

5-2016

Dante's Hidden Sin - Wrath: How Dante Vindictively Used The Inferno Against Contemporaries

Michael J. Rupers
Dominican University of California

<https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2016.hum.01>

Survey: Let us know how this paper benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Rupers, Michael J., "Dante's Hidden Sin - Wrath: How Dante Vindictively Used The Inferno Against Contemporaries" (2016). *Graduate Master's Theses, Capstones, and Culminating Projects*. 214.

<https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2016.hum.01>

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at Dominican Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Master's Theses, Capstones, and Culminating Projects by an authorized administrator of Dominican Scholar. For more information, please contact michael.pujals@dominican.edu.

Dante's Hidden Sin: Wrath

How Dante Vindictively Used The Inferno Against Contemporaries

by

Michael Rupers



A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Humanities

San Rafael, California
May 2016

This thesis, written under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor and approved by the department chair, has been presented to and accepted by the Department of Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. The content and research presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Michael Rupers
Candidate

May 2016

Joan Baranow, Ph.D.
MAH Program Director

May 2016

Sister Aaron Winkelman, Ph.D., Professor Emerita (English)
Thesis Advisor

May 2016

Leslie Ross, Ph.D., Professor (Art History)
Secondary Thesis Advisor

May 2016

Copyright © 2016 by Michael Rupers
All Rights Reserved

Table of Contents

Introduction: Contemporaries of Dante in The Inferno	1
Pope Celestine V	19
Filippo Argenti	21
Farinata degli Uberti	24
Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini	26
Bologna: Venedico Caccianemico	28
Popes: Nicholas III, Boniface VIII, Clement V	30
Cante de' Gabrielli	33
Pistoia: Vanni Fucci	35
Florence: Cianfa Donati, Agnolo Brunelleschi, Buoso degli Abati, Francesco Cavalcanti, Puccio Sciancato	37
Guido da Montefeltro	40
Siena: Griffolino d'Arezzo, Capocchio, Giovanni Stricca, Niccolo Salimbeni, Caccia d'Asciano, "Abbagliato" dei Folcacchieri	43
Bocca Degli Abati	46
Pisa: Count Ugolino della Gherardesca, Archbishop Ruggieri degli Ubaldini ...	49
Genoa: Fra Alberigo, Branca d'Oria	53
Conclusion	56
Addendum	64
Bibliography & Notes	69

Abstract

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) takes his readers on a pilgrimage through what he calls the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* (ostensibly Hell, Purgatory and Heaven) in his epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, originally titled *Commedia*. This paper concentrates exclusively on Dante's contemporaries, those people who lived during his lifetime, and examines his possible motivation for targeting enemy Ghibellines, Black Guelphs, treacherous White Guelphs, corrupt popes, and others who either crossed him or caused him trouble. He vindictively used his masterpiece to lash out at his contemporary enemies, exacting retribution against many who angered him in his lifetime or otherwise offended his religious, political, civic or personal sensibilities, thus revealing a hidden sin, Wrath. Dante deviously groups contemporary characters in such a way as to arrive at a larger and more sinister point, that people from Bologna, Pistoia, Siena, Pisa, Genoa and even his beloved Florence, should be reviled or exterminated. He vindictively roots for ethnic cleansing. The lower construction of Dante's Hell appears to have little to do with Christian theology but, rather, is a contrivance to house his detested enemies and give him personal revenge. Dante's wrath for his contemporaries may have inspired much of the *Inferno*, making the poem far less *Divine*.

Acknowledgements

At first it seems a daunting task to read Dante's *Divine Comedy*. I was fortunate to have Sister Aaron Winkelman, Ph.D., Professor Emerita at Dominican University of California, as my instructor. She brought Dante's epic poem to life and challenged her students to perform their own interpretation. This is the end result of that challenge and I am very grateful for it. As well, Sister Aaron's academic guidance on this paper proved critical.

I was fortunate to enlist as my secondary advisor Professor Leslie Ross, Ph.D., who is an expert of Art History at Dominican University of California. Professor Ross encouraged the inclusion of *Inferno* art, especially Gustave Doré, which helped tell the story still better. As well, Professor Ross' attention to grammatical detail was extremely helpful and I am very thankful.

You never know when a seed has been planted. My late father, Ronald H. Rupers, used to say, "You're under no obligation to tell on yourself." Those words of advice popped into my head when I heard Dante admit to only two sins, Lust and Pride. It caused me to consider whether Dante similarly felt no obligation to tell on himself. Wrath seemed the obvious Dante hidden sin. Like so many other things in my life, I have my funny and intellectually curious Dad to thank for keeping my eyes and ears open.

Dante's Hidden Sin: Wrath

How Dante Vindictively Used The Inferno Against Contemporaries

Introduction



University of Bologna
2007: Reconstruction of
Dante Alighieri face.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) takes his readers on a pilgrimage through what he calls the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* (Hell, Purgatory and Heaven) in his epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, originally titled *Commedia*.¹ Dante completed it in 1321, shortly before his untimely death in Ravenna, Italy, probably of malaria. Unbelievably, Dante placed nearly seventy contemporaries in Hell, vindictively using his epic poem to lash out at his enemies, exacting retribution against many who angered him in his lifetime or otherwise offended his religious, political, civic or personal sensibilities, thus revealing his hidden sin, Wrath. This paper concentrates exclusively on Dante's contemporaries, those characters who lived during his life-time, and it examines his possible motivation for placing the more egregious in Hell.

Dante scholars more commonly analyze *The Divine Comedy* from a poetic, philosophical, theoretical, cultural and historical perspective. It is one of the richest

intellectual books ever written. The verse and terza rima scheme (aba bcb cdc ... yzy) of the entire 14,233 line *Divine Comedy* was innovative. By choosing the common Italian vernacular over the more refined Latin, Dante helped popularize and define the Italian language. He is to the Italian language what Shakespeare is to English. Many scholars have noted that if the scriptures or Bible were ever lost or destroyed, many of its main tenets and most notable stories could be reconstructed by reading *The Divine Comedy*. The same can be said for history, philosophy and literature. It is such a breathtaking masterpiece that Dante has few peers, perhaps only Homer, Virgil, and Shakespeare worthy of the club. While it is easy to become enamored with the intellectual weight and literary accomplishment of *The Divine Comedy*, we take pause here to consider that it also served the author's mean spirited personal vendetta against his enemies. Analyzed here is the author's possibly nefarious motivation behind major sections of his epic poem.

It wasn't until 1440 that the Gutenberg Printing Press was invented in Europe, which means there were no newspapers to speak of at the time of Dante's writing in early 14th century Italy. Publishing anything at all was extremely difficult and not readily accessible to the common man. The few poets and writers able to publish largely controlled the historical record and reputations of their subjects. Little recourse was available to most people portrayed negatively in any sort of publication. They had to endure criticism without commensurate response.

According to Merriam-Webster, a "contemporary" is defined as one "existing or occurring at the same period of time." This paper includes people living during or after the year of Dante Alighieri's birth in 1265. The fifty year period prior to that is noteworthy for its effect on Florentine politics and Dante's

family in particular. Dante places many of those characters in Hell, but they are omitted here because technically they were not his contemporaries. The line is drawn at 1265. Identified and analyzed in this paper are those contemporaries of Dante seemingly included for primarily spiteful reasons.

Unquestionably, Dante understood the power he had as a writer over his subjects and used it to his full advantage to defame or humiliate those contemporaries toward whom he felt special animus. Dante's genius was that he could weave into his epic tale vengeful stories about people he hated and make it seem normal, almost as if they had it coming. Imagine being the only blogger on the internet? That only your opinion of others counted? That almost nobody could protest anything you wrote? That is the kind of power Dante possessed with his epic poem and he was sure to swing hard.

Compare what Dante does to his contemporaries in Hell to the movie, *Dirty Harry*, where an otherwise good cop exacts vigilante style justice to bad guys simply because he can. Dante is a literary Dirty Harry, taking personal liberty to throw scores of contemporaries in Hell, wreaking ingenious havoc with them because he can. You might think "good for him," or you could just as easily think he was a contemptibly obnoxious individual. This paper assumes the latter.

Dante confesses to Beatrice Portinari, his idolized perfect woman he loved since childhood, to only two sins: Lust and Pride. He does not really tell on himself. Dante shields Beatrice and his readers from his real problem, the one that probably extended his exile for the duration of his life. He admits nothing about his incredible anger, his Wrath. He had been disingenuous with Beatrice and had

no intention of coming clean. Instead Dante feigns two other human failings. But Lust is not that unusual for a man, and Pride is a backhanded compliment that the author pays to himself.

Dante famously wrote sonnets for the women he admired (or lusted after), even creating in a ballad a list of the sixty most beautiful women in Florence. It



Henry Holiday: Dante meets Beatrice at Ponte Santa Trinità in Florence. 1883. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Inspired by *La Vita Nuova* (Beatrice in white).

might have been the very first “hottest babes list” ever recorded. That he was a ladies man there can be no doubt. In particular, Dante lusted in his heart for Beatrice, recounting in a previous book, *La Vita Nuova*,² how he first fell in love with her at age nine. While Beatrice

was first in his heart and mind, Dante ranked her in his ballad at nine, a number with tremendous spiritual meaning to him but was likely lost on her. Dante’s wife, Gemma Donati, apparently paid no attention, or if she did, paid no mind to her husband’s very public crushes. It is Beatrice in Purgatory, however, that acts betrayed by Dante’s womanizing, and she admonishes him. He plays the role of scolded naughty boy but likely felt no shame.

Dante’s second confessed sin, Pride, is actually in some form poetic praise to himself. Dante confesses to Beatrice that he is too proud of his poetic genius and feels shame about that too. He struggles to become humble in the face of enormous literary talent. Is he sincere? Not likely. The *Divine Comedy* was in large part an homage to Dante’s

greatness. Look at the not so subtle way he accomplishes it.

Dante's escort through Hell is none other than the great Roman poet Virgil (*The Aeneid*), meaning he was worthy of Virgil's company. The two great poets encounter in Limbo, a relatively serene place in the First Circle of Hell for the unbaptized and virtuous pagans, other great poets such as



Jean Baptiste Wicar: *Virgil Reading the Aeneid to Augustus, Octavia, and Livia*. 1790-93. Art Institute of Chicago.

