

Don't worry

(dramatic theatre play)

By Rosa M. ISART

rmisart@hotmail.com

official web: www.rosamariaisart.com

post office 35.045

08080 Barcelona (Catalunya)

Year 2001-02

(original language: catalan)
(translation by S. Pons)

With admiration, to all those women who have suffered from mamma cancer.
With respect and tenderness to JL.

Why a play freely based on Dante's Divine Comedy?
Because living through a serious illness is always a descent to Hell.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Main characters

THE MOTHER, Alice, aged 52, diagnosed with mamma cancer,
living with Mark and mother of two, Dante and Sonia.

YOUNGSTER 2, Dante, the son, aged 30, a widower.

VIRGIL, THE TAXI DRIVER, Virgil,
positive, natural-born instructor and instigator, protector of youngster 2

Supporting roles

YOUNGSTER 1

THE SKINHEADS, neo-nazis

Political demonstrators

BARTENDER, Charon

SANDRA, main character's friend and confidant

At *Orcus*: SECRETARY, stupid bureaucrat

At *Orcus*: THE MASTER, the one in charge, always dressed in light blue

MARTHA, Alice's acquaintance

THE DOCTOR

THE NURSE

THE AVARICIOUS, the prodigal's husband

THE PRODIGAL

At the *Brotherhood Centre*: OLD WOMAN 1, 2, 3

At the *Brotherhood Centre*: THE MAESTRO, who instructs and speaks, always dressed in white.

At the *Brotherhood Centre*: WHORE 1, 2, 3 (The Furies)

NESSUS, THE CENTAUR, always quiet and keeping the company of oneiric youngster 2

BRUNETTO, damned orator, Dante's theologian instructor, a sodomite

GUIDOGUERRA, brave and talented knight, illustrious of Florence's

A FEMALE CHOIR, dressed in white tunics

HORNED DEMONS, sturdy and vicious

JASON, warrior

At the *Brotherhood Centre*: ASSOCIATE MEMBER 1, 2

SMILING WHITE ANGELS, altruistic squad

FRIEND 1?, 2?, 3? and 4? (Maria), presumed friends of Alice's

MARK, Alice's sentimental partner

THE BLIND MAN FROM CANUDA STREET, homeless

MAGHREBIS

GUARDS 1, 2, 3

Others

The Master/the Maestro are played by the same person.

The oneiric characters that speak to Youngster 2 will all be wearing masks, as indicated in the scenes.

SPACES

Elements

Habitually on the stage:
a taxi, stage left
a round table, downstage right
a white magnetic backdrop, used as a blackboard

Atmospheres

Real sceneries:
main character Alice's home
(The floor is of transparent tiles with a green light shining from beneath)
the Brotherhood Centre (meeting place)
Not real sceneries:
the unearthly space called Orcus (all in shades of light blue)
oneiric-infernal landscapes (described in each scene if necessary)

TIME

Coexistence of :
Turn of the 20th to the 21st century, circa 2000
Timelessness in the oneiric moments of mental delirium

Correlatives...

key

H - Hell

P - Purgatory

Pa - Paradise

(-) In brackets, chapter (Hell/ Purgatory/Paradise - and corresponding canto) correlative to the Divine Comedy.

Correlation

Dante - Youngster 2

Virgil - Virgil, the taxi driver.

Bartender - Charon

Source: Dante, La Divina Comedia. S.A. de Promoción y Ediciones; Club Internacional del Libro, Madrid 1985. 2 Volumes. From the collection: Grandes genios de la literatura universal, volume 13.

Inferno
(Hell)

SCENE 1

(H-1) (Inferno - First Canto)

Stage left a taxi missing the left side chassis and lit only by a single spotlight when playing a role in the scene.

Early afternoon. Centre stage, YOUNGSTER 1 is speaking on the mobile phone.

YOUNGSTER 1: Yesterday I got laid. I'm a genius. I'd like to be rolling in money.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*who hasn't noticed the other is speaking on the phone, turns around to look at him*): What the hell are you saying?

YOUNGSTER 1: You have to hang up? Yes, OK. (*Now addressing YOUNGSTER 2*): Don't panic. It's not me speaking. I was just playing sentences on the phone, with Fito.

YOUNGSTER 2: Sentences?

YOUNGSTER 1: He's asked me for three sentences meaning lust, pride and covetousness.

YOUNGSTER 2: What a weird game.

YOUNGSTER 1 (*explanatory and clowning*): Lust: Yesterday I got laid. Pride: I'm a genius. Covetousness: I'd like to be rolling in money.

YOUNGSTER 2: My turn. What about symbols for each of them?

YOUNGSTER 1: Uff!....Don't know.

YOUNGSTER 2: Lust: an agile leopard of spotted coat and swift movements. Pride: a lion, holding his head high and furious with hunger. Covetousness: a she-wolf that, in her territory, seems full of desire.

YOUNGSTER 1: Fuck that, you're a crack.

YOUNGSTER 2: F word. Penalised.

YOUNGSTER 2's mobile phone starts ringing.

YOUNGSTER 2: Hey, is it yours or mine?

YOUNGSTER 1: Yours, yours!

YOUNGSTER 2 (*answers the phone, listens*): Yes, mother. I'm on my way. I was just off. At Alex's. I'm on my way, I'm on my way. (*Looking grim, saying goodbye to YOUNGSTER 1*). It's getting late. I must be off, Alex. I had arranged to meet my mother, I'm seeing her to her gynecologist's check-up.

YOUNGSTER 1: That's once a year, isn't it? What a drag, isn't it?

YOUNGSTER 2 (*half absent*):....yeah.

YOUNGSTER 1 exits stage right. The taxi becomes lit.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*Putting up his hand*): Taxi, taxi!

VIRGIL (*sitting down*): Virgil, at your service! Where to?

(H-2) (Virgil, imminent guide through Hell)

YOUNGSTER 2 (*sombre, pensive*): I lost my wife at 27. Bea was beautiful, you know? Pretty, dark, sweet... Now I must see my mother to the gynecologist. We'll see what he has to say. The mammography hasn't turned out right. (*Pulling himself together*). You'd better take me nowhere and everywhere at the same time. Pau Claris street with Diagonal¹. Thank you.

VIRGIL: Don't get worked up. She protects you from Heaven. Let's go for a ride on the deep wild side.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*talking to himself*): I'm sick and tired of the fucking traffic in Barcelona! (*He gets into the taxi*).*General dark.*

¹ The play takes place in Barcelona, and these are two of the main streets in the city.

SCENE 2

(H-3) (At the threshold of Hell)

White backdrop. A piano, lit by a spotlight, enters stage left while Broad Sunlit Uplands by Mike Oldfield is being played (LP the Millennium Bell, track number 8, 4:03). A gradually brighter light focuses on YOUNGSTER 2, who is sitting very still inside the taxi. He gets out and, very slowly, starts getting undressed and ends up heading for the piano to fetch a white robe which is inside it. He gets all dressed in white, barefoot. The piano suddenly starts moving stage right. He, in slow motion, carrying out ballet steps, goes after it because he loves it. He misses it. The piano turns upstage right and is now moving in the opposite direction, to the left until it disappears. He hasn't managed to reach it. He falls on his knees and hangs down his head. Dark. (NOTE: if necessary, the same instrumental music will be palyed on and on). General light. Silence. Six skin-heads wearing very tights trousers and dressed in pitch-black enter stage right. YOUNGSTER 2 is still on his knees but he raises his head and looks at them The leader skin-head makes a graffitti on the white backdrop with a black spray. Under the careful eye of his smoking gang, he underlines a text written on the wall: "Through me the way to the suffering city; through me the way to the eternal pain; through me the way that runs among the lost."² When he's done, he laughs coarsely . They exit running and shouting stage left.

THE SKIN-HEADS : Fuck the stupid, fuck the righteous, fuck the naïve. To hell with foreigners, hippies and faggots. To hell with all of them!

² In Spanish in the original Catalan text.

YOUNGSTER 2 stands up and turns around; he heads for the taxi which is upstage left. VIRGIL is sitting very still inside the car.

YOUNGSTER 2: Hey, mister, listen; you, listen...Virgil.

VIRGIL (*Coming out of the taxi*): Yes, son?

YOUNGSTER 2: The bastards! Didn't you see them? The mother fuckers! All day long fucking around people, whacking them! The sons of bitches!

VIRGIL: Oi, boy. It isn't through yet. Look down there, the yobbos are joining up a demonstration.

YOUNGSTER 2: Holy shit. They're getting closer.

Upstage right enters a line of fine neat business executives brandishing a white flag with the dove.

YOUNGSTER 2: Virgil? (*completely puzzled*) And what about the people?

VIRGIL: Well, there they are. They're politicians, you see, but... they're still persons. They look like a million dollars,... and they're all neat and tidy.

YOUNGSTER 2: And this is a demo?

VIRGIL: It's like propaganda, isn't it, boy? Oh, well, tough luck. They look like fleas. They infest everything. But it's just that... who's got the nerve to stand up for anything today? Provided we don't act, publicity will keep on killing us. Any sort of publicity. And politics, first of all.

The march elbows past the two speakers; silently, they slowly exit stage left.

YOUNGSTER 2.: Agg! Look at all them flies!

Loud racket can be heard off-stage:

BARTENDER (*off-stage*): Out you bastards! Out you pricks!³

Through the stage, from left to right, enter the skin-heads of the previous scene.

A little bit further after them runs a fat hairy-cheeked man in an apron, all shabby and hysterical.

³ The Bartender speaks in Spanish in the Catalan text.

BARTENDER (*shaking his arms on and on*): Dead! Dead! Dead! Human scum! Don't expect to see Heaven!

Far away resound the pathetic and scornful sounds of the laughter from the skin-heads. The BARTENDER disappears, VIRGIL sits down back in the taxi.

Harshly, YOUNGSTER 2 gets down on his knees. Dark very gently, allowing us to witness as YOUNGSTER 2 crawls like a worm his way out of the scene.

SCENE 3

The taxi is under a cover that reads "Fax" in very big letters; now the thing is a giant fax. All the props on stage are very light blue. A big sign informs us we are at : "ORCUS". A waiting room. A desk stage left (a telephone, paperwork, the secretary's mask...) and sitting down at it, a bespectacled secretary, her hair gelled back in a tight pony tail. Stage right, some chairs in line. Stage right enters, in a frenzy, MOTHER .

MOTHER: Miss, I think I am next.

SECRETARY: No, madam, you must wait in turn.

MOTHER (*furiously casting out of the stage the clerk's mask that was on the desk*): There's nobody waiting here!

SECRETARY: No, madam There's nobody waiting. Everybody has already got their turn ticket and we will call them in. If you are so kind to answer my questions.

MOTHER: What do I have to tell you?

SECRETARY: Calm down, madam I am just here to take down your data, not to put up with everybody's bad blood.

MOTHER: Everybody's bad blood is nothing but your fault.

