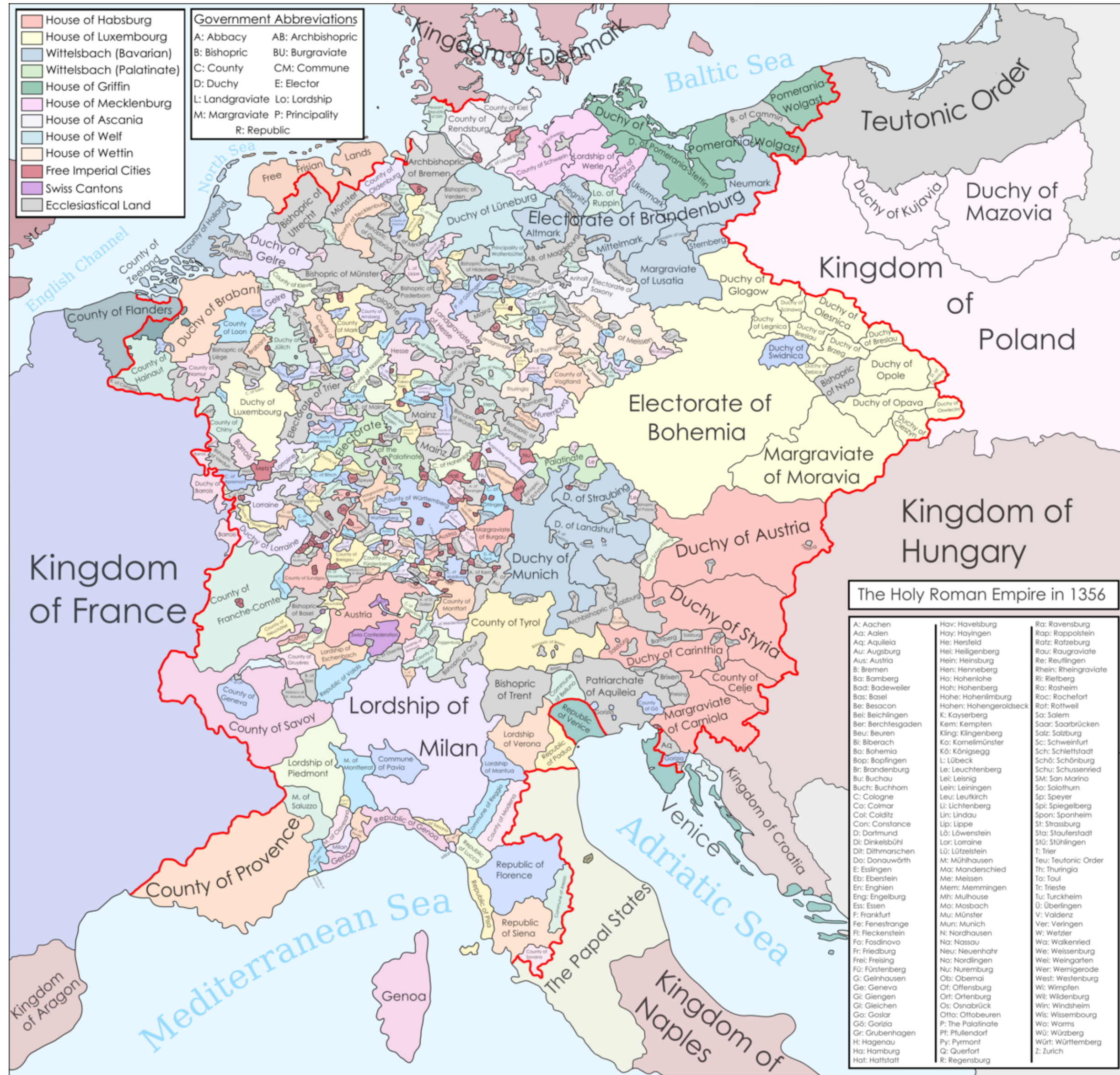
A fourth video, well done but from a viewpoint unsympathetic to the religious context of the poem. Martin Hossick, *Dante: The First Renaissance Man*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXgYvfm-l7I>

And for the ultimate video series, Yale University offers an entire semester, 24 classes, on Dante brilliantly taught by Professor Giuseppe Mazzotta, free through youtube in Yale's series of online courses.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=679FGDpZBew>

No extra work is required, but if you have the time, any of these could enrich your lifelong appreciation of Dante and *Inferno*. See you soon!