Homer (*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*), Horace (*Odes and Epodes*), Ovid (*Metamorphoses*) and Lucan (*Bellum Civile*), all of whom converse amiably with their supposed equal, Dante. It was egotistical of Dante to preemptively include himself among the greatest writers of all time. He had not yet proved his skill, though he was certainly in the process. It was similar to Muhammad Ali (formerly Cassius Clay), declaring himself the greatest boxer of all-time in his first big fight.³ He would be right, but not yet. Dante also pridefully shows off to Lucan and Ovid in *Inferno* Canto XXVI. They had employed serpents in their poems as well, but Dante goes a step further, performing a poetic somersault with the transformation of his characters into snakes. And despite confessing to Beatrice in Purgatory, Dante again in Heaven shows his Pride when he craves public recognition and acceptance precisely because of his poetic greatness in the *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, Canto XXV:

*If it should happen... if this sacred poem
this work so shared by heaven and by earth
that it has made me lean through these long years*

*can ever overcome the cruelty
that bars me from the fair fold where I slept,
a lamb opposed to wolves that war on it ...*

*By then with other voice, with other fleece,
I shall return as poet and put on,*

at my baptismal font, the laurel crown;

*for there I first found entry to that faith
which makes souls welcome unto God, and then,
for that faith, Peter garlanded my brow.⁴*

Dante's so-called sin of Pride found in the *Inferno*, purged in *Purgatorio*, reappears prominently in *Paradiso*. He feels deserving of a "laurel crown." Far from cured, Dante is still brimming with Pride. Both confessions, to Lust and Pride, were likely insincere.

Dante may have deluded himself and his readers into thinking that all his contemporary inclusions in the *Inferno* were examples of Christian justice, but most likely he knew better. It was not really God's justice but his. He was filled with hate for those who in any way, shape, manner or form contributed to his exile. Any domino that at any time had led to his awful predicament he will torture in Hell. It was his book, his idea and his vengeance.

In the addendum to this paper after the conclusion are listed the contemporary characters to the *Divine Comedy*. Making no claim to perfection, it is mostly right. Dante places only eight contemporaries in Heaven, half of them saints (Thomas Aquinas, etc.). It is shockingly light on contemporary characters he knew personally. His mother, who died young, had exposed him to literature at an early age and is not included. Nor does he include any priests or nuns he may have known. Surely Beatrice's father, who donated most of his wealth to start a female hospital wing, or the plethora of battlefield nurses and doctors who gave of themselves so unselfishly, might have deserved strong consideration. No, Dante mostly forgets about the good contemporaries in Heaven.

Purgatory isn't much better. Dante places only nineteen contemporary characters there and over half are creative people like himself: poets, artists and musicians. The rest

are friends and a few others who served a dual purpose of shedding an evil light on someone else. He manages a few roundabout inclusions in Purgatory and Heaven that highlight someone else's misdeeds, such as Piccarda and Pia, but otherwise is hard pressed to balance the *Inferno* in those two canticles with worthy souls. It is amazing how Dante finds so few contemporaries worthy of salvation in either Purgatory or Heaven.

Dante places a whopping sixty-eight contemporaries in Hell. Now isn't that something? No trouble naming names there. Only nineteen in Purgatory and a mere eight in Heaven.² But sixty-eight in Hell? The numbers should be reversed or at minimum par. Most people would probably know far more worthy of salvation than damnation. Not Dante. His Wrath toward his enemies causes him to go poetically berserk by tossing scores of people from his lifetime into a torturous Hell. He was incredibly and overwhelmingly vindictive.



Gustave Doré: *Satan*. 1890 Engraving.

Dante's hatred shines most in the punishment and contrapasso in each circle of Hell. A "contrapasso" is the fitting resemblance, usually ironic, that the punishment has to the sin. It was an ingenious invention that Dante used to great effect in the *Divine Comedy*, indicating tremendous personal animosity toward people he knew or was acquainted with. Dante made his enemies fight one another forever in a black swamp, pushed down deep into the muck and gasping for air; stung by wasps; forever sad and lonely; lay in the cold mud like pigs; boil in a river of blood; turned into barren trees in a dark woods; buried face down in holes in the ground with legs in the air and feet on fire; encased in ice

and eating someone's head; bound to a coffin and thinking always of the future; lying, walking or sitting forever on burning sand; whipped by one demon and then another; swimming in waste; heads twisted backward; boiling in tar; weighed down in a lead cloak; hands tied while snakes transform their bodies; enveloped in tongue shaped flames; their bodies cut up and much more.

A fellow has to be exceptionally enraged and wicked to write about people he knows in such a vindictive way. Imagine publishing things like that about people in your community. And then standing in the butcher line or sitting at church with their relatives or friends. Or them. Awkward? Of course. But Dante was so incensed that he burned nearly every bridge.

Who exactly was Dante angry at and why? For starters, he inherited his family political allegiance to the Guelph party, initially supporters of the papacy, in their struggle with the Ghibelline party, supporters of the emperor. Dante traced the origin of that spat to a Florentine family quarrel in 1215 when a bride



was spurned and as a result the offending groom ambushed and killed. He blames mostly the Ghibellines for historically raising the stakes and causing dire consequences for his family and friends.

The rival Ghibellines won an important early battle in Florence in 1249 and banished the Guelphs. The very next year in 1250, the Guelphs returned because the victorious Emperor Frederick II had died and they regained control of Florence for the next ten years. Then the Ghibellines did it again in 1260, winning a huge battle at

Montaperti, killing nearly 10,000 Guelphs and exiling hundreds more from Florence, though not Dante's father. That time the Ghibellines were especially cruel as they razed hundreds of Guelph towers, palaces and homes. They came close to destroying the city altogether.

Then in 1266, a year after Dante's birth, the Guelphs won a decisive victory and



Florence's Duomo and the Baptistery of San Giovanni in the Piazza del Duomo

returned to Florence. They remained firmly entrenched in Florence before a final victory over the Ghibellines in 1289, assured that party's ultimate defeat, though not necessarily elsewhere in Tuscany. There were many villains in the nearly 75 years (1215-1289) tug of war between Ghibellines and Guelphs, and

Dante hatefully casts his political opponents into Hell. He does the same to Guelphs who either failed or betrayed his party along the way. In 13th century Italy, politics was personal, or at least very much so to Dante, and he used the *Inferno* for retribution.

A new political rivalry emerged post Ghibelline. Once again a silly family quarrel, this time in nearby Pistoia, escalated to murder with the poison spreading to Florence, where two rival families chose sides. As a result the factional split between what they termed the Black Guelphs and White Guelphs, the demarcation initially being family alliances (black Donati vs white Cherchi), then morphed into real political differences. The White Guelphs, Dante's party affiliation, preferred secular autonomy from any entity including the Pope. The Black Guelphs supported the Pope in his desire to influence secular affairs in Florence, which had become the Paris of its day. To get a sense of it,

Florence's florin had become the international standard currency. The American dollar holds the same position today. Pope Boniface VIII wanted in on the action in Florence and if not invited, would crash the party. The Black Guelphs and papacy became allies and thus targets in Dante's Hell.

Dante usually kept his family (mother, father, siblings, wife and children) out of his writing. But other people's families were fair game, and he was extremely upset with those



Giuseppe Zocchi: *The Piazza della Signoria in Florence*.
Early 18th century

in the Florentine financial community. Dante observed over the course of his adult life how Florence had changed dramatically into an economic and cultural powerhouse, bringing in different and less appealing people (to Dante) with

loose morals and ethics. He was resistant to that change and blamed the acquiescing noble families of Florence for their failure to protect the city. He attacks several nobles viciously in Hell.

This paper supposes a mean-spirited, vindictive motivation on the part of Dante Alighieri, so it is important to briefly trace his movements as best we can from the moment of his leaving Florence in October 1301, through his exile, and consider what effect it had on his writing.

Tensions ran high in Florence around the turn of the 14th century as the competing families and political parties vied for control, often violently. Neither side

would give way, and the Pope could not quell the powder keg that was set to explode. In 1300, in an attempt to calm city strife, Dante was one of the city's main political leaders, a priori, a position of power akin to mayor. He exiled hundreds of violent rabble rousers both Black and White Guelphs from Florence, including a very good friend, Guido Cavalcante. In the ensuing year, 1301, Dante's overtures to Pope Boniface VIII to stop the invasion of Charles of Anjou's French troops went unheeded, and White Guelph fortunes reversed in November of that year. The Black Guelphs returned with the Pope's support and violently overthrew the government. In early 1302, having been duped by the Pope and held against his will in Rome, Dante was finally released and found himself and fellow White Guelphs on the outside looking in. He was exiled from Florence with a death sentence. The entire episode traumatized him.



Similar to early 14th century map

After exiled, Dante spent the better part of 1302 to 1304 circling Florence and rallying other ex-patriated White Guelphs and Ghibellines in an effort to force a violent return. In a break for him, Pope Boniface VIII died in 1303 after quarreling with his ally, King Philip IV. Boniface's successor, Pope Benedict XI, unsuccessfully tried to broker a Florentine peace. Disappointed yet again, Dante became extremely frustrated and broke away from the White Guelph and

Ghibelline exiles in a belated attempt to distance himself. He decided “to make a party for himself.”⁵ None of his efforts worked, and he parted ways with bitterness and recrimination for his allies. His reputation in Florence, however, had taken a turn for the worse. A man is judged by the company he keeps, and Dante had appeared overly opportunistic in his choice of friends. Florence had taken note and was not impressed.

While staying in Lucca and trying to accomplish something on the run, Dante began an essay on Italian vernacular poetry entitled “De Vulgari Eloquentia.” He wrote it in Latin, the language of the educated, in order to appeal to them, and he made the case for the need of a common Italian vernacular language. However, Dante quit “De Vulgari Eloquentia” less than halfway through. It may have been difficult to write while living the life of a vagabond. Or perhaps he realized “De Vulgari Eloquentia” was not quite the masterpiece that he had hoped to write.

Dante roamed Italy in 1305, spending time in Padua. He moved on to Lunigiana, on the northwest tip of Tuscany, where he was the guest of Marchese Malaspina, who required his diplomatic skills to resolve another matter. Dante began writing “Convivio” in 1306, a lengthy poem this time in the Italian vernacular that revisits his poetry, and in it he asks Florence for forgiveness. He admits to being weary from the road, not respected anymore as a poet, almost a beggar and wishing he could just go home. His tone is wistful and conciliatory, betraying none of the hostility of his early exile years. Dante writes, “My people, what have I done to you?”⁶ His overtures do not work. The city did not forgive or offer a return. Never again is Dante quite so contrite toward Florence.

Dante labored on “Convivio” through 1306 and into 1307, and he changed his attitude about the role of a monarchy. After a lifetime in opposition, he switched his

support to a single secular authority in the person of a Roman emperor. In Dante's evolving political view, an emperor was the only way to assure civic stability and keep the peace. Dante's big change of mind was born of personal experience as the shenanigans of local Florentine politics had failed him miserably. Witness his exile. And only a powerful emperor appeared to be his pathway home. Democracy had not worked very well for Dante. He wanted a hero. An Emperor. He wanted to go home.