SECRETARY: Excuse me, but I'm just an employee. He is in charge, not me. I simply divert. Now to this queue, now to that other one... Take it down, if you please: I simply divert.

MOTHER: Miss, tell me what I need to tell you.

SECRETARY: Name?

MOTHER: Alice.

SECRETARY: In Wonderland!

MOTHER: Damned beaurocrats, always breaking your balls! No, Miss, not “in Wonderland”. Alice “in Balls-breaking-land” at your service.

SECRETARY: My mother always tells me that my jokes are out of place and time. I’m sorry.

MOTHER: Wise woman, your mother, miss. There’s nothing like words of wisdom.

SECRETARY: Where from? Western World or Third World?

MOTHER: Does it make any difference?

SECRETARY: Don’t worry, sheer paperwork. Illnesses in the Third World are more automatic and more usual and faster. In Europe and the like, what happens is that you are more sophisticated moanies, less tolerant towards what you happen to live through or endure...

MOTHER: Miss, shall we go on? It seems in a previous life you were a poet, you waffle more than you speak.

SECRETARY: Pardon?

MOTHER: Yes, where were we?

SECRETARY (*looking through a form on her desk*): Mmm, yes, age?

MOTHER:...Fifty-two

SECRETARY: Sorry?

MOTHER: About fifty. Just write about fifty!

The phone starts ringing.

SECRETARY (*answering*): Orcus, Official Reclamation Centre of Unearthly Subjects, how can I help you... (*awaits listening*) Ahh, right, yes..., yes, sir. Tomorrow, tomorrow at eight. To you. Goodbye, have a nice day.

MOTHER: Can we finish with that form, miss?

SECRETARY: Take a seat down there at the back. I will call for you straight away.

The phone rings.

SECRETARY (*answering*): You have six appointments, sir. One of them is right here right now. (*She hangs up. Addressing the woman.*): He is just coming down from the second floor. Until later. Tell him I have just gone out for breakfast. (*She's off*).

MOTHER remains there, anxiously touching her face. Waiting. Out out anxiety she starts jumping from one chair to another, as if crossing a river on the stepping stones, each time gaining in violence. She doesn't notice the MASTER coming in.

THE MASTER (*always with a serious tone of voice*): Number 6? My apologies, I mean, Mrs. Alice?

MOTHER (*jumping off a chair and stamping her feet loudly on the floor*): You bastard.

THE MASTER: You are overexcited.

MOTHER (*straight to him and pulling him by his lapel*): Alice, in Broken-balls-land. Hysterical to the bone. At your service.

THE MASTER: You didn't find it funny, did you?

MOTHER (*letting him go and wiping her hands*): Not at all. A diagnose: "suspect zone". A consequent decision: to operate on me... Breakfast...with the "suspect zone", lunch... with the "suspect zone", tea...with the "suspect zone", have dinner with it, sleep with it, wake up, get laid, keep vigil... All day long with the fucking label on (*she hits her forehead with her fist at every word she says*): "suspect zone". It is practically a euphemism. You must probably know the truth by now, isn't that so? The ease of a euphemism.

THE MASTER (*taking a seat on the secretary's chair*): Calm down... It's as easy as can be. Everybody has got a moment in life when things fall out of place and grow irrationally. Cancer must be regarded as a normal state, not as a state of emergency. It's just natural, madam, to have your home in a mess at any old time in life. Cells fail, proteins fail, just as everything else does. And if something doesn't fail, it eventually ends up bursting to smithereens. (*Pause*). Bear in mind there is a chance it isn't like that.

MOTHER: Politics, I always take it with a pinch of salt. And your policy isn't plain to believe at all, either. ... You doctors are old foxes. Don't tell me you can't see things coming. (*Sticking her face an inch from the MASTER's*) I'd love to spend several hours insulting you.

The MOTHER heads for the chairs, pushes them about and knocks them off to the floor. She screams on and on and moves all over the stage screaming.

Knocks over the papers, knocks over everything and then leaves.

Dark.

A blinking light on.

Like a flash, the x-ray of a mamma with an affected zone is projectd, giant-size, on stage several times. Meanwhile, the noises from the city start being noticeable: car horns, traffic, ambulances, police whistles... In the end, sound of skidding and screech of braking and: dark.

SCENE 4

The light comes back on gradually. We are still at the waiting room at ORCUS. Everything is light blue. The MOTHER is at the back, propping against the wall and with a shotgun in her hands, all heedful and suspicious. She will look on the scene. The MASTER, still sitting down, opens a drawer and takes out a bunch of darts.

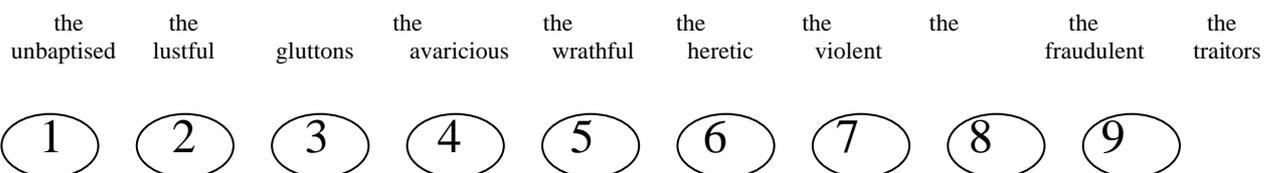
THE MASTER: Not to be looked upon as evil, “six of one and half a dozen of the other”⁴ ...*(He stands up and starts aiming darts at a target that has descended from the ceiling on one of the sides)*. Now, let’s create some positive things. ...a flirt *(aims a dart)*. Now,...*(another dart)* a three-day recovery from the flu for all those whose names begin with J. Now,... *(another dart hits the bull’s eye)*, a good long love story for those who suffer from migraines in April... *(Aiming two darts)* Two frustrated rape attempts. *(Addressing the audience)* We will resume in one hour, ladies and gentlemen! That’s all!
Dark.

SCENE 5

(H-4) (First Circle , of the Virtuous Innocent Souls that couldn’t receive baptism)

The taxi is uncovered in the semi-darkness. The magnetic backdrop consists of a huge blackboard where a scheme is being drawn (See scheme 1) by a naked woman dragging some chains. She exits. She comes back carrying a large red magnetic counter that she places on the circle labelled with number 1. She definitely exits stage right.

Stage left enters YOUNGSTER 2. (Men wearing masks and black tunics and carrying torches will be wandering in and out of the scene while YOUNGSTER 2 is speaking).



Scheme 1

* NB: the text does not need to be included and it can be replaced by illuminated words that initiate the scene in the manner of neon lights.

⁴ The Master uses here a proverb in Spanish, although the rest of his speech is in Catalan.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*sad and enraged*): Virtuous or innocent souls, you were punished just for being unbaptised. Now it's my turn, my turn, hard-working and meek, thoughtful and trustworthy, serious and kind, now it's my turn! Why my mother? Why do they have to fuck up my life...if I've never done any harm to anybody! What good gods are there still left? Christ, what's up with you? Why do you whack the good ones? What a fuck-up!

He lies down on his back center stage. After a while, the torch carriers exit. Stage right enter the skin-heads looking heedless. When they spot him, they piss on him and leave whistling, clapping hands and congratulating each other.

Dark.

SCENE 6

(H-5) (Second Circle, of the Lustful)

Stage left enters a hairy sadomasochistic guy that places the red counter on circle number 2 and exits upstage right.

*Very dim light. Upstage the taxi is barely noticeable. Two women are sitting at a round table downstage right. (*Note: this table will remain here for the rest of the play). In this scene, the tile floor under the table will be made of transparent glass with a green light shining through from underneath. (We are at Alice's). YOUNGSTER 2 is still lying in the dark.*

MOTHER: I don't know why me, Sandra. It's like fucking lottery. And he, as cynical as can be, kept on saying, "Don't worry, madam. Many people go through the same as you, they do, they did and they will in the future. It's very common in women who are passed menopause. Don't worry. We'll go by the

protocol and you will pull through. Yes, madam ...Frankly, it's a very little zone, suspect, all right, but tiny." Asshole,... Had his wife been diagnosed with it! Mr. Gynecologist's sweet little wife, then we'd see the long face on him!

SANDRA: I'm sorry, Alice.

MOTHER: And I damned well know. That our delicate little body and our delicate little heart somatically deals with everything: arguments, misunderstandings, blows, disappointments, deceit, betrayals...

SANDRA: What did they say they'll do?

MOTHER: It almost certainly is. Mammographies never lie. They're old foxes and always get it right first time. They won't remove my breast, though. One of them said that was the protocol he strictly followed with all women. Given the choice of having a ball removed or not, we'd see what the little prick would prefer! The other one, and that's the one I'm sticking with, said the breast cancer, if you undergo radiotherapy and chemotherapy, doesn't necessarily mean having your breast cut off. The point is removing the suspect zone, as they put it...Then, if it is confirmed to be cancer,they would remove the ganglia, too.

SANDRA: They operate on the breast and the armpit.

MOTHER: That's right (*Pause*). Maybe all this, Sandra, is happening to me because I used to fuck a lot when I was young and maybe my hormones got all messed up. Or maybe because I used to drink too much coffee. Or because as a child I squeezed a huge purulent spot I had on my breast. Or maybe because when when lived at the industrial estate I breathed too much dirty air. Or maybe because I carry two mobile phones with me and there may be too many waves floating over me. ...My head is bursting with frenzy. I no longer know what else to tell myself or what to make up or how to comfort myself. I no longer know if I have to cry. Or maybe not. Or send to hell the breast-cutting

doctor or the non-cutting one. Or if I have to send God to hell. Or if I have to do nothing. Or if I have to do everything.

SANDRA suddenly embraces her. Dark.

SCENE 7

Everything is in the dark, so is the taxi. YOUNGSTER 2 is still lying down.

Only the outlines of the two people talking full front can be seen.

MARTHA: Alice!

MOTHER: Martha, how are you doing, darling?

MARTHA: Honey, you look gorgeous! Is everything all right?

MOTHER: Yeah. Everything's all right. Great. Just getting by, as usual.

MARTHA: This having grown-up children really suits you right.

MOTHER: Well, it was about time, wasn't it?, after all the efforts, a little time for yourself is just fine, isn't it?

MARTHA: Yes, yes. You're dead right! Honey, what do you fancy? Some window-shopping? Do you need to buy anything or shall we go into a tearoom and have a hot chocolate with cream?

MOTHER: I'll go for the hot chocolate.

MARTHA: Honey, you look gorgeous!

MOTHER: You've already told me.

MARTHA: But you really do!

MOTHER: Fine.

MARTHA: You're up to something, aren't you, naughty girl? I can see it in you eyes!

MOTHER: It's really nothing. Mark and I may be going away for a couple of days.

MARTHA: Oh, how jealous!

MOTHER: Yes, how jealous, how jealous.

Dark.

SCENE 8

Only the taxi is lit by a single bright spotlight.

(H-6) (Third Circle, of the Gluttonous)

Stage left enters a fat woman eating profiteroles and humming some tune who will move the red counter to circle number 3 and exit upstage right.