George

HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE c. 1300



ITALY c. 1300



MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS IN DANTE'S TIME, c. 1300

Holy Catholic Church

Eastern Orthodoxy 1054 ff
 Constantinople fell 1453
 Kiev, 1000
 Moscow, 1500

Western Catholicism

Rome
 Avignon 1309-1376

POPES

Celestine V d. 1296
 Boniface VIII d. 1303
 Clement V d. 1314

GUELF

Islam

Shia 680ff
 Ilkhanate Mongol/Persian Sufi
 Sunni Egyptian Arabic Ottoman

Genghis Khan d.1227

Kublai Khan d. 1294

Osman I d. 1326

Al-Nasir Muhammad d. 1341
 Egypt

Holy Roman Empire

Charlemagne, c.800

Albrecht I, Hapsburg d. 1308

Charles d'Anjou d. 1285

Charles II of Naples, d. 1309

Henry VII d. 1313

Philip IV, "The Fair" d. 1314

Edward I d. 1307

William Wallace, "Braveheart" d. 1305

GHIBELLINE

Opponents

William Tell

Templars ,
 Jacques de Molay d. 1314

Robert I, The Bruce

International Figures 1300

Papal States



Celestine, d. 1296



Boniface VIII d. 1303

Avignon Papacy
1309-1376



Clement V d. 1314

Holy Roman Empire



Charles d'Anjou, aka
Charles I of Naples



Philip IV, "The Fair"
d. 1314



Edward I
d. 1307



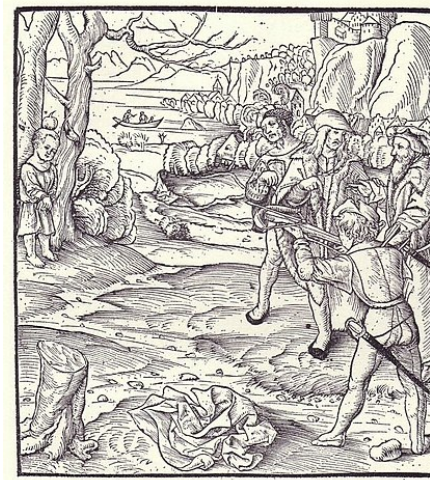
Albrecht I d.1308



Templars
Jacques de Molay, d. 1314



William Wallace
d.1305



William Tell 1307



Robert I The Bruce
d. 1329



Henry VII d. 1313



Cathars persecuted
1220-1350



Genghis Khan d, 1227



Kublai Khan
d. 1294



Osman I
d. 1326



Marco Polo
d. 1324



Al-Nasir Muhammad
d. 1341

CONTEMPORARIES: LITERATURE AND PAINTING



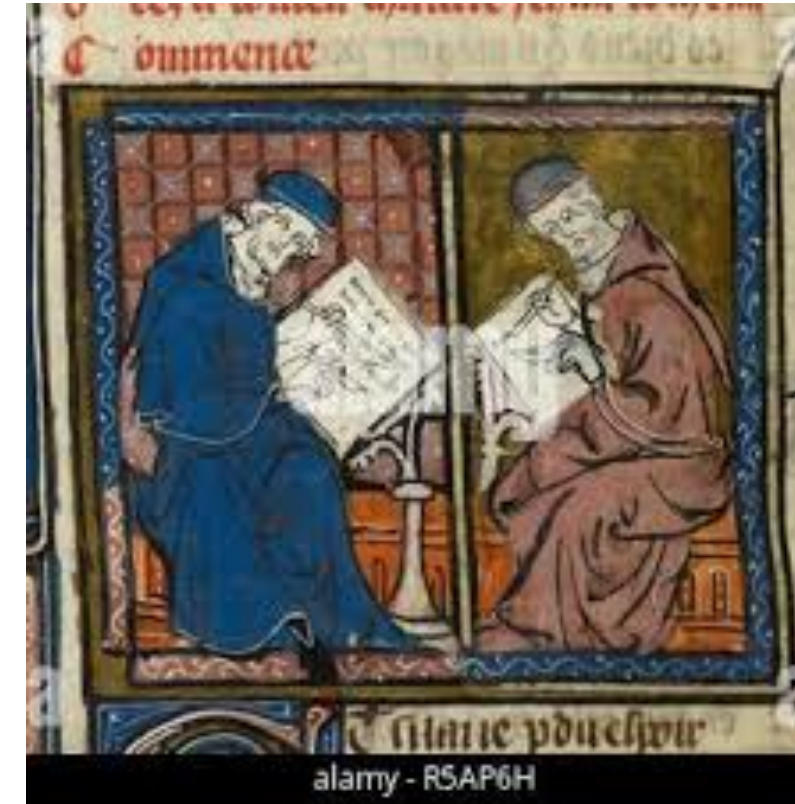
Guido Cavalcante
c.1250-1300



Francesco Petrararch
1304-1374



Giovanni Boccaccio
1313-1375



Guillaume de Lorris
c. 1200-1240
Jean de Meun
1230-1305



Thomas Aquinas
1225-1274
Summa Theologica



Jalal al-Din Rumi
1207=1273
"Masnavi"



