222. Frozen Tears, 1951

222. Watercolor on paper
30.5 x 45 cm
12 x 17.7 in.
Switzerland, Private collection

This is an illustration to *Inferno* Canto 33 of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In this canto, Count Ugolino della Gherardesca reveals the reason for his punishment to Dante and Virgil. His hateful aggression against his enemy is described in Canto 32, and Dalí has illustrated it by another watercolor.

Dante and Virgil then proceed to the traitors of their guests. Such betrayal begins by feigning gratitude which the traitor really owes his victim. Hence it is punished more severely than in the previous parts: The eyes are directed upwards.

The tears immediately freeze in the hollows of the eyes. Now crying causes a congestion, thus increasing the despair and torment:

"Because the first tears
form a crust by freezing
And, like a visor fashioned out of crystal,
They fill the cup
below the brow completely".

In 1949 during what he later called 'My Italian Campaign', Dalí talked the Italian Minister of Public Instruction into commissioning him to illustrate the *Divine Comedy* for an edition of nearly the size of Botticelli's famous drawings. From 1950 to 1952 he executed 102 watercolors of 200 planned. They were exhibited for the first time 1954 in Rome, Venice and Milan, 1955 in New York. Also in 1954, the Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato published a sales brochure with lithographic, full-size reproductions of seven watercolors with wrongly matched texts. But no publisher could be found to finance the project. Also, the newspaper critiques were very negative and considered Dalí too complex and eclectic to illustrate a meditative work like the Divine Comedy.

Later it was reported that Communists protested the waste of public money that was needeed for better purposes, while the Italian patriots objected to the work of Italy's greatest poet being illustrated by a Spaniard [Field's Catalog, p. 189].

From April 1959 to November 1963, *Les Editions d'Art* Les Heures Claires under Jean Estrade as art director published a 19th century French translation of the *Divine Comédie* with reduced (.6) scale reproductions of 100 watercolors, misleadingly placing one with each canto. Each print required about 35 monocolor print plates of synthetic raisin mounted on wood blocks. A luxury edition of 33 was printed for Joseph Foret who sold them with watercolors. The French edition had a print run of 4,765, the 1964 Italian edition with illustrations from the same print house another 3,044.

The Italian editors arranged the images differently. They were the first to correctly place item 222. with Inferno Canto 33 because the half body and cypresses in the background clearly show *Lucifer* as described by Dante in the next Canto Inferno 34!

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Fig. 1. Salvador Dalí, *Adam (illustration to Paradiso Canto 26 of the "Divine Comedy")*, 1952
Salvador Dali Museum, St. Petersburg, Fla.
(here: reduzed size bookprint, after 1959)
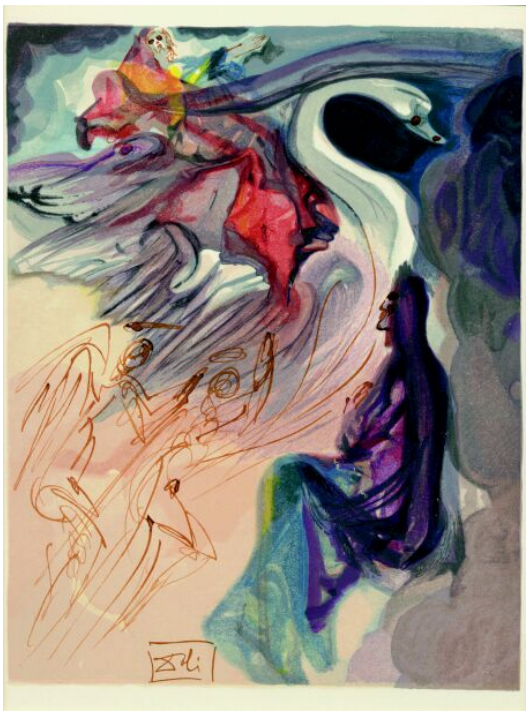
Fig. 2. Salvador Dalí, *St. Peter enfuriated (illustration to Paradiso Canto 27 of the "Divine Comedy")*, 1950
Salvador Dali Museum, St. Petersburg, Fla.
(here: reduzed size bookprint, after 1959)