YOUNGSTER 2 is centre stage lying on his back; he slowly gets up feeling uneasy due to the sounds of thunder and rain and the terrible barks of a vicious dog. He wanders around the stage with distrust. Exits.

SCENE 9

Empty scene. Laughing and playfully chasing each other, enter the DOCTOR and his assistant, the NURSE.

DOCTOR (*becoming serious, stern, he starts saying out loud*): “Patient checks in for exeresis of distortion zone in UCE of right mamma. After previous marking, surgical exeresis of the suspect zone is carried out under general anesthesia. Due to non-conclusive results in the preoperative pathologic study, it is decided to enlarge the margins of the section awaiting the total processing of the obtained tissue. Penrose drainage is applied. Normal apyretic postoperative period. Scarcely productive drainage.”

The DOCTOR starts undressing the NURSE, they both lie down passionately on the floor. The lights go out. When they come on again, just a thin ray of light, both of them are already naked, he on top of her, penetrating her. They both moan with pleasure. They're having a great time.

NURSE (*stuttering out of pleasure, analytically*): Life is, (*sigh, pleasure*) ...ah, ah... full of contrasts. (*Feeling really good*) Oh, oh... May... May... Maybe... Maybe we should feel guilty... We,... here, (*her mouth half open*) so well,...it feels so good! Oh, how good!

DOCTOR (*Also stuttering due to the act of pleasure*): Don't think,... Don't, Oh, baby, this is so good! Please, don't think about that. Who's to blame for the blows of life? Don't think about it. Oh, ahhh... Just let it flow, all good and bad. Oh, oh, how good, oh, oh. We... we... we couldn't do anything if we only thought of the roofs that come tumbling down. Allow some time, oh, ahh,...to silence. To the miracle of a little hap- (*a moan of pleasure*)-piness.

NURSE: Oh, oh, oh,... I'm coming. I'm coming!! Oooohh. I'm coming. I'm coming for you.

They keep on riding. The scene goes on a little longer...Dark.

SCENE 10

(H-7) (Fourth Circle, of the Avaricious and the Prodigal)

Stage left enters a man counting bank notes who will move the red counter to circle number four and exit upstage right.

The taxi is imperceptible. A couple enters.

THE AVARICIOUS: And this showy thing, what's that supposed to be? Because, of course, its only use is for people to start looking at it! How the fuck can you write in such an unserious thing! No, not that, ... well, not even as a diary!

THE PRODIGAL: Man, don't you have any sensitivity? Don't look at things so bluntly! This is indeed a notebook . And you can write in it just anything you like. And it may be serious and it may not be serious. Never mind! In a notebook you write what the fuck you want! And I'll write whatever the fuck I want!

THE AVARICIOUS: Magda! But if it's as showy as can be! Just by looking at it, you get high.

THE PRODIGAL: Well, I just felt like buying it.

THE AVARICIOUS: No. You didn't do it because of the bright colours. You wanted to boast about the brand. Because this way, in front of your friends, you'd take out an Agatha Ruiz de la Prada⁵ little notebook. And they cost a fucking fortune! It's not a notebook, it's a show-off! Couldn't you buy it in one of those all-for-a-pound shops!??

THE PRODIGAL: No. It was a treat I wanted to give myself.

THE AVARICIOUS: Bullshit. You're a posh girl, and a big show-off and a snob.

THE PRODIGAL: Go to hell.

THE AVARICIOUS: You go.

THE PRODIGAL: If you loved me, you'd know that buying it made me happy. And you'd think it's fantastic.

THE AVARICIOUS: Fantastic, come off it!

THE PRODIGAL: Why do you save so much if we'll all end up under a cypress tree.

THE AVARICIOUS: And why do you spend it all? Do you think I have a little banknotes machine at home, that just have to pull the crank handle and sit and wait for the money to come pouring down?! You damned spendthrift! When I met you, you might as well have warned me. With a little sign hanging from

you neck: “Tight in the fist and in between the knees” and I would have known what was in store for me!, eh!

THE PRODIGAL: Fucking dirty! Always so dirty!

(The sounds of thunder of scene 8 can be heard again. The couple wrap up in their coats and exit. The light moves on to the table. The green light of the tiling under the round table is now off. Three old women appear carrying magazines and crossword books in their hands, and sit at the round table.)

OLD WOMAN1: Agg! Uff!

OLD WOMAN2: What’s up, Mercè? What’s up?

OLD WOMAN1: Oh, my God. I’m choking. I think I’m going to be sick.

OLD WOMAN3: She’s going to what? Eeh?

OLD WOMAN2: That she very often feels nausea, Dora.

OLD WOMAN3: Ahh!

OLD WOMAN1: “Lagoon by a grey foul beach. It comes from a Greek word that means hatred, sadness and horror.”

OLD WOMAN3: Oh, dear, what difficult crosswords, Mercè.

OLD WOMAN1: Yes, sure, yes. The Styx. That one that always appears in old books, you know. The one of the monsters, the one in Hell.

OLD WOMAN3: Ahh!

SCENE 11

(H-8) (Fifth Circle, of the Wrathful)

The taxi remains dark. We are at the “Brotherhood Centre”. The three old women are still sitting at the round table, shuffling papers. The floor here at the centre is never green in colour. Stage left enters a very anxious man, carrying a financial newspaper, a good leather briefcase, and a laptop, who moves the red counter to circle number 5 and exits upstage right.

⁵ Agatha Ruiz de la Prada’s designs are all very ostentatious and of bright colours. A collection of stationery based on her designs has recently been launched to the market.

Enters the MAESTRO , a man dressed in a very luxurious white tunic. After him, two operators in blue overalls carrying a big red board (similar to chipwood).

THE MAESTRO: Ladies, is it all right if we leave this board here?

OLD WOMAN3: Eh?

OLD WOMAN1: Provided it doesn't fall over us, isn't it, girls?

OLD WOMAN3: Who is fooling over us? Eh?

OLD WOMAN1: Shut up, woman!

OPERATOR 1 (*To operator 2*): Hey, man, watch out, don't screw up my foot. Stop that!

OLD WOMAN2: No problem. Carry on with your work.

THE MAESTRO (*to the old women*): It'll take no mre than five minutes. (*To the operators*) Think, dear friends, that colour red means strength and blood and power. (*To the old women*) See you . (*The three of them leave*)

OLD WOMAN3: Sick you? Now? Oh, dear, just go ahead, go ahead, then. It's not good to hold it back!

YOUNGSTER 2 (*We can hear some knocking and he comes in from the right*): Hello, good afternoon. Excuse me, the Maestro, please?

OLD WOMAN1: He's just off, dear. How can I help you?

YOUNGSTER 2: My mother wishes to return him this book. If you could, please, give it back to him...

OLD WOMAN1: Sure, dear. Of course we will. Don't worry. We'll sure give it back to him, don't worry.

YOUNGSTER 2: Thank you. Thank you very much. Have a nice day.

Dark

SCENE 12

(H-9)(The appearance of the Three Furies)

We're still at the "Brotherhood Centre" The three old women are still sitting at the table shuffling papers. Three whores enter.

WHORE1: Ladies, could we sit at this table? We are so sore , ain't that right, girls?, that we'd better make a break (*the other two whores laugh*) and give our sore arses some rest.

WHORE2: Go hurry, Victor has just told me that your tea is set and ready. You just have to move your arses to the kitchen. Bread, a chocolate bar... and if you are still hungry, you can nip his...(holding the phrase and laughing at her own joke)...his tasty nuts!

The old women exit, taking the crosswords and YOUNGSTER2's book. The operators enter and remove the red board.

The stages fills up with red curtains - of different material, if you wish- that descend from the ceiling; at the same time, the light will gradually become brighter and brighter. A gentle breeze will make the curtains sway for as long as the conversation of the three whores goes on..

WHORE1(*Lighting up a cigarette*): He said he wanted to do it without a condom I told him I didn't have the time or the wish to pick up AIDS, that he could go back to his wife and let her give him a blow job. But the guy kept saying he was hooked on me, so I told him that was hitting rock bottom, that what would a whore with primary school education do with an Economics professor like him, and he answered he didn't give a fuck, that he was fed up with everything. So I told him that if he was fed up with everything, what he should do was go to a spa where he could get a mud bath, or else to Montserrat⁶, to Abad Cisneros Hotel.

WHORE2: So, what did he say?

⁶ Montserrat is a mountain in NE Spain, northwest of Barcelona, and a famous religious site where you can find a Benedictine monastery where some people like to retreat for reflection and relaxation.

WHORE1: Nothing. He smoked one of his La Paz cigars while standing. He grabbed the doorknob. Just about to leave, he turned round all of a sudden. He stared at me for a good while, in silence, and in the end he left. Closing the door without a bang, without a noise, like a gentleman.

WHORE3: How romantic!

WHORE1: How romantic, bullshit! I no longer know if they want to fuck or, once they're at it, they want to do it in a different way from how they do it with their wives.

WHORE3: Umm, (*affectionately caressing her cheek*) My Fury! (*Pause*) Why don't they have Malibú here?

WHORE1: Honey, there's something big cooking up here. In the beginning everything is rose-coloured, all this "we are all brothers and sisters and how much we love each other", and this "make love" and this "universal energy"...but then it's time to cough up! So in the end no Malibú or anything. Let's beat it, that pain, the fucking Maestro, is coming back..

THE MAESTRO (*coming in*): Will you attend the seven o'clock meeting, ladies?

WHORE1: Oh, we are so terribly sorry, Maestro, but we have to collect our children.

THE MAESTRO: All of you?

WHORE1 (*viciously*): Yeah. All of us have children. They have scored (*pretending she's shooting a ball*) and got us pregnant. We play so badly we always end up in the penalties round, Maestro!

Everybody exits.

SCENE 13

(H-10)(Sixth Circle, of the Heretic)

Upstage left, the taxi in the dark.

Dark backdrop. Stage left, crossing the scene downstage, the MAESTRO followed by about 30 people, all dressed in yellow tunics, except the MAESTRO, who's dressed in white. The last one moves the red counter to circle number 6 and they all exit upstage right.

Gradually fading to dark...

SCENE 14

(H-11)(Introduction to the Seventh Circle, of the Violent)

The taxi is in the dark, upstage left, now with a cover that transforms it in Antonio Gaudi's Sagrada Familia. Enter some hooligans carrying (and smelling of) beer; one of them moves the red counter to circle number 7 and all of them exit upstage right.

We are at the Contemporary Culture Centre of Barcelona. There's a table centre stage. A lit blackboard. Some 25-35-year-old students are sitting down in front of the teacher's table, YOUNGSTER 2. The round table stage right is in the dark, full of bags, coats, etc. on top.

YOUNGSTER 2: Hello and welcome all of you to this course. I've always been involved in the world of arts, but not strictly in the field of tuition. I'll be in charge of conducting this seminar you have decide to join, "Literature, morals and practical philosophy: strategies of life".