It is not known with any degree of certainty when Dante wrote the *Inferno*. Most commentators have settled on the entire canticle having been written between 1308 and 1314. However, Dante's first biographer, Giovanni Boccaccio, in "Life of Dante," asserted that Dante had written the first seven cantos while still living in Florence before his departure and subsequent exile in October 1301. There are good reasons to believe Boccaccio, who reported that Dante's nephew had stumbled upon the first seven cantos in 1306 while searching through stowed away family chests in Florence. The story goes

that the first seven cantos were taken to a master Florentine poet, Dino Frescobaldi, who forwarded them to his friend and Dante's host in exile, Marquis Moruello Malaspina in Lunigiana. Dante reportedly was delighted to have the cantos back and said, "I had wholly abandoned the lofty fantasy I had for this work . . . I will try to remember my first intention, and will proceed with it as grace shall be granted to me."⁷ He then begins Canto VIII with the Italian words, "Io dico, seguitando," which means in English, "To continue, let me say,"⁸ as if there were a break. As in several years. Or not. Most



Giovanni Boccaccio statue in Uffizi, Italy. Author of *Life of Dante*, first biography of Dante 1375

commentators dismiss the Boccaccio story and choose to believe Dante was segueing from one canto to the next because it was the first time a story had overlapped cantos, and he was merely guiding his readers. But that happened often later without the author ever again using the joiner “to continue.”

Whether Dante had an epiphany (Hollander’s view) or his first seven cantos caught up to him (Boccaccio’s story), Dante abruptly dropped “Convivio” only a quarter of the way through and began (anew?) the *Divine Comedy* while in Casentino, along the Arno River about 60 kilometers east of Florence. He had been a restless soul, a writer in search of a masterpiece and finally found one. The excitement of the *Divine Comedy* probably fueled his spirit, certainly his intellect and challenged his poetry. It was a good reason to get up in the morning.



Domenico di Michelino: *La Commedia illumina Firenze*. 1417-91. On the wall of Florence Cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore.

Nobody is really sure where Dante was from 1309 to 1310, nor how many cantos of the *Inferno* he wrote in those years? Some say he was in Lucca for awhile, perhaps had a lady friend who may have been a benefactor, then roamed Tuscany spending time again near Casentino. Some theorize he was in Bologna and then later Paris, where he may have immersed himself in philosophy. But there is no record of him being in Paris, and it defies logic to think there wouldn’t be.

Dante became excited again in 1310 at the prospect of Emperor Henry VII of Luxembourg conquering and ruling all of Italy. It was “Convivio” coming true. A strong monarch to restore sanity and order to a divided Florence and Tuscany. So sure of it in

fact, Dante wrote a scathing letter to his fellow Florentines in March 1311 warning that to



Holy Roman Emperor
Henry VII of Luxembourg

reject Henry would come at their peril. He was insulting to Florence to say the least. Days later he wrote another letter to Henry urging him on. In 1312 Henry was on the move in Italy, declared Florence rebels against the empire, and by early 1313 he appeared poised for an assault on the city. At long last Dante would be allied with the winning side, and he could

return to Florence victorious and probably part of a ruling government. Oh and there would be Hell to pay. Then in the summer of 1313, Henry died and along with him Dante's hopes of ending his exile.

The shockingly strident letters to Florence and Henry in 1311 proved to be a huge tactical mistake, solidifying Dante as *persona non grata*. It was an oops moment and one almost impossible to retract. In that same year, 1311, Florence had offered an invitation to all exiles to return. Except Dante. He was the only exile excluded, and surely his letters were a factor.

Dante may have given up any hope of ever returning to Florence and became more strident in his writing of the *Inferno*. Only 20% of the *Inferno* contemporary characters appear in the first fifteen cantos, or roughly first half. It is possible that the creation of the other cantos, XVI through XXXIV, containing 80% of the remaining contemporaries, coincide with either his hostile letters to Florence and Henry or the latter's death. Dante's hit list of enemies becomes almost four times longer and harsher in the back half of *Inferno*, and there may have been a good reason for that. His damning to

Hell so many enemies in the second half of *Inferno* may indicate his acknowledgement of his permanent exile.



Equestrian Statue of
Cangrande della Scala in
the Castelveccchio Museum,
Verona, Italy

In the middle of the Henry episode, in 1312, Dante moved to Verona, where he lived as the guest of Cangrande della Scala until 1318. Cangrande was a Ghibelline leader in northern Italy and provided Dante a comfortable, stable environment in which to finish the *Inferno* and probably write all of *Purgatorio*. For Dante, the Cangrande relationship and friendship would prove critical.

Meanwhile in 1315, Uguccio della Faggiuola, a military officer in control of Florence, insisted on inviting back all exiles including Dante. However, the Florentine terms for returning included public penance and a hefty fine, and Dante considered them too humiliating to accept. Perhaps he did not really trust the Florentine government and found a reason to object. He had after all published *Inferno* saying that the city deserved to be destroyed. The sooner the better. There were scores of Florentines whose friends or relatives Dante punished in Hell. Somehow that is not the stuff from which warm invitations are made. It might have been a huge risk returning after such a long period of stridency and open hostility. There was good reason to feel trepidation. In response to Dante's refusal, Florence reconfirmed his condemnation, a death sentence, which was extended to include his sons. So much for an open door.

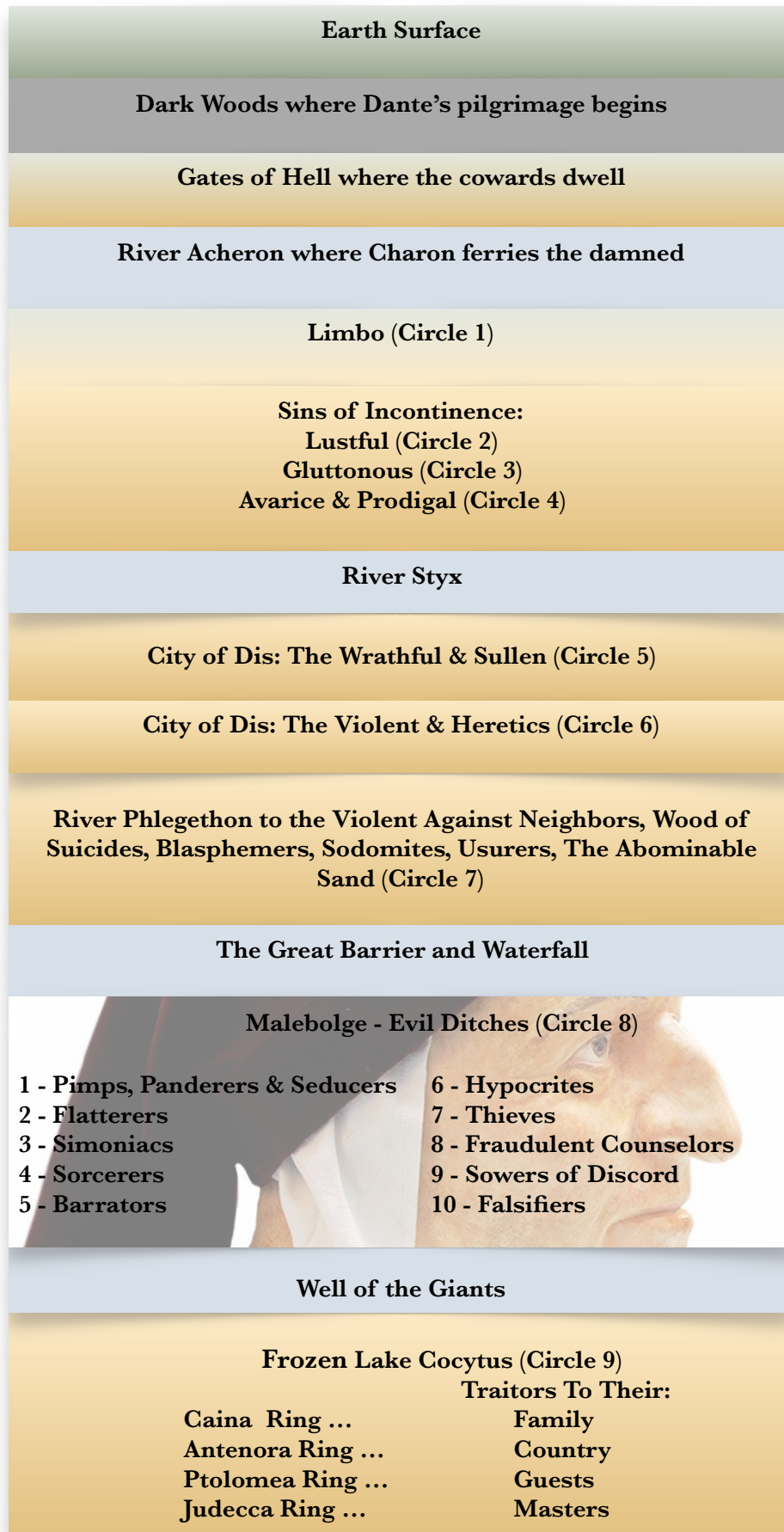
Around 1317 Dante wrote "De Monarchia," a treatise on the relationship between the Pope and the Emperor, assigning the former the power over eternal life and the latter authority over temporal life. Pope Boniface VIII had issued a papal bull in 1302

declaring that the emperor's power was subject to papal power, and in "De Monarchia" Dante heretically contradicts him: "one is the Supreme Pontiff, to lead humankind to eternal life, according to the things revealed to us; and the other is the Emperor, to guide humankind to happiness in this world, in accordance with the teaching of philosophy."⁹ Dante sided with the Emperor's right to govern absolutely and declared his power came from God. In essence, Dante's had moved full circle in political philosophy from Guelph to Ghibelline, albeit to a Christian Ghibelline. That attitude pervades the *Divine Comedy*.

Dante may have started *Paradiso* in Verona before moving on in 1318 to his final stay in Ravenna, where he died in 1321. He dedicated *Paradiso* to Cangrande della Scala, signifying just how important that gracious host and those years were to the author.

Examined here are the contemporaries of Dante's who lived in his lifetime after 1265 and why they probably ended up in Hell. Included in the analysis will be the contrapasso for the sinner in each Circle of Hell, the fitting resemblance the punishment has to the sin, which was a clever literary innovation of Dante. In many cases the punishment and contrapasso for each sinner reveals the extent of Dante's hatred.

The *Inferno* is Dante's imagination of Hell. The deeper one goes the more serious the sin and the harsher the eternal punishment. According to some, Dante's Hell reflects the social attitudes during the medieval period, though this paper advances another theory. That Dante designed the lower depths of Hell to accommodate his spite toward his enemies and not for any theological or religious reason. The first half of his Hell would suffice for all sins because it includes the seven deadly sins, from which all other sins emanate. Dante let his imagination go further in order to torture enemies with lesser crimes because the *Inferno* was in large part vindictive retribution. Here is Dante's Hell:



Here now are some of the more egregious examples of the Wrath that Dante felt for his contemporaries in the *Inferno*.

