

# THE CHRIST COLLOQUY Andrew Grattan

## Book I *Commedia*

### CANTO XLIX I-26

And I saw a child asleep in a manger, on the chariot  
Threshold, and a woman in white, praying over her.  
'Who is that child, Dante, is it the baby Jesus, or another

Of that name?' And Dante looked away. 'Look at the  
Mighty English Oak, it is ample, and high and true, as Hume's  
Augustinian 'City of God', its leaves wavy and branched, nursing

Saplings, all about her, though leafless. It is the 'Tree of Christianity',  
And all ecclesiality and all peoples –  
Church and laity, intermixed'. I mused, that it was as righteousness

Planted, and witnessed the tableau, that did unveil. I looked  
At the Gryphon, and saw the mighty manacles, that were  
Paired about his clawed feet. The Gryphon turned

Round, drawing the shaft, which was as Norwegian  
Admirable pine, and hefted it to the mighty English oak,  
It swelled buddgingly, and leaves grew, yellow-green

As a habit is fresh and pure on a clothing day. And the roses  
Photosynthesised, to red and violet and purple.  
And the *Salve Regina* went up from the twenty-four,

And the *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. My eyes sank within  
Themselves, and Dante, withdrawing his grey cloak,  
About his middle, turned to set me down, lest,

I faint. And I looked up to the chariot, and a golden  
Box, revealed upon it, set in luminosity, that inlaid  
Box. Twelve centurions marched out behind her,

And a man of indeterminate age, bearded, with  
Shining face. Dante exhaled: '*Ecce*, Moses'.