The first thing you must bear in mind is that writing is an exercise of imagination and constancy as well as a therapeutical wayout, a catharsis for yourself and to offer to the others. As for morals, we'll try to define them and put them into practice. As for practical philosophy, *Plato, no Prozac!* by Lou Marinoff, a doctor in Philosophy and professor at the City College in New York, must be, from today on, your bedside book. It's a 1999 book and it has

been brought out by different publishers, so it won't be difficult for you to find a copy.

I won't try to make a speech, to follow a programme in a coherent, lineal way. Each lesson will be a unique experience and a starting point for you on behalf of an anecdotal, accurate research. All this stock of knowledge (*making a gesture grouping something with his hands*) and points of view, you must structure yourselves, in your head, and make use of them when necessary to face practical as well as spiritual life. In short, each lesson will be a mystery, there will be a topic always according to our moods on that each day, especially according to mine, as I will be the one doing most of the talking. Today's topic is Canto 11 and the following from the Florentine Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy. The text dates back to the second half of the 13th century⁷, the author being born around 1265.

Dante goes on about an area in Hell made up of the condemned for violent. This would be the "Seventh Circle". The book is divided in "Cantos". Here we are at the Inferno, "Hell-Canto 11", will you please write this down in your notes as "H-11"? Dante, after speaking and visiting Hell, writes about -and goes to- "Purgatory" and finally, to Paradiso, "Heaven". Hell, Purgatory and Heaven are, thus, the three parts of the book.

(Getting closer to the blackboard and drawing a scene while speaking.)

The Seventh circle has three Rings, being the First Ring made up of the violent against others, referring both to people and their goods; in the Second Ring there were those who had been violent against themselves, both against their own bodies and their possessions, (*the light will gradually fade until it is dark; he goes on in the dark*)..., and in the Third Ring there were the violent against God, both against His person and His possessions, i.e. Nature and Society...

Dark.

The Divine Comedy			
Canto 11 and next			
The Seventh Circle “the Violent”	AGAINST OTHERS (Canto 12, First Ring)	{ people goods }	
	AGAINST THEMSELVES (Canto 13, Second Ring)	{ people goods }	
	AGAINST GOD (Canto 14, Third Ring)	{ people goods → {	nature society

Scheme drawn on the blackboard by YOUNGSTER 2

SCENE 15

(H-12) (First Ring in the Seventh Circle: the Violent Against Others)

⁷ Writer’s joke. The text was written in the 14 th century. Perhaps all the play is just a dream of the principal actor.

On the stage, only the taxi and the round table on the right, now full of rubbish bags and litter on top. Semi-darkness. A Minotaur crosses the scene running. Out of the taxi, exit VIRGIL and YOUNGSTER 2.

VIRGIL: The Centaurs, half horse, half man, were mostly the children of Ixion and the Fog, and simbolize wild lawless life. That's why they're commonly associated with violence.

YOUNGSTER 2: Why all that explanation, Virgil?

VIRGIL: Chiron, Nessus, Pholus, they're all centaurs' names.

YOUNGSTER 2: I see...

VIRGIL. From now on, centaur Nessus will be coming with us, he'll be your first guide and I will be the second in range. *(Enters a stocky, tall man all suited; his feet are like horse hooves. He places himself, in silence, beside YOUNGSTER 2).*

YOUNGSTER 2: Virgil, are you freaking out or what?

VIRGIL: You'd better keep quiet, there are lots of sons of bitches on the loose. *The three of them exit. Once again, the Minotaur crosses the stage running. Also crossing the stage, but quite chaotically, some of the characters of Picasso's Guernika. Enters and remains silent centre stage under a bright zenithal spotlight the character of Edward Munch's The Scream (with the his arms in the same position). Light slowly fading to dark.*

SCENE 16

(H-13) (Second Ring of the Seventh Circle: the Violent Against Themselves)

The taxi is in the semi-darkness. On the table stage right there are stones and flowers. The scene is full of trees. (Inside them there are people). Enter walking YOUNGSTER 2, VIRGIL and the centaur NESSUS.

VIRGIL: So you are not culé⁸ anymore... Lost interest in football, have you? Well...

YOUNGSTER 2: That's it. You see, first they got rid of Cruyff. And, man, that was a coach! I felt really sorry. Then, they brought in piggy Van Gaal. Wow, some cheeks he's got! And that was it, as bad as it could get. Quite a stupid fellow and dry to the bone, as well. And now, with Gaspart⁹ as the president, I'm going nuts. Barça used to be much more than just a football club, there was a bit of Catalan blood running through it, now... it's just a flea market. (*He kicks into a tree*).

TREE: Auch!

YOUNGSTER 2: Fuck, Virgil, this tree's just said "auch".

VIRGIL: You're delirious.

YOUNGSTER 2: What if she wants to kill herself? She should fight. (*Pause*) For herself. And for all of us who love her.

VIRGIL: She's got nothing to lose. Let her go for a winning bet.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*Fearful, miserable*): Sure. How difficult...

TREES (*All together*): She's got nothing to lose. (*They start shaking the branches-arms and end abruptly after the last word has been uttered*). Let her go for a winning bet and not be such assholes as we were, in our previous suicidal lives!

Dark.

SCENE 17

⁸ Name which are colloquially called Football Club Barcelona supporters.

⁹ Johan Cruyff played for Barça and later became the couch of the team, achieving some very good results. Van Gaal couched the team for a couple of seasons but never obtained the support of the crowd. Gaspart was vice-president for a long time and became the president when Nuñez retired after a couple of decades as the President of the Club.

(H-14) (Thrid Ring of the Seventh Circle: the Violent Against God, Nature and Society)

YOUNGSTER 2 and VIRGIL, as they follow their way, find themselves in a concentric area. From the outside to the inside: the jungle, a stone- delimited trench, and a circular zone full of (hot) sand. Noise of fire crackling, hot steam in the air. Quite a lot of naked bodies of men in masks, zombie-like, walking on the sand, suffering. One of them stands out because of his aloof manners. (Both the taxi chassis and the round table stage right are hidden under covers which go with the setting).

VIRGIL (eyeing the aloof man): What a waste of a man, this Capaneus, his pride will be the worst punishment of all. There isn't a more terrible torture than feeling anger. He, proud and enemy of the Gods, besieged the city of Thebes, and so do propaganda posters now, besieging the city and rotting the streets during the pre-electoral campaign. The city ends up filthy, all dirty. And so do the cars, besieging the streets of the metropolis empty of trees. The city turns out cold, and awful to see. *(Focusing on their way)* The outskirts of the jungle don't burn. Come with me, chap. *(Noise of water running)*. Can you hear river Phlegethon running? It still is red water, though -like the destiny for most of us.

Dark.

SCENE 18

(H-15) (Meeting with the Old Master Brunetto Latini)

We are in the same setting as in scene 17, where there are still some souls wandering. Three single spotlights, one for each character. Stage right, a

naked man in a mask. Stage left, YOUNGSTER 2 and VIRGIL. The noise of water running can still be heard.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*with surprise*): Brunetto! Brunetto Latini!

BRUNETTO (*dropping a curtsey and covering his sex*): Brunetto Latini. An orator, a poet, a philosopher and a theologian from Florence. Author of the encyclopedic book *The Treasure*. Friend of clergymen and men of letters, all of them condemned, just like myself.

YOUNGSTER 2: Shall we talk about vices.

BRUNETTO: Yes, we shall talk about vices.

Dark.

SCENE 19

The usual minimal setting (The taxi uncovered, magnetic backdrop on which the scheme is drawn). Some individuals dressed as bacteriological police start entering the stage. They will be placing big white cans in a row and, later, another group of the same kind of individuals will be placing a second row of cans on top of the first ones. This will be carried out with a lot of noise, annoying enough for the audience. A third line of cans will descend from the ceiling by means of ropes or straps, which the individuals will carefully align with the others . They all exit. They will form an improvised three-leveled screen on which a slide will be projected which will show what we call “Scientific text 2” (see). Silence.

“Histologic study. Examined piece: b. of right mamma.

Anatomicopathological report:

It is received for study right mammary tissue of 5 x 2.5 cms which presents irregular 1.5 x 1 cms fleshy zone surrounded by adipose tissue, and surgical expansion by 2 x 2 cms is carried out to the fascia.

Immersion in paraffin of representative sections and limits.

In the microscopical study and diagnose:

- infiltrating ductal carcinoma, of small cells

MOTHER (*voice off*): (*she is reading out loud an extract from "Scientific text 2"*): "In the microscopical study and diagnose:

- infiltrating ductal carcinoma, of small cells Bloom- Richardson grade I histological differentiation of the right mamma
- 1 x 1 cms size, with infiltration in the adipose tissue; without tumorous necrosis and showing moderate desmoplasia; no lymphoid reaction.
- tumorectomy carried out within usual limits, with adipose tissue, without invasion and non lymphatic."

MOTHER enters all confused, chasing some chickens out of the stage. She goes on to throwing stones against the cans while speaking, making long pauses between each word:

MOTHER: infiltrating ductal carcinoma, infiltrating ductal carcinoma, infiltrating ductal. (*Shouting the words at the audience*) A fucking cancer, to put it clearly, to make it understood.

Dark.

SCENE 20

(H-16)(Meeting with Illustrious Knights from Florence)

Complete darkness. A direct frontal spotlight goes on when GUIDOGUERRA, who is naked except for the mask he's wearing, starts speaking and which will go out as soon as he has finished his speech.

GUIDOGUERRA (*shouting at a presumed forum*): Guidoguerra would like to know if goodness and courage still reside in the city.

A direct frontal spotlight will go on when YOUNGSTER 2 speaks.

YOUNGSTER 2: Civilization? (*Answering the question, indignant at the answer*). Bullshit! No, they no longer reside in the city!

He hits the wall of cans on one side, maybe making some of them fall. Dark.

SCENE 21

(H-17)(Moving from the Seventh Circle to the Eighth Circle, with the presence of the horrible monster Geryon, the symbol of fraud)

(The light will fade from dim to very dim when YOUNGSTER 2 and VIRGIL are already hanging from the ceiling).

Two ropes go down to get YOUNGSTER 2 and VIRGIL. They will be raised and placed on top of the cans (the ropes will always be there for safety reasons). Now, on the white cans a slide of Geryon, the monster is projected: angel-like male face, the body of a snake, poisonous scorpio tail, two front

claws hairy to the armpit, the trunk covered in insignia and coats of arms, the emblem of fraud and artifice.

Enters MOTHER: she's being carried in a hospital trolley by four men dressed in white, wearing masks. They wander around the stage while the disturbed, delirious MOTHER talks.

MOTHER: Geryon, symbol of fraud, I salute you: hail! (*pause*). Fraudulent men usually disguise their nerve in the appearance of justice and humility. Bows, coats of arms, they're nothing but artifice, swindle, mirages, spells, lies, machination, obscure purposes. You, Giant, son of Chryasor and Poseidon, king of Eritrea, they will devote and altar to you in each and every city of the world: Rome, Dublin, London, Barcelona, Madrid, Oslo, Athens, Washington, Ankara, Miami... No doubt about it, your computer is the best one, and they keys you press, the usual ones. Moët Chandon, Rioja wine, Priorat wine, all the pleasures and imprints of quality are at your feet. Ave, Caesar, the wankers salute you. Amen. Ora pro nobis, tree.