Pope Celestine V

(1215-1296)



William Blake: The Inscription over Hell-Gate. 1824-1827.

Appears in **Canto III**

Found at ... **The Gates of Hell**

With ... **The Cowards**

**“ABANDON ALL HOPE,
YOU WHO ENTER HERE”**

Inferno Canto III 9

Punishment: Trapped in darkness, running towards a banner that he will never reach, being pestered by wasps and hornets, worms and maggots.

Contrapasso: The punishment forces Pope Celestine V to follow forever a banner because he could not decide in real life on a principle to follow.

*After I recognized a few of these
I saw and knew the shade of him
who, through cowardice, made **the great refusal**. 58-60 ¹⁰*

Pope Celestine V was a very good, pious and humble man. He had been an unusual choice for pope from the start. He wanted no part of the papacy and was elected against his wishes. The papal chair had remained vacant for nearly two years following the death of Pope Nicholas IV in 1292, and out of desperation, the Cardinals elected Celestine in July 1294, pulling him out of his hermetic cell in the mountains where he had been at peace. Pope Celestine V was 79 when elected. There had been several popes previously in Church history who had also abdicated the papacy, though none in nearly 250 years. Dante included none of the other abdicated popes in Hell. Probably because their great refusals had not directly affected him

Poor Celestine, he had quickly realized that he was merely a figurehead, almost powerless. His edicts and orders were ignored. Feeling miserable as Pope, Celestine solicited the advice of his ultimate successor, Pope Boniface VIII, who reportedly manipulated him on the procedures on how to declare an abdication. One week after issuing the edict on the rules of abdication, on December 13, 1294, Pope Celestine V did just that, abdicated: "Dante certainly believed this to be the case and never forgave him for the part he was to play in the fate of Florence."¹¹ Celestine's abdication made way for Dante's nemesis, Pope Boniface VIII, to assume the papacy and lead to Dante's eventual exile and political demise.

Celestine tried to flee but was captured and imprisoned by Pope Boniface VIII, who worried about his predecessor's reinstatement. Celestine died nearly a year later in prison at the age of 81. In 1313 he was canonized as a saint by the Catholic Church. Meanwhile, Dante was nearing completion of the *Inferno*, probably the only man alive who disliked Celestine.

Pope Boniface VIII posed a clear and present danger to Dante that Pope Celestine V had not. Celestine's abdication would ultimately lead to Boniface mounting a military campaign against Dante's White Guelph governing coalition in Florence and in turn lead to Dante's exile. Furious with Boniface, Dante connects the dots from Celestine's abdication to Boniface's election and stings him at the Gates of Hell forever. The lesson from the beginning of the *Inferno* is that there is a place in Hell for those who cross Dante. The *Divine Comedy* would be for Dante both poetic genius and swift retaliation.

Filippo Argenti

(late 13th century)



Gustave Doré: Virgil pushes Filippo Argenti back into the River Styx. 1890.

Appears in **Canto VIII**

Found in **Circle 5**

With ... **The Wrathful**

Punishment: The wrathful are people who lived life feeling hostility and aggression inside of themselves and in Hell are being choked and trapped in the marshes and dark swamps of the River Styx.

Contrapasso: They now fight one another forever in the black swamp, being pushed down deep into the muck and gasping for air, just as they choked on their aggression in real life.

*Soon I watched him get so torn to pieces
by the muddy crew, I still give praise
and thanks to God for it.*

*All cried: ‘**Get Filippo Argenti!**’
And that spiteful Florentine spirit
Gnawed at himself with his own teeth. 58-63¹²*

It wasn’t just the condemned souls who wanted to “get Filippo Argenti!” Dante was seething mad him too. Dante had been on a diplomatic mission in Rome to meet with Pope Boniface VIII in November 1301, when the Black Guelphs of Florence, under the leadership of Charles of Anjou (at the Pope’s behest), ransacked the city and took it over. Hundreds of White Guelphs, Dante’s political party, were either killed or expelled and their property seized. Dante’s wife, Gemma, and their three children were removed



Dante Alighieri home in Florence, Italy.
Today a museum.

from their home by a Black Guelph, Boccacino Argenti, who laid claim to it. Dante was incredibly angry with Argenti, but because he was still alive in 1300, he could not place him in Hell. So his dead brother, Filippo Argenti, most likely took his place. Filippo

probably would not have found himself in Hell were it not for his brother having stolen and occupied the Alighieri home. Quoting from Canto VIII above, Dante the pilgrim tells his guide Virgil, “*I would be most eager to see him pushed deep down into this soup / . . . / Soon I watched him get so torn to pieces / by the muddy crew. I still give praise / and thanks to God for it.*”

The level of vitriol is over the top.

Dante’s mistreatment of Filippo especially makes the case that the *Inferno* served as an enemies list:

In fact, many commentators have condemned the pilgrim’s (Dante) reaction to Argenti as an instance of savagery unbecoming of a man on the road to salvation. Parodi calls Dante, ‘brutal, insulting, and implacable.’ To Rossi, the pilgrim is bestial on account of his cruelty. Borgese speaks of Dante’s ferocity, and Momigliano of the satanic quality of Dante’s hate. Sapegno refers to the poet’s perverse pleasure in his growing brutality, while Bosco views the Argenti episode as a rare example of a personal vendetta against one of the damned.¹³

Keeping count, that is no fewer than six commentators in four quick sentences who observed Dante as overly harsh, mean-spirited and vindictive. More commentators have noted the same. The Argenti episode is hardly unique. Dante might not have been as ferocious with other contemporaries, but his motivation for contemporary inclusions in Hell are probably similar in many ways.

The *Inferno* provided an outlet for Dante’s ferocious anger and frustration. He is able to pummel Filippo Argenti in Hell just as he wished he could his brother Boccaccio in real life. It is hardly an accident or coincidence that the Argentis were personal enemies of Dante and some of his first *Inferno* victims. As was the case with so many sins, Dante had plenty of compelling examples from which to choose. He clearly preferred to highlight individuals who had crossed him.

Farinata degli Uberti

(d. 1264)



Gustave Doré: Dante and Virgil
before Farinata. 1890

Appears in **Canto X**

Found in **Circle 6**

With ... **The Heretics**

Punishment: In the City of Dis in the 6th Circle, the damned are subjected mostly to huge sepulchers or sarcophagi that are flaming hot so that the heretics inside are scorched by the heat.

Contrapasso: The heretics denied the existence of a soul in the afterlife. Dead was dead to them, so Dante places them fittingly in a tomb all together, but he wakes their senses with the fires of Hell. Now they get it. They have a soul. And theirs is damned. This would be a never ending Uh-oh moment.

*And he to me: 'Turn back! What are you doing?
Look, there **Farinata** stands erect—
you can see all of him from the waist up.'*

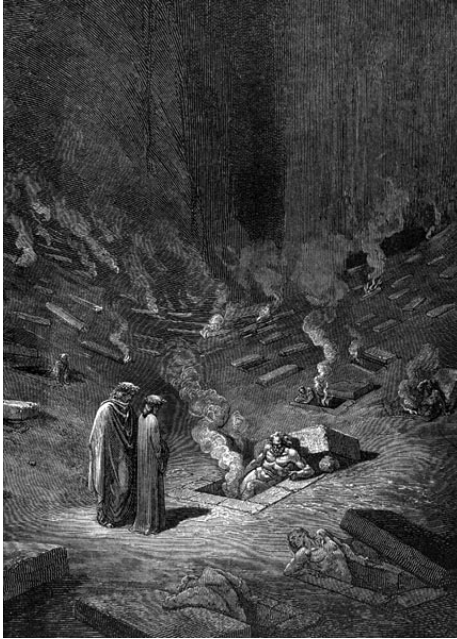
*Already I had fixed my gaze on his,
And he was rising, lifting chest and brow
as though he held all Hell in utter scorn. 31-36¹⁴*

Farinata degli Uberti is included as a contemporary because he died five months before Dante's birth, meaning Dante was technically alive in the womb. Dante encounters the heretics in Circle 6, those who did not believe in the afterlife, but rather that earthly life was temporal and to be enjoyed to the fullest in the present moment. That idea went against Church teaching and was a punishable sin. Plenty of people were guilty of being an epicurean, but Farinata degli Uberti was not guilty of that alone. He had the misfortune of also being the Ghibelline leader that routed the Guelphs at the Battle of Montaperti in 1260, five years before Dante's birth in 1265. The result was the expulsion of several hundred Guelph families from Florence. Montaperti had been an epic Guelph military disaster that lingered decades later. In Canto X Farinata degli Uberti boasts of personally defeating and expelling the Guelphs twice (1248 and 1260), for which Dante proudly chides him that the Guelphs had returned both times, an art lost upon the Ghibellines. The entire conversation is a heated political argument having little to do with heresy.

In fact, Florence would have been entirely destroyed had Farinata degli Uberti not intervened and declared himself first a Florentine and second a Ghibelline. He vowed to defend Florence against his own party with his sword: "The Ghibellines thereupon took the lessor course of knocking down 103 palaces, 580 houses, and 85 towers."¹⁵ Dante is not the least bit grateful. As far as he was concerned, Farinata saved Ghibelline Florence, not Guelph Florence. The Florentine political strife in 1300 had its roots in the mistreatment of Guelphs by the Ghibellines in 1260. Dante inserts Farinata degli Uberti in the 6th Circle of Hell as a heretic with clearly no interest in his sin, but rather places him there to score political points and exact retribution. It was purely vindictive.

Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini

(1214–1273)



Gustave Doré: Dante and Virgil among the heretics. 1890

Appears in **Canto X**

Found in **Circle 6**

With ... **The Heretics**

Punishment and Contrapasso: Same as Farinata degli Uberti.

*His answer was: 'More than a thousand lie
here with me: both the second Frederick
and the **Cardinal**. Of the rest I do not speak.'* 118-120¹⁶

In Canto X Dante mentions “the Cardinal” as also being among the heretics in the 6th Circle of Hell. Scholars agree he was referring to Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, who had been a reliable ally of popes and Guelph causes, until he switched sides in an attempted Ghibelline coup of Florence in 1258. Ubaldini is quoted as having said, "I can say, if I had a soul, I lost it a thousand times for the Ghibellines."¹⁷ That should have qualified him for perhaps a still deeper place in Hell among the traitors to country or party, but Dante settles on putting him with the heretics, or atheists, a strange

place for a man of the cloth. What really bothered Dante, however, was Ubaldini's attempted Ghibelline overthrow of Florence in 1258. That volley presaged the eventual Ghibelline rout of Guelph forces in 1260, costing over 10,000 Florentine lives in a humiliating defeat. It all ties together for Dante, who uses the *Inferno* for personal vendettas.