Giotto
1267-1337



Bernardo Daddi
1280-1348



Duccio
c. 1255-1318



Cimabue
1240-1302



Ambrogio Lorenzetti
1290-1348



Chrétien de Troyes
fl.c. 1160-1191



Geoffrey
of
Monmouth
c. 1095-c.1155

DANTE AND BEATRICE



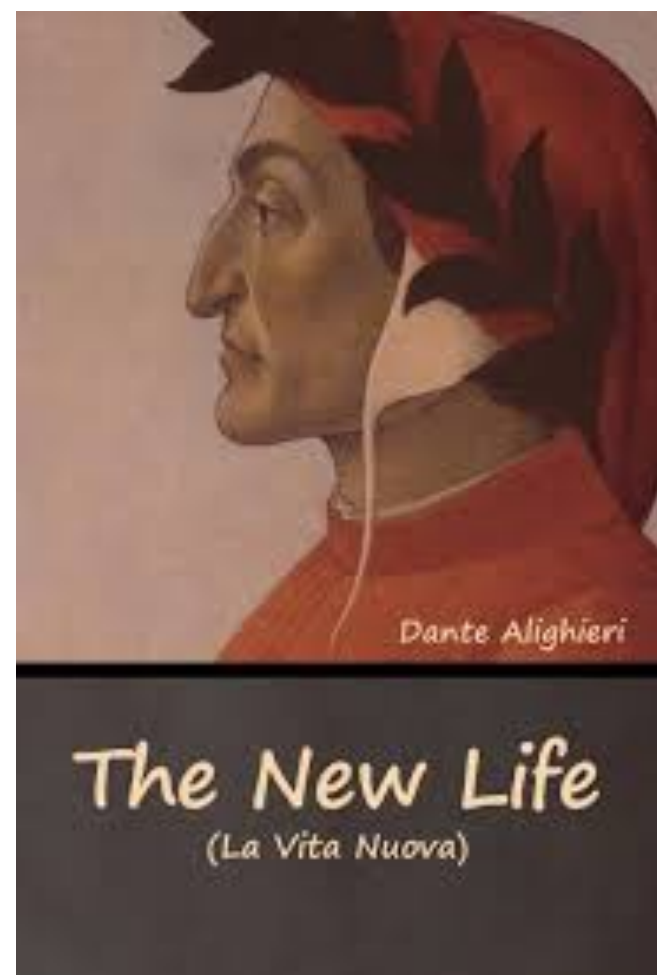
Simeon Solomon 1840-1905



Henry Holiday 1839-1927



William Blake 1757-1827



Dante Gabriel Rossetti 1828-1882
Dante's Dream



Gustave Doré 1832-1883

Monument
in
Belaggio
G.B.Comoli
1810



DANTE IN FLORENCE

FLORENCE AND ITS CHURCH IN THE AGE OF DANTE

George W. Dameron

SIZE AND WEALTH, WESTERN EUROPE

Grenada	150,000
Paris	150,000
Venice	110,000
Genoa	100,000
Milan	100,000
Florence	95,000
Seville	90,000
London	80,000
Cordova	60,000
Naples	60,000



Dante House Museum



Baptistery



Central Florence c. 1300

FAMILIES

- Cavalcanti
- Donati
- Bardi
- Portinari
- Alighieri



Giotto
Dante, exiled from 1302



Beatrice (Bici) Portinari — Bardi
1265-1290



Gemma Donati — Alighieri
1265—after 1333





Five Metaphors

1. Life is a Battle
2. Life is an Ocean
3. All the World's a Stage
4. Life is a Dream
5. Life is a

Jorge Luis Borges
1899-1986

POLITICS AND EXILE

Guelf v. Ghibelline



Battle of Montaperti
Ghibelline Victory
1260

Domenico Petrelli 1822-1891



White Guelf vs, Black Guelf



Christofano dell' Altissimo 1527-1605



Battle of Compaldino
Guelf Victory
1289

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
che la diritta via era smarrita.*

*Ah quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
esta selva selvaggia e aspre e forte
che nel pensier rinova la paura!*

In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight road was lost. (Sinclair, 1939)

Midway in our life's journey, I went astray
from the straight road and woke to find myself
alone in a dark wood. How shall I say (Ciardi 1996)

When life had labour'd up her midmost stage
And, weary with her mortal pilgrimage,
Stood in suspense upon the point of Prime;
Far in pathless grove I chanc'd to stray,