Enters a FEMALE CHOIR dressed in white tunics. They will follow the hospital trolley as in a procession around the stage.

THE FEMALE CHOIR: Ora pro nobis, tree.

MOTHER: Ora pro nobis, Earth.

THE FEMALE CHOIR: Ora pro nobis, Earth.

MOTHER: Ora pro nobis, water.

THE FEMALE CHOIR: Ora pro nobis, water.

MOTHER: Ora pro nobis, air.

THE FEMALE CHOIR: Ora pro nobis, air.

MOTHER: Ora pro nobis, fire.

THE FEMALE CHOIR: Ora pro nobis, fire. (*Oracular and laconic*) May the fire created not end up burning us forever! May the fire created not end up burning us forever! May the fire created not end up burning us forever! May the fire created not end up burning us forever!

MOTHER: May the fire created not end up burning us forever!...Damn!

Dark.

SCENE 22

Everything is in the dark. Only the two silhouettes speaking downstage are visible.

MARTHA: Alice!

MOTHER: Martha, today it's sheer chance that makes us bump into each other!

MARTHA: Honey, you look good. I see you are still prettier.

MOTHER: Oh, well.

MARTHA: This little getaway with your husband suits you really well!

MOTHER: Getaway? Oh, right! Those two days away.

MARTHA: Honey, what a bad memory for things that really matter! Who knows what you were up to!

MOTHER: Who knows!

MARTHA: No matter when I see you, you never have a hair out of place!

MOTHER: One has to look after oneself.

MARTHA: How pretty you look.

MOTHER: Thank you.

MARTHA: You're up to something, aren't you, naughty girl? I can see it in your eyes! Today, as well!

MOTHER: Yes, sure. Now I'm going to Cancun. No, I'm not. Only joking.

MARTHA: Oh, how jealous!

MOTHER: Jealous, Martha?

Dark.

SCENE 23

Empty scene. Stage right, some chairs. Enter, seriously, the DOCTOR and his assistant, the NURSE. Suddenly, she slaps him across the face.

NURSE: You're a fucking bastard. You are never going to leave your wife. For you, just my pussy will do! (*showing it to the audience*). A doctor specialized in demagogy and condoms. There you go!

DOCTOR: Shut the fuck up. (*Adopting a majestic pose and facing the audience*). Readmission of the patient after diagnose confirmation of 1 cm carcinoma in right mamma, carrying out... (*he exits and enters again this time pushing MOTHER in a wheelchair; MOTHER is wearing a tropical wide-brimmed straw hat*)... carrying out a lymphoidectomy in the right axilla.

NURSE. A Penrose drainage is embedded in the lymphoidectomy.

DOCTOR (*While exiting, and pushing MOTHER's wheelchair out of the stage, who casts her hat against the NURSE*): A Penrose drainage is embedded in the lymphoidectomy.¹⁰

The NURSE remains on the stage on her own, gazing at the hat lying next to her. Light gradually fading to dark...

SCENE 24

(H-18)(Eighth Circle, of the Fraudulent; at the First Concentric Pit, of the Ruffians and Seducers, and at the Second Pit, of the Flatterers and Cortisans)

Magnetic white backdrop. Stage left enters a man in a posh mackintosh but in jail clothes under it, who will move the red counter to circle number eight and exit upstage right.

¹⁰ All the technical speech in Spanish in the Catalan original version

Stage right, some HORNED DEMONS carrying huge whips are sitting on odd chairs; while sipping on some liqueur, they laugh under their noses. Centre stage, YOUNGSTER 2.

YOUNGSTER 2: “Malebolge” i.e. damned pits. It’s a compound word: *bolgia*, bag. *Male*, damned. Such was the place where we, Virgil and I, turned up after descending from Geryon monster’s back. He, a modern poet, headed left and I went after him. To my right I could see many reasons for sympathy, new tortures, as well as new offenders; the first pit was packed with them. At the back were the sinners all naked. *(Pause and now shouting)* Because, REMEMBER, we are in Hell! *(At the uttering of the last word, the HORNED DEMONS on their seats strongly crack their whips against the floor).*
Dark.

Stage right enters VIRGIL, forcing his way through the chairs, empty of HORNED DEMONS by now. He is carrying an old torchlight. Still centre stage, you can make out YOUNGSTER 2.

VIRGIL: Goodness gracious. *(Pause)* Who suffers the most in disease, the sick one or the un-sick, who daily feels the taste of it? Who feels the most anger? Who the biggest despair? Whose pain is stronger, that of the bed-ridden patient, whose disease is hardly curable...or that of the one sitting by the bedside, the supernumeraries. The supernumeraries- that preson of your same blood or not-of-your-same-blood-but-who-suddenly-takes-on-the-role-of-an-angel. Those who flash a smile to help the sick and meanwhile feel their stomach shrink, hiding a tear behind their glance. Who suffers the most in disease? Dante, you could do with some sleep. Or else you soon won’t be able to tell day time from night time, the sleepless hours and the absence, for the sake of a comforting reconstituting stay between the sheets. You must sleep nine hours.

YOUNGSTER 2: Nine hours? Why?

VIRGIL: Ten is excellence.

YOUNGSTER 2: I don't get it.

VIRGIL: I don't get it myself either.

YOUNGSTER 2: You aren't right in the head.

VIRGIL: Neither are you.

YOUNGSTER 2: So, do you want me to sleep?

VIRGIL: Yes. A while. Give yourself some time for digestion.

YOUNGSTER 2: Do you think I'll be able to digest it?

VIRGIL: What shall I do, bite my nails?

YOUNGSTER 2: Answer me.

VIRGIL: What do you want the answer to?

YOUNGSTER 2: Answer why we have to feel pain. Answer why as a child I used to think surviving was the difficult part and why now, as an adult, I see that the real difficulty is in living with the others. Answer why we men are ever so twisted.

VIRGIL: I see, you want us to bite our nails,...both of us? Let your braincells go to sleep. Can't you feel them screeching, uncomfortable, uneasy, weary?

YOUNGSTER 2: Do you want me to sleep?

VIRGIL: Do I need to say so again?

YOUNGSTER 2 (*As trying to find a comfortable position to sleep for a while, already lying on the floor*): What is it, Virgil? What is it? What is the pain, Virgil?

VIRGIL: Maybe our last chance to learn. Before we fuck up forever.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*A little sleepy*): Do you think so?

VIRGIL: May be. Possibly.

A curtain is drawn which hides all the stage. Dark. Only the light from

VIRGIL's torchlight downstage, very close to the audience. Stage right enters a man, JASON

VIRGIL: Look who's here...

JASON: Have we been introduced?

VIRGIL: No, we haven't. We offhandedly haven't.

JASON: Then?

VIRGIL: I thought it better to greet you than lead you to think I am an utter stupid.

JASON: You are in no need of greeting me.

VIRGIL: Right, won't you be coming from any odd street in New York?...or not necessarily so far, from any European city? Today we aren't greeting. You live in complete harmony with the environment.

JASON: I don't live in the present. Don't you remember we are at Hell,... out of time?

VIRGIL: Oh, yeah, right. Everybody lives their own Hell.

JASON: Jason.

VIRGIL: You stole the Golden Fleece from Colquis.

JASON: I see you know me...

VIRGIL: You are in every mythology encyclopedia! Even in the cheapest ones. You are one of those who are never left out. But from here on, we are quite unacquainted with your story. We don't even know the meaning of "fleece"... Latin or Greek are not taught at school anymore, you see?... and it's also quite hard to find classical languages translators!

JASON: And what about the Moon?

VIRGIL: It seems we haven't got there yet. Or maybe we have, if we are to believe all the reports of the events dated from 1969. Just think that today we no longer know if a fact is true because there is a photo of it... or false...because there is a photo of it! (*historic narrator*) Every week new photos come out.

JASON: Photos of ...?

VIRGIL: They're called "magazines". We are fed photos. In the old times, there was a town crier in the town square. Nowadays, we have lots of photos, very few words and the least body contact. Now, don't get me wrong, it's nothing to do with sex, but with being afraid of people. So, every day we leave the house less and less often. I'm talking about the customs of our peoples in the year 2002¹¹ after Christ.

JASON: I, I...*(he becomes nervous while looking for some interesting argument)* I am a descendant of Aeolus. My mother is said to have been Alcimede...

VIRGIL: Blah, blah, blah and blah, blah, blah... and on the sixth day you turned up in front of Pelias and demanded him the power that was legally yours. And then Pelias asked you to bring him the skin of the ram that had carried Phrixus through the air. It was a golden fleece guarded by a dragon. And you managed to return from Colquis with the golden skin... and you married Medea. And, already living in the city of Corinth, you got bored with her after ten years of marriage... There's a lot we know about you!

JASON *(in an exercise of self-confession)*: I cheated on her.

VIRGIL: Wrong doing, you bastard. You must know how to handle good things.

Dark.

SCENE 25

¹¹ Writer's joke. In the page 48 (scene 28) a character says that all happens in the year 2001. Perhaps all the play is just a dream of the principal actor.

Empty scene. A slides projector there, somewhere on the stage. Stage right MOTHER on a swing. She keeps swinging. Stage left, upstanding, the NURSE, wearing the hat from scene 23.

NURSE: On ets? Ooon-eeets...

MOTHER (*translating for the audience*): “Where are you?”

NURSE: On sóc? Oooon- sooóc...

MOTHER (*translating for the audience*): “Where am I?” Apart from simultaneously translating from her pig Catalan, the questions are altogether quite interesting. The place, the location, the last one, the next one, the right one, the one we’d like, the one we’re up to. How important location can be. L-O-C-A-T-I-O-N. How terribly out of place we feel sometimes...

NURSE (*turning on the projector while mother keeps on swinging*): Will you tell me where fucking Cancun is? It’s in all travel agencies shop windows and it’s where all the just married couples go and I have no idea where the so fucking famous city is! Me too, I have to get there. If everybody does, I am also entitled to go. I’m also entitled to take the fucking plane that takes you to the fucking city of Cancun!

MOTHER stands up. On her way to the slides projector, she grimaces in pain due to her right armpit, where she places her hand. When she’s near the NURSE, she presses a button on the machine and we can see a slide of map of Cancun and its surroundings.

MOTHER: Cancun!

NURSE (*knowing for sure she’ll never get there, with desire and admiration*): Cancun...

MOTHER: Why Cancun, miss?

The NURSE is sad, silent and tense.

MOTHER: How do you travel, normally? (*Pause*) How do you travel back home?

NURSE: By underground.

MOTHER: Look around in the underground. Nobody needs to go to Cancun. But quit that married man. He's already been cheating on you for too long, miss. Too many false promises.