Sandro Botticelli: Profile of Dante. 1495. This rendition was widely accepted until 2007.

It can be argued that Dante later did something very similar to Ubaldini. While in exile, Dante initially allied himself with the enemy Ghibellines in hopes of a violent overthrow of Florence's government. That action could be construed as treasonous and was by many Florentines. He also turned his back on his White Guelph party, calling them stupid and declaring his independence. Quitting an alliance could also be treasonous. He threatened his former Florentine neighbors to submit or be conquered by Emperor Henry VII of Luxembourg, who was loosely allied with him. So just like Ubaldini, Dante made controversial political decisions that could be interpreted as treasonous. Most likely Dante grew up being taught that Ubaldini was a scoundrel who betrayed the Guelph cause and learned to loathe him. Dante is inclined to include in Hell any Ghibelline who adversely affected him personally, even if indirectly. Despite his jumping political expediency, Dante at his core hated Ghibellines, and Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini pays the price.

Bologna

Venedico Caccianemico

(1228-1302)



Giovanni Stradano: Pimps and Seducers Whipped. 1587

Appears in **Canto XVIII**

Found in **8th Circle: First Ditch**

With ... **The Panderers and Seducers**

Punishment: The sinners found in the First Ditch of the 8th Circle march naked in a long line while being whipped by horned demons.

Contrapasso: Because their actions resulted in the cuckoldry of others, they are lined up like prisoners, unable to escape their punishment.

I said: 'You there, with your eyes cast down,

'if I'm not mistaken in your features,

*you're **Venèdico Caccianemico**.*

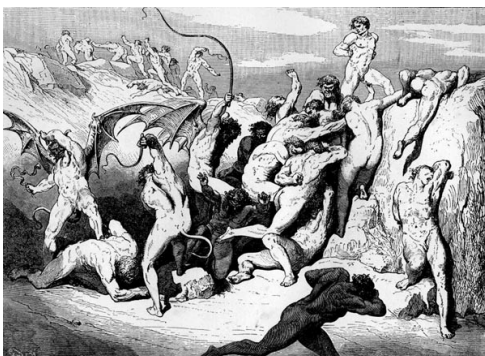
...

no matter how the foul tale goes around.

*I'm not the only **Bolognese** here lamenting*

This place is so crammed with them. 49-52, 59-61¹⁸

A scathingly hateful rebuke of an entire city, and the sort of thing Dante repeats several times in the *Inferno*. He portrays Venedico Caccianemico as a pimp and all of Bologna as pimps and whores. Dante had spent a fair amount of time in Bologna. Most commentators believe he attended the university there as a young man and also visited occasionally during his exile. A major political figure in Bologna was Venedico Caccianemico, who was eager to ingratiate himself to the marquis, Obizzo II da Este, a fellow Guelph and lord of Ferrara. Dante mistakenly thought Venedico was dead in 1300, which is why he included him in Hell. Venedico is quoted in Canto XVIII as saying, “It was I who urged Ghisolabella / to do the will of that marquis.” Ghisolabella was Venedico’s sister, and he traded her for sex to Obizzo II da Este, effectively pimping his sister for political advantage. Dante places Obizzo II da Este in the First Ring of the 7th Circle of Hell. Obizzo II da Este “conquered his dominion of Ferrara by slaughter and destruction, raped daughters and wives, and had carnal relations with his own sisters and the sister of his wife before he was assassinated.”¹⁹ The episode is also a smear of Obizzo, who was basically Bolognese.



Gustave Doré: Punishment of the panderers and seducers. 1890

Dante used the occasion of finding Venedico Caccianemico in the 8th Circle of Hell to spitefully smear all of Bologna. Italy was extremely provincial in the 13th century, and the hatred for neighboring towns was more common than not. Venedico in his defense says to Dante, “I’m not the only Bolognese here lamenting. /

This place is so crammed with them.” He asserts that Bologna is filled with pimps and prostitutes, those who say “sipa,” the Bolognese word for “yes.” It is not known exactly why Dante hated Bologna so much, but he obviously did. A city filled with pimps and whores? Doesn’t every major city have its share of them? It is one thing to think it, another to write it. For a man in exile and on the run, it was an incredible insult. Dante must have calculated that he would never need Bologna to survive because he certainly burned that bridge.

Popes

Nicholas III

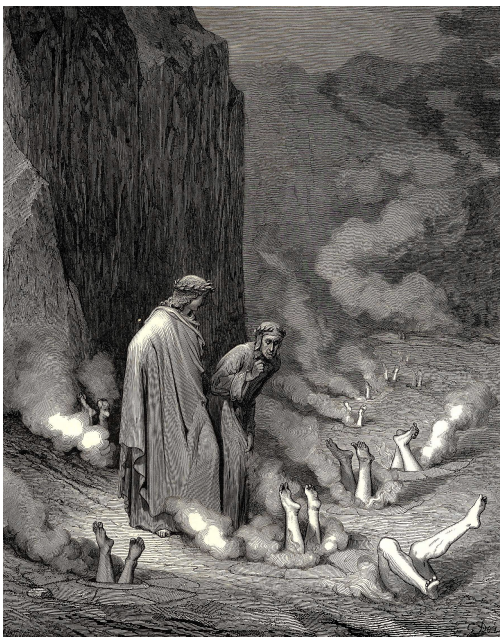
(1225-1280)

Boniface VIII

(1235-1303)

Clement V

(1264-1314)



Gustave Doré: Dante and Nicholas III.
1890. The Simonist Popes head first, feet on
fire.

Appear in **Canto XIX**

Found in **8th Circle: Third Ditch**

With ... **The Simonists**

Punishment: These popes and religious clerics are found in the Third Ditch of the 8th Circle buried upside-down in holes the size of baptism basins as their legs and feet twitch and protrude while smoldering in flames. There are so many that they are stacked one on top of another, pushing each deeper into the ground. Every twenty years another pope is sure to arrive, driving those preceding deeper into the ground in the manner of a pez dispenser.

Contrapasso: Simony is the sale of absolution and other religious favors for money. Dante's contrapasso is reminiscent of the Pentecost in which the disciples were scorched on their heads with fire from the Holy Spirit. These Simonist sinners instead ironically receive fire on their feet. Florentines similarly executed assassins with upside down suffocation into the ground. Not enough to execute a man, they needed to terrorize him as they did it. Dante employs the same method with corrupt popes and then sets their feet on fire in a final wicked blow.

*he calls the friar back to stay his death.
And he cried out: 'Is that you already,
are you here already, **Boniface?***

*By several years the writing lied to me.
'Are you so swiftly sated with those profits
for which you did not fear to take by guile*

the beautiful Lady and to do her outrage?" 51-57²⁰

Here again Dante gets even with a group of people he hates. Pope Nicholas III came from a powerful Italian family that he enriched with political favors. His nepotism was widely known. Dante uses Nicholas as a springboard, however, to target his real enemies Popes Boniface VIII and Clement V, neither of whom was dead in 1300. The

manner in which Dante includes both in Hell was ingenious. The first by mistaken identity and the second by prophesy. Boniface was perhaps Dante's greatest nemesis. Having manipulated the hapless Pope Celestine V into abdicating in 1294, Boniface sought to expand the Church's power and sphere of influence into Tuscan secular affairs, which he hoped would result in monetary gains, especially concerning Florence. The Black Guelphs backed Boniface because they stood to gain, but the reverse was true for the White Guelphs.

In October 1301 Boniface enlisted the troops of Charles of Anjou to forcibly replace Dante's party with that of the more papacy friendly Black Guelphs, fierce Dante foes whom he had a hand in expelling several months earlier. While Dante was in Rome as part of a Florentine delegation to speak to Boniface about calling off the coup, he was held against his will for months while Boniface's allies took over Florence and solidified their control. Dante was duped by Boniface. Upon his attempted return to Florence, Dante learned that he could not go home without risking imprisonment or death. His twenty year exile from the city of his birth and ancestral home had begun. Boniface's "support of the Black Guelphs and the French forces in Florence earned him Dante's unflagging enmity."²¹

Dante places Nicholas in Hell as a ruse to introduce Boniface because every simoniac pope gets pushed down further into the ground every twenty years by the next pope. So Dante has Nicholas confused because he is head first in the ground, cannot see and mistakes Dante for Boniface. Nicholas asks, "Is that you already? / Are you here already, Boniface?" Devising in that way to place the living Boniface in Hell was both clever and funny.

Pope Clement V was not even a cardinal when the deadlocked conclave, evenly divided between Italian and French cardinals, elected him pope in 1305. It was obvious to most that Clement was a pawn of France's King Philip IV. Instead of a proper coronation in Rome, Clement remained in France, eventually making Avignon the official papal home in 1309, where it remained for nearly seventy years. Dante was probably writing Canto XIX around 1309, or perhaps inserted this text while editing in 1315. Dante was beside himself with anger at Clement. In his view, it was a travesty not to have the Church seated in Rome. There is a fair amount of Dante hatred displayed toward the French. Clement added several more French cardinals to solidify papal control over their Italian counterparts. Because Clement had sold out to France's King Philip IV in order to do his bidding, Dante has Nicholas prophesying Clement's eventual destination in the 8th Circle of Hell among the simonists. The lesson here is that a pope crosses Dante at his eternal peril. He's going to get him, and it won't be pretty. As in suffocating upside down, twitching and on fire forevermore.

Cante de' Gabrielli

(1260–1335)



Gustave Doré: Alichino attacking Ciampolo. 1890. Devils guarding the pitch.

Appears in **Canto XXI**

Found in **Circle 8 / Fifth Ditch**

With ... **The Barrators (Grafters)**

Punishment: Ten demons called “Malebranche” (evil claws) ride herd over sinners in a boiling lake. Should the sinners emerge from the pitch, the demons push them under the surface as a cook would dumplings in a soup.

Contrapasso: These sinners are barrators, or corrupt politicians. What we today would call “grafters.” Like the corrupt simonist popes, these corrupt politicians cannot show their faces for fear of being speared by the demons.

*Farfarello, and madcap Rubicante.
'Have a good look around the boiling glue.
Keep these two safe as far as the next crag 123-125²²*

In Cantos XXI through XXIII Dante describes a part of Hell that he devotes more space to than any other, the Fifth Ditch of the 8th Circle, which is reserved for barratry, or graft. This was the crime for which Dante himself was found guilty in absentia in Florence, and he was probably very sensitive about it. Graft? He will show you graft. The demon “madcap Rubicante” is a reference to the Black Guelph, Cante de' Gabrielli, who as Podesta of Florence was the official most responsible for exiling Dante. Executing the order of Dante's exile is why he is found here among the damned. Dante gets his revenge on his successor by placing his accuser and tormentor in Hell with other corrupt politicians, despite not being dead in 1300.