Where scarce imagination dares display,
The gloomy scen'ry of the savage clime. (Henry Boyd 1785)

In the middle of the journey of our life
I found myself astray in a dark wood
where the straight road had been lost sight of. (Heaney, 1993)

Midway along the highroad of our days,
I found myself within a shadowy wood,
Where the straight path was lost in tangled ways. (Wheeler, 1911)

Midway along the journey of our life
I woke to find myself in some dark woods,
for I had wandered off from the straight path. (Musa, 1971)

TRANSLATIONS

MIDWAY life's journey I was made aware
That I had strayed into a dark forest,
And the right path appeared not anywhere. (Binyon, 1933)

Midway on our life's journey, I found myself
In dark woods, the right road lost. (Pinsky, 1994)

Midway this way of life we're bound upon,
I woke to find myself in a dark wood,
Where the right road was wholly lost and gone (Sayers, 1949)


Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost. (Longfellow,
1867)

On traveling one half of our life's way,
I found myself in darkened forests when
I lost the straight and narrow path to stray. (Arndt, 1994)

When I had journeyed half of our life's way,
I found myself within a shadowed forest, for I had lost the path
that does not stray.
(Mandelbaum, 1980)

Stopped mid-motion in the middle
Of what we call our life, I looked up and saw no sky—
Only a dense cage of leaf, tree, and twig. I was lost.
(Mary Jo Bang 2003)

<https://carolinebergvall.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/VIA.pdf>

A close-up photograph of a man with dark hair, smiling slightly, speaking into a silver microphone. The background is dark and out of focus. Overlaid on the image is white text in Italian.

**"Or se' tu quel Virgilio e quella fonte
che spandi di parlar sì largo fiume?"
rispuos' io lui con vergognosa fronte.**



The dark wood



The three beasts



The Gate to Hell



The Gate to Hell



INFERNO, CANTO III



Poets in Limbo