The NURSE removes her hat calmly. She places it in front of her, covering her pubes.

NURSE: There's so much hypocrisy in the world, isn't that right?

MOTHER *(smiling, sure of it)*: Right it is.

MOTHER gets her hand near the hat the NURSE is holding. Both of them together make a slow movement to lift and fling the hat away...

NURSE AND MOTHER *(while flinging it)*: To Hell!

NURSE: To Hell!

Dark.

SCENE 26

(H-19) (Third Pit of the Eighth Circle, of the Simonists)

Stage left, the taxi in the dark.

Medium light. Crosses the scene the MAESTRO followed by two men, dressed in yellow tunics.

They reach the table stage right and sit down:

THE MAESTRO: How much did he pay?

ASSOCIATE 1: All the monthly payment.

THE MAESTRO: He said he'd give more.

ASSOCIATE 1: He says things are not going well.

THE MAESTRO: What do I care! What do we care!

ASSOCIATE 1: What shall we tell him?

THE MAESTRO: Bring him to me. I'll make him see things as they really are.

ASSOCIATE 1: He'll be in your office at four. That's clear.

ASSOCIATE 2: Crystal clear. (*Patriotically, standing up*)... Gold and silver for the Maestro, for the cause, for salvation!

ASSOCIATE 1: Shut up, asshole! (*He sits him down very abruptly*).

Dark.

SCENE 27

(H-20)(Fourth Pit in the Eighth Circle, of the Diviners)

Stage left, the taxi in the dark, now under a cover that has turned it into Antonio Gaudi's Sacred Family church.

We are at Barcelona Contemporary Culture Centre. Centre stage, a table. A lit blackboard. Some 25-35-year-old students are sitting in front of the teacher's table, YOUNGSTER 2. Stage right, the round table is in the dark, full of bags, coats, etc.

YOUNGSTER 2: Start looking for *No logo*, by Klein¹². We'll be working on it in a fortnight. Not next week, because I'll be away. Thank you.

VOICE OFF (THE RADIO): "Finally, the politician has promised to eradicate the problem of drugs in the district. That, as well as increasing the presence of police, some grounds for the hygienic attention of drug addicts will be set up. He has also mentioned that he will improve the street lighting in the area, by installing new street lamps of expansible multiform light. When asked by a listener about the type of light, Mr Barrera referred to European directives." *He turns off the radio and answers the mobile phone.*

¹² Naomi Klein, a North-American journalist, wrote *No logo*, criticising globalisation, capitalism and large companies. One of the accusations she insisted upon the most was the appalling conditions in the factories of poor countries which work for large multinational companies. (An article on Klein appeared in the newspaper *El Pais*, weekly supplement num 1299, Sunday 19th August 2001)

YOUNGSTER 2: Hi, Joan. You're lucky to find me here, in Barcelona. I'm going away. I'm going to attend the presentation of Mira's new translation into Catalan of The Divine Comedy. (...) In Valencia, on Monday¹³. (...) Yes, nothing, just a few days. Just for work. (...) I see you are keeping up with the news... Yes, but it isn't Tàpies, it's Miquel Barceló.¹⁴ He'll be doing the illustrations. Yes, yes, you are right there: based on the other version, Sagarra's. (...) Yes, a de luxe edition. Sorry?... Oh, you brute! (...) Forget about luxury and whores! (...) Do you think so?... In fashion? No, not the Divine Comedy, no. Maybe it's Hell that's in fashion. You see how things are. (...) sure, yeah. Yes, much better. When I'm back. My regards to you. And to María José, as well.

Dark

SCENE 28

Alice's house. The taxi and the table are in the dark. Dining-room. The floor is green in colour (as in the scene conversation Mother-Sandra, Scene 6). Stage left, a chest of drawers and a pendulum clock. Nearly centre stage, a television set and an armchair for one person where MOTHER is sitting down watching a dance solo.

YOUNGSTER 2: Mum, what on Earth are you doing?

MOTHER: I'm dancing.

¹³ On Monday 4th December 2000, the writer V. Villatoro presented the new translation into Catalan of Dante's The Divine Comedy, whose author is Joan Francesc Mira, a writer, philologist, antropologist and Greek professor at the University of Castellón. It took place at 19.30 in the evening in the main lecture theatre of the Valencia University. The new version was polemic for using different criteria to the ones used by Josep Maria de Sagarra, whose version is widely known and read. Mira received the Gold Medal of the city of Florence for this translation (Edicions Proa) from the hands of the town mayor, Leonardo Domenici, at the Vecchio Palace. This was the third award Mira received for his translation, having been previously awarded with the Critics Award of the Institut Interuniversitari of Valencian Philology and the Critics Award of the magazine Serra d'Or.

¹⁴ The Majorcan painter Miquel Barceló was asked to do about a hundred illustrations, watercolours, for the de luxe edition of the Divine Comedy for J.M. Sagarra's version. It was a project of Circulo de Lectores, which

YOUNGSTER 2: The dancer is dancing, mum. Hey! Are you listening to me?

MOTHER: I'm daaaaancing.

YOUNGSTER 2: Mo-ther!

MOTHER: I'm dancing. Shut up!

YOUNGSTER 2: What's this you are watching?

MOTHER: The Awards Ceremony of the Max prizes for the Performing Arts.

This 2001¹⁵ was the turn of the city of Bilbao to hold the event, at the Arriaga theatre. I recorded it on Monday evening, the 23rd of April, (*suddenly exaggerated and childish*)...St.George's Day!¹⁶ The day of love, of roses, of books! (*She speaks dryly again*) There was a performance between each award.

YOUNGSTER 2: Now, that's much better. Now you are talking sense. So, who's dancing, mother?

MOTHER: I am.

YOUNGSTER 2: Mother!

MOTHER: Marta Carrasco. Shade of white. An homage to Camille Claudel.

YOUNGSTER 2: Mother...(Pause. Changing the topic of conversation:) is there any soda water left, you know?

MOTHER: Dancing. I am dancing. Don't disturb me, please. (*Shaking her hands in a frenzy*) I've been telling you to for quite a while now!

YOUNGSTER 2 wants to turn off the television. He thinks twice. Exits the scene.

MOTHER (*addressing the television*): Yes, pain. Yes, yes. I can see how you feel it. Yes, pain... Colours, I can't touch them. You can find all colours in the world. Yes, blue, green, orange, yellow, lots of colours, textures...But, on the

wanted to celebrate their 40th anniversary. So was reported in the Catalan newspaper *Avui*, on Saturday 29 September 2001.

¹⁵ Writer's joke. In the page 43 (scene 24) a character says that all happens in the year 2002. Perhaps all the play is just a dream of the principal actor.

¹⁶ On 23rd April, St George's Day, coinciding with the commemoration of the deaths of two great writers, Miguel de Cervantes and William Shakespeare, it's traditional in Catalunya to celebrate the day of love and books, in which girls buy books for their boyfriends and boys roses for their girlfriends.

other side. On the other side. On the other side!...They fly away, like the wind, they fly away!...I want to suck life up, but I can only choke on it. Every creative process involves pain, Camille. Every destructive process involves pain, as well, Camille. *(Pause)* Air! I'm choking! Don't! Don't! Don't you choke!: I'll choke for the sake of both of us! Colours, light, air... never let me. Never let me...go.

She hangs down her head. The ticking by of a pendulum clock can be heard out loud for about 15 seconds. MOTHER is standing very still right in front of the television. A giant black cylinder descends from the ceiling hiding her from the audience. Enters YOUNGSTER 2 with a plastic bag and two bottles of soda water. He leaves the bag on the floor. He takes a pyjamas out of the chest of drawers. He puts it on. He doesn't bother folding the clothes he has taken off. He leans against the cylinder and ends up half asleep, in a foetal position. Semi-darkness. Pause. The sound of the television is dying out. You can see the cylinder rising . MOTHER still has the television on, now without any picture on it. She turns it off. She goes to sleep, in the same clothes she's wearing, right next to her son. Dark.

MOTHER *(Voice off; meanwhile, a direct spotlight on MOTHER, which will go off abruptly when she has finished her speech)*: Camille, Martha, I've already seen you at least about twenty times. This dance of pain and anguish. A shared dance, in the end. "Suspicious zone", "removed zone", "confirmed zone",... and now what?...now what? ...I shall live? *(long pause, she comes out of her comtemplative spell)*...I have a headache. I'm fed up with so much sorrow. Let's call it a day.

SCENE 29

Same setting as in the previous scene, where the characters are still sleeping. Gradually, the HORNED DEMONS fill up the stage. Just then, The song “En Aranjuez con tu amor” starts playing, it’s the version sung by Sònia Terol (6:23) (Sony Music, 1999). The HORNED DEMONS start dancing slowly, majestically, hard, spasmodically. After a while, enter SMILING WHITE ANGELS who, adorning the HORNED DEMONS, will transform them into static red roses. In the end, the result will be a garden of red plants, just when the song finishes. All the SMILING WHITE ANGELS will exit together, as a military battalion marching.

Dark.

SCENE 30

(H-21) (Fifth enclosure of the Eighth Circle, of those who traffic with Justice)

Empty stage. Enters the DOCTOR. Centre stage.

DOCTOR *(to the audience)* “Material: axillary lymphatic ganglia: Macroscopic description: several samples of fibro-adipose tissue which, on the whole, are 7 x 6 x 1.5 centimetres. In the section, six nodular formations can be identified, being the largest 1.5 centimetres of maximum axis.”

Enters the NURSE and remains stage right.

NURSE: “Microscopic description: It is confirmed the existence of six lymphatic gangliar formations, which evidence a moderate reactive sinusoidal histiocyte, which becomes more evident in those lymphatic ganglia of a bigger

size. These changes appear together with some degree of reactive hyperplasia of lymphoid germinative centres. No further alterations have been observed.”

DOCTOR (*to the audience*): “Diagnose: sinusoidal histiocyte and unspecified reactive lymphoid hyperplasia in six axillary lymphatic ganglia. No evidence of further alterations. Absence of malignancy.”

The NURSE exits. The DOCTOR remains standing thoughtfully. Stage right enter the HORNED DEMONS from scenes 24 and 30, now carrying harpoons with them. They point them at the doctor and chase him out. Dark.