The demons guarding the boiling pitch such as Rubicante, aka Cante de' Gabrielli, are liars just as corrupt as the sinners they prod and poke into the boiling pitch. It hardly matters if the barrator is suffering in the pitch, afraid to show his face, or like Gabrielli, satanic in the form of a winged demon. They are all among the damned.

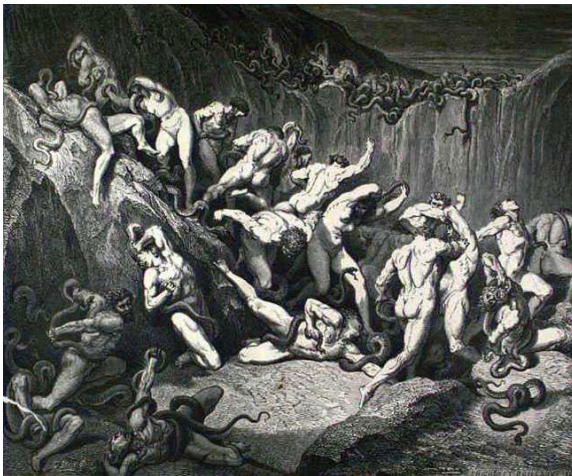
Along with Cante de' Gabrielli, Dante names numerous other corrupt Tuscan politicians. Dante delights in their comical misfortune. Gabrieli lived another twenty years

past publication of the *Inferno*, knowing the whole while he was going to Hell. Well, according to a political loser named Dante. Because of that, more than any other character, Gabrielli is probably the one who could have also written this paper as he likely had a clear understanding of what Dante was doing to his enemies. He was but one of many.

Pistoia

Vanni Fucci

(d. ca. 1295-1300)



Appears in **Cantos XXIV; XXV**

Found in **Circle 8 / Seventh Ditch**

With ... **The Thieves**

Gustave Doré: Punishment of the thieves. 1890

Punishment: The thieves are first found in the seventh ditch of the 8th Circle, where snakes coil around the naked sinners, binding their hands and feet. Soon the sinners turn to ash, but not for long as they revert to their former selves, and the attack of the snakes begin anew. The process never stops.

Contrapasso: The snakes steal the sinners' bodies just they stole things on earth.

*'I loved the life of beasts and not of men,
just like the mule I was. I am Vanni Fucci,
animal. Pistoia was my fitting den.'*

Canto XXIV, 124-126²³

*Ah, Pistoia, Pistoia, why won't you resolve
to burn yourself to ashes, cease to be,
since you exceed your ancestors in evil?*

Canto XXV, 10-12²⁴

Dante takes considerable space beginning in Canto XXIV and extending into Canto XXVI describing in vivid detail the sordid treatment by snakes of the thieves. His ability as a writer is challenged as he asks the reader to imagine what he swears he has seen. It is incredible the story he tells, of snakes and serpents twisting and coiling around naked thieves, transforming them this way and that. Colorful to say the least.

There are thieves in every city but Dante probably chooses to illuminate Vanni Fucci so as to spitefully rail against Pistoia, a city whose strife reignited the Black and White Guelph dispute that spread disastrously to Florence, culminating in Dante's exile. Dante highlights Vanni Fucci's thievery of sacred objects from the sacristy of St. James Chapel in Pistoia. The theft shocked local residents, and word spread to Florence, where Dante probably learned of it. An innocent man was accused and put to death for the crime.

In Canto XXIV Vanni prophesies that Dante's White Guelph party will expel the Blacks, who will return to do the same to the Whites. Vanni hopes to distress Dante.

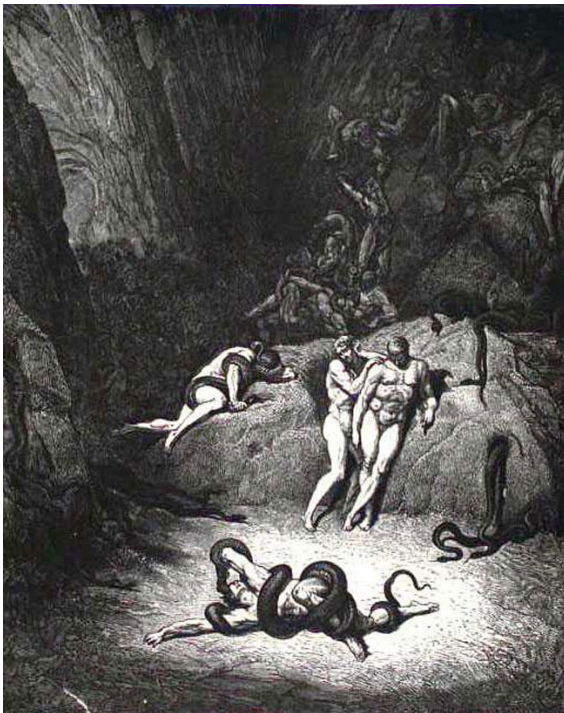
Moving on seamlessly to the next Canto XXV, Vanni curses God:

No more obscene blasphemy could be devised for Vanni Fucci to commit.
Dante's hatred of him is savage. He rejoices to see what happens next.

Two snakes, friends to him, Dante says, coil themselves, one about Vanni's neck, stifling him, another about his arms, binding him so that he cannot move. Apostrophizing Pistoia, Dante calls on it to burn itself to ashes...His execration of Vanni Fucci is extraordinary: some personal resentment must underly it, the reasons for which are now unknown.²⁵

Dante appears to have a personal grudge that seven hundred years later we still do not understand. But there it is. Wishing for the destruction of an entire city is beyond harsh. It is indicative of something far more sinister. Dante seems to put forward Vanni Fucci as a means to denigrate Pistoia.

Florence



Gustave Doré: Transformation of Agnello. 1890

The Five Thieves

Cianfa Donati

Agnolo Brunelleschi

Buoso degli Abati

Francesco Cavalcanti

Puccio Sciancato

Appear in **Canto XXV**

Found in **Circle 8 / Seventh Ditch**

With ... **The Thieves**

Punishment: The five Florentine thieves are found in the seventh ditch of the 8th Circle, where serpents ensnarl them or attack them, stealing their human form and forcing them to become serpent. The sinner/snake then slithers along looking for another shade's body to attack so as to regain human form. No sooner done then another snake comes along to attack, and the shade is forced to assume the serpent's form yet again. And so it goes ...

Contrapasso: The snakes steal the sinners bodies just they stole things on earth.

*asking: 'What's become of **Cianfa**?'*

...

*The other two were looking on and each
was shouting: 'Oh my, **Agnello**, how you change!
Look, now you are neither two nor one!'*

...

*Then he turned his new-made shoulders and he said
to the third: 'I want **Buoso** to run, as I have done,
down on all fours along this road.'*

...

*but I with ease discerned that **Puccio Lameshanks**,
and he alone, of the three companions
in that group, remained unchanged.*

*The other, **Gaville**, was the one whom you lament.*

Canto XXV 43, 67-69, 139-141, 148-151²⁶

*Take joy, **O Florence**, for you are so great
your wings beat over land and sea,
your fame resounds through Hell!*

*Among the thieves, I found five citizens of yours
who make me feel ashamed, and you
are raised by them to no great praise.*

*But if as morning nears we dream the truth,
it won't be long before you feel the pain
that Prato, to name but one, desires for you.*

Canto XXVI, 1-9²⁷

Dante takes enormous poetic pride describing the torturous scene endured by his fellow Florentines. He brags of besting the poets Lucan and Ovid, who described similar serpentine scenes but not to his skill level. It would be like a figure skater complimenting another's 360 spin and then pulling off a double 360. Dante is essentially saying, "Hey Guys - watch this!" Dante can barely contain his joy at describing the punishment, as serpents exchange form with human shades, who can reverse the process by attacking another human shade, but then become yet again the target of another serpent. The scene is never ending pandemonium and frankly very entertaining. Dante is right to be proud of his poetic description. Lucan and Ovid would be proud, or better still, jealous.

Not much is known about the five Florentines other than they were all nobles. Cianfa is of the Black Guelph Donati family, and Dante harbors a fierce grudge against their relative, Corso Donati, who is still alive in 1300 and cannot logically be placed in Hell. Agnolo Brunelleschi was a robber adept at disguise. Puccio Sciancato was a Ghibelline noble whose family avenged his murder in Gaville. Of Buoso degli Abati and Francesco Cavalcanti little is known. But the main point here is that they were all nobles, and nobles had failed Florence miserably, which had led to the city's cultural demise.

A careful reading of the sonnets exchanged between Dante and Forese Donati, a very close friend, prior to the latter's death in 1296 illuminates the issue of nobility in Florence and lends insight into Dante's angst on this subject:

The Alighieri are not the nobles they claim to be but a lowborn family, and behave accordingly. Forese implicitly asks why Dante has criticized the Donati; the Alighieri do not act as aristocrats should...The Florentine commune engaged in a program to reign in the noble families and prevent them from exacting revenge on one another...the government struggled for decades to control the feuding aristocrats. Forese alludes to the changing times, decrying the loss of nobility...When Forese pillories the

person of Dante, he also strikes at all of thirteenth century Florence. He treats Dante as the embodiment of a cultural, historical, and possibly political change that offends him.²⁸

Dante adopts his friend Forese Donati's attitude toward the Alighieri family and applies it to other Florentine noble families in the *Inferno*. The accused becomes the accuser. He projects his family's shortcomings onto others. Dante resists and rejects the new Florence that has become an economic and cultural powerhouse on the world stage and has seemingly turned its back on a simpler and more noble time. Florence was passing him by, and Dante echoes his friend's pain in watching that happen. He puts the nobles in Hell.

In the first 12 lines of Canto XXVI, Dante essentially tells Florence that he is ashamed of the city, that disaster and pain will come soon, and frankly that it can't come soon enough. Dante uses contemporary characters from a particular province to make a larger, negative point about them.

Guido da Montefeltro

(1223–1298)



Gustave Doré: Punishment of the Sowers of Discord. 1890

Appears in **Canto XXVII**

Found in **Circle 8 / Eighth Ditch**

With ... **The Fraudulent Counselors**

Punishment: The fraudulent counselors in the eighth ditch of the eighth circle are clothed in flames that scorch them.

Contrapasso: The flames look like tongues of fire that move with the sinners, just as the fraudulent counselors' tongues burned others on earth with their deceitful counsel.