SCENE 31 (Delirious monologue of the boiling tar)

(H-22) (Continuation of the Fifth Pit in the Eighth Circle)

Empty scene. YOUNGSTER 2 is half drunk, downcast.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*Roaring*): Graffiacane, Ciriatto!! Come here, man! We’ll have a good time! You’ll see a hell of a beating! (*He knocks back his bottle and keeps on calling for people who never turn up*) Barbariccia, Draghignazzo, Farfarello! Where are you, fucking demons! Aren’t you up for some fun,...for some fucking great fun? (*He falls to the floor, gets up again: now trying to speak out to the audience*) What the fuck are the fucking ganglia? You see, I never paid no attention to fuuuucking ganglia. I would have fucked a cow, to forget my fucking sorrow, run away to the countryside, to a meadow. To the fucking Pyrenees!... Miserable! No, much better a hot chick, one of those expensive whores Joan was telling me about. (*Pause*) I’m rotten to the bone with anxiety! Rotten as if somebody had spilt filthy, slimy, dirty black tar all

over my body! Tar that makes me dirty and burns me down (*he pretends he is dusting his clothes with disgust*). I've bitten the inside of my lips so many nights! (*Pause*) ... G-A-N-G-L-I-A! They are collections of cells half way through a lymphatic vessel or a nerve. (*He feels several parts of his body: armpit, neck, breastbone, pelvis...*) Here, here, here, here. it's full of them. (*Laughing*) As if they were sockets in a house, all over the place! Their length ranges from one to 20 millimetres. (*Gradually opening his arms until they are perfectly perpendicular to his chest*) "Lymphatic ganglia have a haematopoietic, phagocytic, haemolytic function". Fair enough! Fuck knows what they're saying!

Enters in a hurry the NURSE, in a wedding dress of shiny white.

NURSE (*Explaining, while YOUNGSTER 2, astonished and thick, stares at her*): Haematopoiesis is the process of formation, maturation and release into the blood of every blood cell. Phagocytosis is about the capacity of destruction. And haemolysis refers to haemoglobin, the ferroproteins which transport oxygen to the cells. Say thank you from me to your mother. She was as right as can be!

The NURSE exits quickly.

YOUNGSTER 2 (*moaning*) Let me be, man, let me be! Ignore me and my twaddle! All my learned words! (*With convulsive laughter, losing balance, tired, maybe stuttering at times*)...The doctor just told us not too long ago... That they aren't. That, thank God, they aren't affected. Clean ga-ga-ga, gang,...ganglia! (*Laughter, crying...*)

Stage right to upstage left enter running the HORNED DEMONS, who, holding up their arms, carry a large red curtain which will cover both YOUNGSTER 2 and the whole stage. A wind coming from beneath will blow up the curtain and make it move like the waves of the sea.

Dark.

SCENE 32

(H-23)(Sixth Pit of the Eighth Circle, of the Hypocrites)

Under the large curtain from the previous scene, a huge cross is rising from the floor to an upright position; because of the curtain, what can be seen is an enormous crucifixion shape under a red cover. Apart from this, there are only a few chairs scattered on the stage. Enter four women with made-up faces (like geisha or clowns or dolls). Enters, later, MOTHER.

FRIEND ?1: Alice, I'm terribly worried about your diagnose. About this ugly thing they say you have. Whatever you need, just ask, you know that. Just remember that I'll be away on holidays for two months. Anything, you know, whatever it is, even if you want me to send my Philippine maid to help you out with the cleaning, so you won't get tired. But all this in a couple of months. Due to my stress, the doctor has recommended me to go on a little trip!

FRIEND ?2: You'll pull through for sure, darling. My auntie didn't because she was a little, a little bit, younger than you. But again, she won't be better anywhere else than in the cemetery, nice and quiet. She was always causing trouble between me and Lluís. We would always end up quarrelling because of her!

FRIEND ?3: I've brought you a self-help book. It will do you good. Don't worry, I won't tell anybody. But I'm superhappy because today we're meeting Carlota and Mamen at the tea room. Today, this afternoon. How dreadful to have a boring life! Not my case, anyway!

FRIEND ?4: Alice, honey. This afternoon I'll come over to you house and we'll spend some time watching the telly. We won't get worked up about

anything. If you like, we might have a white coffee half way through the afternoon. For supper, let the kids get their own way and order some pizzas!

MOTHER (*while walking towards FRIEND ?4*): Hypocrites, under the beautiful colours of virtues, they hide their own vices, all their rubbish. (*While cleaning FRIEND ?4's face, removing her make-up, speaking very slowly*): yes, Maria. I really fancy you coming over this afternoon. Five months is a long time without seeing your friends. I'll put you up to date about what Marc and I have been doing lately,... about some silly thing my children have done, about the fright the cat gave us when she got lost, about the supper we did to celebrate Sonia's graduation,... about...

Light gradually fading to dark.

SCENE 33 (Monologue of the pain and the evidence)

Complete darkness. Mother centre stage. A single spot light. A plant in a noble flowerpot.

MOTHER: You learn that living free of disease is a privilege. People just don't value what it's like to be able to leave the house every day to get the bread on your two legs. Counting on two eyes, two ears, two hands. We aren't aware of physical integrity because we are used to it. What is habitual is turned into indifference towards the custom. Whereas, "habitual" is really nothing but that which is so close to us that won't ever do us any harm. Habitual means closeness and closeness leads to affection. Thus, big newspapers, both national and local, should be provided with a special section reminding us humans of the importance of everyday things, with their naiveté, their innocence, their lack of malice, their companionship. (*She goes to get herself a hot drink, better coffee, and while holding the cup with both her hands, she goes on speaking*) And then, when the cold has settled in, this warm cup. The same feeling as having found your cup of tea in life. It's all this warm energy that tucks me in

between the bedsheets and pillows of life. Because I long to see my children grow even older and because I'm dying to go for walks with Marc when we are well into our old age. Because I want a Pretty-Woman- like poster for the film of my life, with me smiling in Marc's arms in the middle of nowhere. There are still many coffees to share. Waiting to be drunk... and nobody is going to take them away from me. So, Lord, you'd better not have put this crap in my breast. Such things aren't necessary. If you wanted me to learn to appreciate life's temperatures better, you have certainly achieved your goal. Like plants in the sun, pulling inches every day! (*Determined*) I'm not leaving yet. I'm starting to learn the lesson.

Dark.

The light goes on again. She's still in the same place.

MOTHER: In this chess game, I don't know the rules. I don't know where or in which direction to move the rook. I may be better off just shooting it down, but then again, no. That'd be anger. Have You, Lord, created disease for us to see the certainties and the mistakes? Will disease be the only way of stopping the human race, ambitious and technology mad as we are? I'm not technology mad at all...(*She thinks for a while*) Am I technology mad for watching TV in the evening?... It's true I did do much talking. Maybe we thought that seeing each other around in the house, in the corridors, in the kitchen just would do, words were no longer needed. What shall I make out from this? That our loved ones are the people we know the least? About my mother, what do I know: not much... About my grandmother...I know nothing... only that as a young woman she lost a boyfriend in the 1936 Spanish Civil War and that the kids went crazy about her toast with chocolate spread. That she has always looked after my children impeccably. That she is tidy and never uses new presents.(*Pause*) And what about Sonia. What does she have to say about Marc: "father works too much". That she's hardly ever in the house and that

when she's there it doesn't make such a difference. I couldn't write a book about family life. Will it then be true that disease is, by all means, the system of purgation and atonement for the terribly lost souls? (*Feeling and looking at the leaves of the plant*) I'll get you some fertilizer.

The song Good Things (Angels Running) (4:33) by Patty Larkin (LP In Search Of Angels, Windham Hills Records, 1994) starts playing. MOTHER puts the fertilizer on the plant. Exits. Enters back with a little pot full of water. Waters the plant. She exits and enters again and again, every time bringing in a new plant. The stage becomes full of them, beautiful, suggestive, pretty plants. In a second coming and going, she'll be carrying tiny little plants, one at a time, and placing them in the hands of members of the audience. While offering the plants to the audience, enter the scene SMILING WHITE ANGELS, who, full of joy and hope, start clearing the scene of plants, removing them from the stage. When the SMILING WHITE ANGELS have left the stage empty of plants, MOTHER finishes off the offering of tiny little plants to the audience (If this can match the end of the song, much better). Dark.

SCENE 34

(H-24)(Seventh Pit of the Eighth Circle, of the Thieves)

At the Brotherhood Centre. The MAESTRO is sitting at the round table with the three old women from scene 10. Some magazines are on the table. It's getting dark. The backdrop consists of snakes that weave shifting focuses.

THE MAESTRO: Ladies, I don't mean to work you up, but we need to have a word with you. With your donations...

OLD WOMAN2: Pensions...

THE MAESTRO: There's not much we can do with the money you put into. There is a bigger responsibility, a broader scope to act in, too many unprotected people, in need of us...

OLD WOMAN 3: I'm nearly sleeping like a log... I can't make out what the Maestro is going on about...*(Trying to read a crossword)* "Precious stone, a variety of green quartz with red spots, which is said to have ...the virtue ...of ... making things invisible...*(yawns)*...

OLD WOMAN1: Heliotrope.

OLD WOMAN 2: Now isn't the time to fall asleep. Or to do crosswords.

THE MAESTRO: We reckon further donations will be necessary.

OLD WOMAN 2: I reckon he's asking for our bank account numbers.

THE MAESTRO: No need for such a fuss, my darling.

OLD WOMAN 1: And what if we don't agree to do so?

THE MAESTRO: We certainly won't get mad at anything... There may be some prayers you won't be able to attend, though. But that won't make you a worse person...I suppose. But if that blind man from Canuda street comes around, we'll let him know we are out of cash...

SCENE 35

(H-25)(Continuation of the Seventh Pit in the Eighth Circle)

Enter walking, a little bit upset, breathless.

VIRGIL: That monster was Ciacco.

YOUNGSTER 2: What a revolting dragon!

VIRGIL: Ciacco stole the cows Hercules used to take grazing to the Aventine. He realized because the cows were mooing in terror. And thus he was killed.

YOUNGSTER 2: ...The serpent has devoured Agnolo Brunelleschi...

VIRGIL: Horrible.

YOUNGSTER 2: I don't think I'll ever forget it. It's the same as when the camping site Los Alfaques was burnt down. I was just a little boy and on the

telly you could see piles of charred bodies. He looked so pathetic clinging to my neck. That was none of my business at all.

VIRGIL: A request for mercy, maybe.

YOUNGSTER 2: Maybe just the wish to be God and rewind. (*Pause*). The doctor has prescribed my mother a five-year hormonal treatment. It is a really expensive medicine, but the National Health Service is paying for it. Will I have to become a social being, then, Virgil? Do I owe one to the State, Virgil? Mercy maybe, from the Government.

They stop due to the appearance of some large embers.

SCENE 36

(H-26)(Eighth Pit in the Eighth Circle, of the Evil Consellers)

Half the stage is taken by flames (the projection of a burning fire).

VIRGIL: In the fire the spirits are burning. In the fire are being tortured the Greeks Ulysses and Diomed. The wooden horse, concealing warriors in its inside, which Ulysses sneaked into the besieged Troy, was the cause of great loss, the ruin of the city.

YOUNGSTER 2: I don't think anybody should be entitled to victory when the loss is too big to be measured.

VIRGIL: Do you mean by this that you are against wars?

YOUNGSTER 2: I mean that when I am hurt, not knowing how to respond throws me into confusion. Because other that respond with a good beating, what else can you do so as to be heard? Talking? And then what if you end up talking so much that you don't do anything, that you just waste your time? It was too easy being a child and living only waiting for the dinner porridge! And then falling asleep under your mother's smile.