*I answer without fear of being shamed.
'A warrior was I, and then a corded friar,
thinking, cinctured so, to make amends.
...
will seal your triumph on the lofty throne."
"The moment I was dead, Francis came for me.
But one of the dark Cherubim cried out:

"No, wrong me not by bearing that one off.
' "He must come down to serve among my minions
because he gave that fraudulent advice. 67-69; 112-117²⁹*

In Canto XXVII Dante meets in the eighth ditch of the 8th Circle of Hell, the great Ghibelline leader and nobleman Guido da Montefeltro, who had successfully defeated anti-papal forces in Romagna and Tuscany. Eventually Guido da Montefeltro's gains were reversed, and he resigned himself to papal authority. He became very religious and entered the Franciscan Order late in life, only to have Pope Boniface VIII lure him out of retirement with a promise of absolution for his military counsel. Montefeltro advised Boniface to trick the powerful Ghibelline Colonna family, who had objected to his election, by offering amnesty and then withdrawing it. The Pope's forces destroyed the Colonna fortress after they vacated. As Guido tells Dante, upon his death, St. Francis of Assisi came to take him to Heaven, but the devil intervened, correctly pointing out, "because he gave that fraudulent advice," and away to Hell he went. The real message is that Boniface is a jerk, and here we have one more reason he should be in Hell.

Dante gets a two-for here. He creates situations such as meeting Guido that allow him to comment on political affairs and also express negative views about people and places he hates: “Guido’s vicious slam of Boniface, with its concomitant enthusiasm for the abandoned devotion to crusading, is not in any respect at odds with Dante’s own thoughts . . . Boniface cares nothing for Christians, according to Guido and Dante.”³⁰

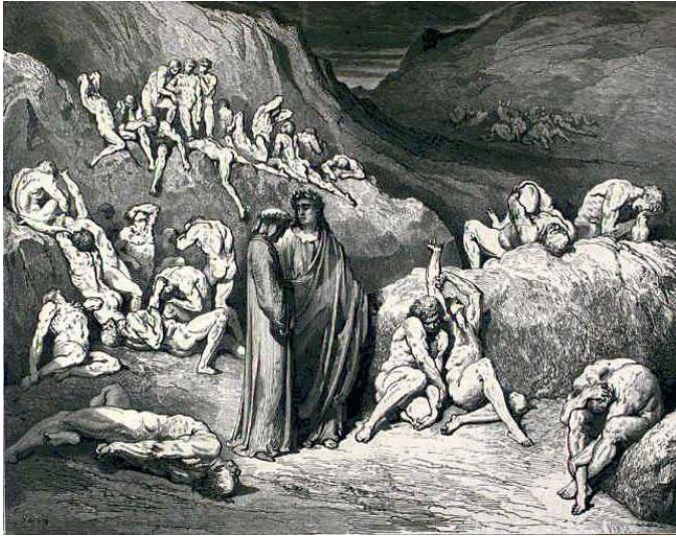


Joseph Anton Koch: Saint Francis and the Devil's Dispute over the Spirit of Guido da Montefeltro. 1800 Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen

Dante demonstrates he is still obsessed with Boniface, whom he had already insinuated was soon to arrive in the third ditch of the same circle. Somehow Boniface’s imminent arrival just wasn’t enough for Dante, who revisited the subject of Boniface in the guise of Guido da Montefeltro. He drives home the fact that Boniface warred against good Christian families, treacherously went back on his word and was so evil that he cost a Franciscan monk (Montefeltro) his ticket to Heaven. The Devil instead of St. Francis grabbed Montefeltro’s spirit.

Dante was as much interested in highlighting the collateral damage of Boniface as he was the transgressions of a Ghibelline warrior, Montefeltro, whom he had previously praised in "Convivio" 4.28.8. He needed to disingenuously reverse his opinion of Montefeltro so as to point the finger at Boniface. Hate drove Dante to contort his true high opinion of Montefeltro in order to accomplish another smear of Boniface.

Siena



Gustave Doré: Dante and Virgil among the falsifiers. 1890

Griffolino d'Arezzo

(d.1272)

Capocchio

(late 13th century)

**& The Spendthrift
Brigade**

(late 13th century)

**Giovanni Stricca
Niccolo Salimbeni
Caccia d'Asciano
“Abbagliato” dei
Folcacchieri**

Appear in **Canto XXIX / XXX**

Found in **Circle 8 / Tenth Ditch**

With ... **The Falsifiers**

Punishment: These sinners are screaming in pain, and the stench coming from them is overwhelming. They all have some painful disease causing them thirst or fever, or they have scabies. They scratch and claw at one another.

Contrapasso: These sinners gave a false image of themselves or were deceitful. Their reward is the suffering associated with very sick, diseased people.

*And one of them replied: 'I was of **Arezzo**.
Albero of Siena had me burned alive.*

But what I died for does not bring me here.

...

*And I said to the poet: 'Was ever a people
quite so fatuous as the Sieneſe?*

Why, not even the French can match them!'

*Whereupon the other leper, hearing me,
replied: 'Except, of course for *Stricca*—
he knew how to moderate his ſpending—*

*'and for *Niccolò*—the firſt one to deviſe
a coſtly uſe for cloves,
there in the garden where ſuch ſeeds take root—*

*'and for that band in whoſe company
Caccia d'Asciano ſquandered his vineyards
and his fields, and *Abbagliato* ſhowed his wit.*

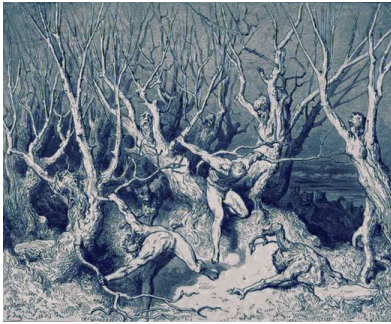
*'But, to let you know who's in your camp
againſt the Sieneſe, look cloſe at me
ſo that my face itſelf may answer you.*

*'You will ſee I am the ſhade of *Capocchio*,
who altered metal by means of alchemy. 109-111; 121-137³¹*

In Canto XXIX Dante excoriates the Sieneſe. He hates them. Juſt like Bologna. Juſt like Florence. Juſt like more to come. The regional animoſities in 13th century cannot be overſtated. The firſt Sieneſe referenced in the Tenth Ditch of Circle 8 is Griffolino d'Arezzo, who was burned at the ſtake for alchemy. Capocchio, another alchemist (coin forger), is next up and quoted by Dante as ſaying, “Was ever a people / quite ſo fatuous as the Sieneſe? / Why, not even the French can match them!” Funny but Capocchio is alſo Sieneſe. Another two for one as Dante manages to ſmear both the Sieneſe and French in one ſentence.

“The Florentines made the citizens of rival Siena the butt of many jokes,”³² and in that vein, Dante's diſlike for Siena drove him to unnaturally place a bunch of bratty ſquanderers in a place in Hell reſerved for con-men, which they actually were not.

Capocchio goes on to name members of the infamous Siennese Spendthrift Brigade:



Gustave Doré: Spendthrifts running through the wood of the suicides. 1890

Giovanni Stricca, Niccolo Salimbeni, Caccia d'Asciano and Abbagliato dei Folcacchieri. Those four Siennese young men squandered their wealth in a gross display of spending and debauchery. They were more akin to what the 20th century writer Tom Wolfe would describe in his book *Bonfire of the Vanities*, as “Masters of the Universe.”

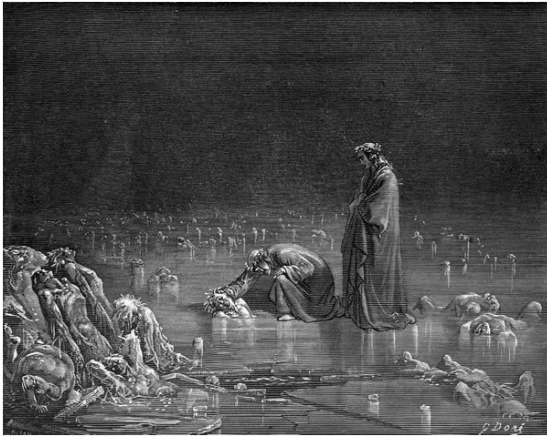
The Spendthrift Brigade were rich, spoiled kids with no sense of decorum or responsibility. They numbered about a dozen, who foolishly pooled their money to live together in a castle and wasted perhaps over ten million dollars in present day money on a lavishly gross lifestyle. They spent their collective inheritance until it was gone, which took only a few years. For anyone who worked hard for their money, and that was most everybody, the sight of the Spendthrift Brigades' irresponsibility was nauseating.

This group probably should have been placed higher in Hell among the Squanderers, as were a few other Spendthrifts. Taunting the Siennese, Dante instead tosses them in Hell with Arezzo and Capocchio and delights in his sarcastic takedown of a rival city. We call it bigotry today. In the last cantos of the *Inferno*, Dante takes on one rival Tuscan city after another, grouping the sinners by their heritage, smearing them by stereotypes of that day. To get it done, or fit them all in, Dante probably invented very dishonestly a hierarchy of sins with corresponding hellish punishment that did not fit the crime but did assuage his personal venom toward those people. It is possible that

commentators have read too much into Dante's theological reasoning and not enough into something more perverse, such as the author's hatred toward his enemies.

Bocca Degli Abati

(late 13th century)



Gustave Doré: Dante addressing Bocca degli Abati. 1890

Appears in **Canto XXXII**

Found in **Circle 9 / Second Ring**

Antenora

With ... **The Traitors To Country**

Punishment: The sinners here are all traitors to country (really their province) or political party. They are in a lake of ice and stuck up to their necks, unable to move their heads.

Contrapasso: The act of betrayal requires movement, action. The sinner must do something to accomplish it. The contrapasso in Circle 9 is fitting because the sinner must spend eternity not moving at all, suffering in the freezing lake.

I struck my foot hard in the face of one.

Wailing, he cried out: 'Why trample me?'

*Unless you come to add to the revenge
for **Montaperti**, why pick on me?'*

...

*I now had his hair twisted in my hand
and had already plucked a tuft or two,
while he howled on, keeping his eyes cast down,*

*when another cried: 'What ails you, **Bocca**?
Isn't it enough, making noise with your jaws,
without that howling too? What devil's at you?'*

*'Now you no longer need to say a word,
vile traitor,' said I, 'to your shame
shall I bring back true news of you.' 78-81; 103-108³³*

In Canto XXXII Dante is walking along with Virgil and accidentally kicks the head of a sinner, Bocca Degli Abati, who is in Antenora, Circle 9 of the Second Ring, one of the lowest places in Hell reserved for traitors against their country or party. Bocca Degli Abati mentions Montaperti, and sure enough that is a sore subject to any Florentine Guelph. It was there at the Battle of Montaperti (near Siena) in 1260 that the Guelphs suffered their most humiliating defeat at the hands of the Ghibellines, who had nearly half their troops. The Guelph military was routed in every way imaginable on the battlefield.