VIRGIL: So what about the American slapping on the Aghan people after the 11-S terrorist attack? what about it, then?¹⁷

YOUNGSTER 2: The worst thing a sane man has to confront is his own act of loud revenge.

(H-27)(Continuation of the Eighth Pit of the Eighth Circle; Count Montefeltro)

Some cries of pain can be heard among the fire crackling.i

YOUNGSTER 2: My Goodness, these people must be in real pain...

VOICE OFF (*Male, in pain*): That hurts, bloody flames...

VIRGIL: Count Guido. Of Montefeltro.

Dark.

SCENE 37

(H-28)(Ninth Pit in the Eighth Circle, of the Sowers of Scandal, Schism and Heresy)

White light. A HORNED DEMON is sharpening his sword. Enter HORNED DEMONS who will cross the stage leaving mannequins on the stage behind them. Each of them will be pushing a mannequin on wheels whose heads consist of a big rectangular piece of paper on which there is the colour photograph of a famous person (contemporaneous with the moment of the acting out of the play) who has been involved in some kind of public scandal. (In the end there will be a total of about fifteen mannequins on the stage). Red light. The music of "Oh, fortuna" by Carmina Burana starts playing. The HORNED DEMON starts beating up, attacking, stabbing with a knife each of the mannequins, leaving all their faces completely destroyed.

¹⁷ Reference to the Islamic terrorist attack against the World Trade Centre twin towers in New York on 11th September 2001. Two planes crashed against them, one into each of the towers.

SCENE 38

(H-29)(Tenth and Last Pit in the Eighth Circle, of the Charlatans and Falsifiers)

Crossing the scene some HORNED DEMONS dragging a row of chairs on which are sitting down several naked men in masks, some of them are carrying megaphones.

The music and the red light sharply come to an end. Dark.

SCENE 39

(H-30) (Continuation of the Tenth and Last Pit in the Eighth Circle, the Falsifiers)

Empty scene; silent performance. Enters MOTHER dragging a row of chairs on which are sitting down FRIEND 1?, FRIEND 2? and FRIEND 3?. She will slowly undress them, one by one, in order, and once naked, she will place a mask, which she will take out of her pocket, on their faces. Once she's through with this, she exits dragging now a row of chairs with naked women on them.

SCENE 40

(H-31)(Ninth and Last Circle, of the Traitors; it is divided in four Rings)

Empty scene. A man is waiting. Stage left enters another man, who witnesses how the first man makes him trip. The second man exits in a huff. The first man moves the red counter to circle number 9 and exits upstage right.

Enter MOTHER and MARK, whose arm is around her shoulders.

MARK (tenderly): So, where would you like to dine?

MOTHER(*flirtatiously*): How do you know I'd like to dine?

MARK: A company like mine demands an excellent dinner.

MOTHER(*amused*): You're so vain... So, how about it, then... What can you offer me, for dinner?

MARK: Avocados on roquefort sauce, smoked salmon, a salad,...I don't know, whatever suits you.

MOTHER: There may be something missing on that menu.

MARK: Oh, really?

MOTHER: Your embrace. (*She gently places a kiss on his lips*)

MARK: Did you tell God you had pulled through?

MOTHER: I did not. But I reckon he must know quite well by now.

MARK pulls her close and holds her as tight as he can. Dark.

SCENE 41

(H-32)(Ninth Circle, First Ring, the Caina, of Fratricidal Cain; Second Ring, the Antenora, of the Traitors to their Country)

Sunset. Light. The taxi is uncovered. VIRGIL and YOUNGSTER 2 come out of the taxi.

YOUNGSTER 2: You could do with a more comfortable car to be a taxi driver!

VIRGIL: You haven't been in it that long either!

YOUNGSTER 2: That is for me to know and you to wonder! And all this filthy city smog, and noise. And rubbish. And disposed cartons. And stinky bottles and wrappers! And rubbish tips that will not close or open properly.

VIRGIL: Damn, boy. You are really one for giving out.

YOUNGSTER 2: And pedestrians, who will step on your feet in their hurry. On the same pavement as you, just a step from you, but pushing about with their stinky sweaty armpits.

VIRGIL: Are you having your period or what?

YOUNGSTER 2: And then, what's even worse: the betrayal. Your brother's betrayal when there's something to be inherited. ...Some Cain-like act.

(H-33)(Third Ring in the Ninth Circle, the Ptolomaea, of the Traitors to their Friends and Guests)

YOUNGSTER 2 moves around the stage stretching his limbs.

YOUNGSTER 2: Of the friends who don't call you up any more. Who will ask you for money and never pay it back. Of your own body which will torture you with disease if it sees it fit.

Enters THE BLIND MAN FROM CANUDA STREET.

YOUNGSTER 2: Good afternoon, Miguel.

THE BLINDMAN: Real good.

YOUNGSTER 2: Have you dined yet?

THE BLINDMAN: There's nothing to choose from.

YOUNGSTER 2: You are sure to get some bite at the Brotherhood Centre.

THE BLINDMAN: A bite on the ear, that's what I'd get. The bastard who runs it stated it quite clearly.

YOUNGSTER 2: Is that so?

THE BLINDMAN: I would have died ages ago. I'm lucky this is a pedestrian area and there are always people buzzing about. Mind you, the Rumanians are quite burnt out and they don't leave much. I don't get it, all this crap of begging and doing nothing when you are still young and able.

VIRGIL: Shall I drive you to the place where you sleep? I've finished my shift.

THE BLINDMAN: Fair enough.¹⁸

Dark.

SCENE 42

(H-34)(Fourth Ring in the Ninth Circle, the Judecca, of the Traitors to their Lords and Benefactors)

Centre stage, sitting down on his own, facing the audience, the MAESTRO.

THE MAESTRO: The end of the world is near. We will be just fine in the hut. There is plenty of food and medicine. Although it is not for us to use but for those who know how to endure illness. I will look after you. I am God, your God as well as the others', even if you don't like it much. You may be good but one thing you must have clear in your head, I am better. Get rid of your kin and your possessions. Give yourself in as a whole. In exchange, I offer you a world free of pain. Without pain, your life will be different. Perhaps it may be a curious latency.

Light gradually fading to dark

SCENE 43 (the last one)

The stage is hidden behind drawn curtains. Twilight. Downstage VIRGIL, really close to the audience, sitting down, his legs hanging on the edge of stage. Murmur of seawaves. Some shouting starts ("Yes. That's it. Leave them round here. Shit, this one is quite heavy...") and the sound of a helicopter can also be heard. VIRGIL turns around. The curtain slowly opens. Upstage, several CIVIL GUARDS¹⁹ and five bodies lying on the ground belonging to five

¹⁸All the conversation with the Blindman as well as the Maestro's monologue are in Spanish in the first Catalan original version.

¹⁹The Civil Guards (Guardia civil) is a protection body similar to the police who are in charge of traffic and more serious matters than the local police, such as crimes, terrorists attacks, immigration...

Maghrebi immigrants. A LITTLE GIRL walking around the scene. VIRGIL stands up and heads for the police officers.

The LITTLE GIRL starts hopping between the legs of the lying bodies.

GUARD 1: Honey, knock it off!

THE LITTLE GIRL: But I'm bored, dad!

GUARD: Damn it! I don't know why your mother wouldn't leave you with your grandma today!

The LITTLE GIRL goes on having a great time skipping about...

GUARD 2: Watch it, don't you trip over anything, honey! You may twist your ankle!

VIRGIL: I don't think... I don't think what the little girl is doing is right.

GUARD 1: Fuck that! My girl will do what she fucking wants to do.

VIRGIL: Are they dead?

GUARD 1: You fucking bet they are! Full of water!

VIRGIL: And what about the mourning?

GUARD 2: Not even their mother would recognise the sons of bitches!... They are just...*(looking for the right word)* clothes!

VIRGIL: Officer, the girl should learn from this...

GUARD 1: Listen, man, don't be poking your nose where you are not needed. Fucking nose-poker. What the fuck are you doing in a desert beach like this, anyway?

VIRGIL: Too many people arrive in Spain on a raft...My goodness!

GUARD 2: Listen, just let us do our job.

GUARD 3: Will you please, sir. Let us do our job and beat it. Take a walk along the beach, it's large enough for all us... Don't hinder the work of the authority...

VIRGIL: Will they be returned to their country?...There si probably somebody to cry over them...

GUARD 3: What a pain!... Nobody claims for rabble like this,... mister
“Hare-Krisma”! What can I say? (*pause*)...what can I say?...Don’t worry.
(*Raising his arm*)...And get the hell out of here.

VIRGIL: Of sons of bitches the world has a plenty.²⁰

Dark.

THE END

NOTES

- The taxi (which appears at the end of scene 1), the round table (which appears in scene 4) will sometimes be elements in disguise. When noted down as “empty scene”, neither of them will be present.
- From scene 2 on, YOUNGSTER 2 will always be dressed in white.
- It would be better if the masks worn by the characters in the oneiric passages were made of papier mache and covering only the upper part of the face (face-forehead), leaving the mouth uncovered.
- As regards to the scheme in scene 5 (the circles of Dante’s Inferno), the text annotations over the circles can be omitted or replaced by lit projected

²⁰ All the conversation in the last scene is in Spanish in the Catalan original version, except when Virgil is speaking to Guard 3, then, the language they use is Catalan, the normal language in the play.

words, either fixed and stable or appearing when starting the corresponding scene.

- When the taxi driver is not part of the performance, unless otherwise indicated, he can wait inside the taxi. The vehicle can be replaced by a single chair facing stage left, thus always showing the taxi driver's left profile.
- In the scenes happening at ORCUS office, everything will be light blue.
- NESSUS the CENTAUR will keep silent company to YOUNGSTER 2 from scene 15, being always oneiric scenes at Dante's Inferno.
- The chickens in scene 19 (mother reading the carcinoma diagnose) can either be real ones or giant fakes of papier mache.
- In the scene when MOTHER is watching the dance on television, if the audiovisual material required is available (Blanc d'Ombra, dance performed by Marta Carrasco, three minute extract in which the dancer fights from the back with a giant piece of plastic, with iridescent effects), the monologue will be adapted to the dance movements. Likewise, if it can be afforded, giant screens will descend from the theatre ceiling which will broadcast the same show that MOTHER is watching. Finally, the giant screens will remain like they are, hanging from the ceiling like spectres until the end of the play.
- By and large, the play has an epic operatic layout. It is a loud war and a loud cry.

- The text is originally in Catalan, although many expressions and lines are in Spanish to show the situation of bilingualism between the two languages in Barcelona, where the play is set, being Spanish the language used by authority and most immigrants.
- All the footnotes are by the translator except footnotes number 10, 11, 12, 14 and the NB on scheme 1.
- Sílvia Pons, the translator, would like to thank Ciarán Synnott for his valuable help.

Beginning of the play: January 2001

End of the play: February 2002

Translation: Beginning September 2002

First draft version finished 14th March 2003

Final revised version finished October 2003