Bocca Degli Abati was in Montaperti fighting for the Guelphs but had Ghibelline loyalties. That disastrous day he suddenly switched allegiances and charged the soldier holding the Guelph flag aloft and cut off his hand, causing the flag to fall. The Guelph troops were further demoralized and soon after surrendered. Aside from the 10,000 Guelph fatalities (versus 600 Ghibellines), nearly 15,000 Guelphs were captured and 4,000 went missing or ran away. The defeat was total. Bocca Degli Abati became synonymous with treason, the same way Benedict Arnold is to Americans or Judas Iscariot to Christians.

Undoubtedly, Dante grew up reviling Bocca Degli Abati. At the mere mention of Montaperti, Dante physically attacks Bocca and threatens to tear out his hair if he does not reveal his name. As he did earlier with Filippo Argenti, Dante strikes a sinner, doing to him in Hell what he probably wished he could on earth:

Dante's behavior toward Bocca, as towards Filippo Argenti, reveals a ferocious side of his character. No amount of allegorical interpretation can explain away his savage cruelty, displayed not only by the character Dante but left unmitigated by an expression of compunction by Dante the writer. Here are no tears, no fainting spells at the sight of the suffering of the damned. He rejoices in it and relishes the prospect of keeping their black fame alive on earth.³⁴

There is no sugar coating Dante's mistreatment of Bocca Degli Abati. It is a stretch to say philosophically, as some commentators do, that Dante had finally learned to accept God's judgement and not pity the sinners. That explanation will not do. What we have here is one man's hatred for another. It is wrath plain and simple.

Bocca refuses to reveal his name, but another sinner gives him up. He quickly tries to change the subject by listing still more traitors, namely Buoso da Duera (sold out to the French), Tesauro de' Beccheria (betrayed Guelphs for the Ghibellines), Gianni de' Soldanieri (betrayed Ghibellines for the Guelphs), Tebaldello Zambrasi (betrayed Bologna to the Guelphs). To Dante, treason is treason no matter the source or the victim, and he is happy to tick off the names. While careful to list the other traitors to their country or party, Dante holds a special enmity for Bocca Degli Abati. He makes sure he gets beaten up in Hell because the *Inferno* is in large measure about revenge.

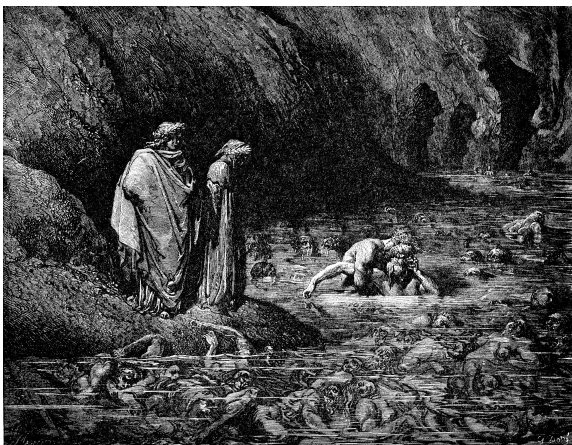
Pisa

Count Ugolino della Gherardesca

(1220-1289)

Archbishop Ruggieri degli Ubaldini

(d.-1295)



Gustave Doré: Ugolino gnawing on the brains of the Archbishop Ruggieri. 1890

Appears in **Canto XXXIII**

Found in **Circle 9 / Second Ring**

Antenora

With ... **The Traitors To**

Country and Party

Punishment: Ugolino and Ruggieri are in the same frozen lake as Abati. The sinners here are all traitors to country or party. Most are in a lake of ice and stuck up to their necks, unable to move their heads. But Ugolino is an exception as he is prone over Ruggieri gnawing on his head.

Contrapasso: This is perhaps Dante's ultimate contrapasso. Count Ugolino was a traitor to Pisa and died of starvation along with his son and grandsons in a jail cell after Archbishop Ruggieri betrayed his trust. Dante portrays Ugolino cannibalizing his family

before his death in the jail cell. So it is fitting that he would do the same to his traitor, Ruggieri, for eternity.

*'But if my words shall be the seeds that bear
infamous fruit to the traitor I am gnawing,
then you will see me speak and weep together.*

*'I don't know who you are, nor by what means
you have come down here, but when I listen to you speak
it seems to me you are indeed from Florence.*

*'Take note that I was **Count Ugolino**,
and he **Archbishop Ruggieri**. Let me
tell you why I'm such a neighbor to him.*

...
*Ah **Pisa**, how you shame the people
of that fair land where 'si' is heard!
Since your neighbors are so slow to punish you,*

*may the islands of Capraia and Gorgona
move in to block the Arno at its mouth
and so drown every living soul in you! 7-15; 79-84³⁵*

Toward the end of the *Inferno*, in the Second Ring of the 9th Circle reserved for traitors of country or party, Dante completely fabricates a story. The gross tale is a highlight of the *Inferno*, and many commentators repeat it verbatim *ad nauseam* without any hint of criticism for its veracity. Probably motivated by hatred for the city of Pisa and the traitors to the Guelph cause and dislike for Ghibelline leaders in general, Dante seeks to shame them with a preposterously barbaric story. Maybe more to the point, Dante was close friends with Count Ugolino's nephew, Nino Visconti, who was exiled by his uncle, and this story is quite possibly told for vengeance sake. Dante might be exacting his friend's revenge.

The Archbishop of Pisa, Ruggieri degli Ubaldini, despite working for the papacy, was a Ghibelline sympathizer who wanted to control both Pisa's secular and religious

affairs. Standing in the way of secular control were two competing factions of the Pisan Guelph government: Count Ugolino della Gherardesca and his nephew and rival, Nino Visconti. Archbishop Ruggieri played chess with the situation, duping Visconti and helping Ugolino chase his nephew into exile. Recognizing a potential clear path to power, Ruggieri then betrayed his ally Ugolino by arresting him and as well two of his sons and



Gustave Doré: Ugolino mourning the death of his sons. 1890

two grandsons. The Archbishop locked the five of them inside and threw the key into the Arno River. They starved to death in around eight days. Archbishop Ruggieri then made himself Podesta of Pisa, thus exerting complete control of both church and state affairs in Pisa, a fierce rival to Florence.

Dante faults Ruggieri for killing innocents, the sons and grandsons, and places him in a most lethal position getting his brains eaten in Hell.

Dante embellished the Ruggieri-Ugolino story by having the latter admit to him in Canto XXXIII that he had eaten the bodies of his sons and grandsons. There was no way for Dante to have known what transpired behind that locked prison cell door. There was no physical evidence reported at that time relating to cannibalization when Pisa fetched the bodies from the tower, and surely there would have been were it so. As well, forensic examination of the bodies in the 21st century determined that none of the bodies was found to have been cannibalized.

Dante invented the story that Ugolino had turned a deaf ear to his sons' suffering, that he stayed stoic and cold, and did the unthinkable:

In the imaginary account he gives to Ugolino, Dante lifts the possibility to the level of epic by making the sons offer their bodies as food, relegating the realistic possibility to Ugolino's gnawing of Ruggieri's skull . . . At this point Dante the wrathful poet stands aside from his story and calls obliteration down upon all the inhabitants of Pisa, reviled in Florence as an example of barbarity . . . This is the wrath of Jehovah who sent the Flood, but without the mercy shown to Noah. Pisa, a new Thebes, deserves in Dante's opinion to be utterly destroyed.³⁶

Like a true Florentine, Dante hated Pisa, and to drive home his point of their barbaric nature, he deceived his readers with a completely false story. He is a "wrathful poet" telling a tall tale so as to incite his readers to hate Pisans as much as he does. But there isn't a shred of evidence or truth to the story. Seven centuries later, here is the evidence:

Francesco Mallegni, a University of Pisa paleoanthropologist, solved the 13th-century mystery by conducting DNA tests on remains found earlier this year in the Cathedral of San Francesco. The scientist - known as the 'professor of excellent cadavers' . . . examined the five skulls and bones discovered in a tomb in the former chapel of the Gherardesca family. Mallegni found that Ugolino not only did not eat his descendants, but that he was hardly in a condition to eat anything at all.³⁷

Indeed, by far the oldest at nearly 70 years of age, Ugolino would be the least likely to survive. His skull was found to be smashed, perhaps the result of a mercy killing in the cell by his sons. Mallegni discovered that none of the five had consumed any meat at all near the time of their deaths. Dante erroneously portrayed Ugolino's two sons and two grandsons as four sons, some of tender age, when they were in fact all adults. One grandson was actually a father. Dante makes the victims appear to be all young boys so as

to heighten the sense of outrage and further impress his readers with Pisan barbarism, as in those people are animals for doing that to children.

Finally arriving at the whole point to the story, the angry poet thinks Pisa should be destroyed. The disgusting scene described by the bigot Dante reflected his sense of hatred for Pisans and is a vivid example of his turning the *Inferno* into a vindictive smear campaign.

Genoa

Fra Alberigo

(1240-1307)

Branca d'Oria

(1233-1325)



Gustave Doré: Dante and Virgil traversing Cocytus.
1890

Appears in **Canto XXXIII**

Found in **Circle 9 / Third Ring**

Ptolomea

With ... **The Traitors To Guests**

Punishment: The sinners here are all traitors to their guests. They are in a lake of ice stuck up to their eyeballs, unable to move or see.

Contrapasso: In Circle 9, the Third Ring of Ptolomea, the ice gets deeper and covers more of the sinners' head, in this ring up to their eyeballs causing blindness. Betraying guests in your home is more shocking than even betrayal to country.

*He spoke: 'I am **Fra Alberigo**. I am he
who harvested the evil orchard,
and here, for figs, I am repaid in dates.'*

*...
'as you must know, if you've come down just now.
He is **Branca d'Oria**. Quite some years
have passed since he was thus confined.'*

*'I think,' I said to him, 'you're fooling me.
For Branca d'Oria is not yet dead: he eats
and drinks and sleeps and puts on clothes.'*

*...
O, men of **Genoa**, race estranged
from every virtue, crammed with every vice,
why have you not been driven from the earth? 118-120; 136-141; 151-153³⁸*

Ptolomea, the Third Ring of the 9th Circle, houses traitors against their guests. The ice covers ever more of the condemned traitors the deeper one goes in the 9th Circle. Fra Alberigo fooled his brother and cousin into thinking all was forgiven for an earlier insult, invited them to a banquet and upon giving his servants the signal, “Bring on the fruit,” they murdered them. Dante knew Fra Alberigo was still alive in Genoa, so he was surprised to find his damned soul in the 9th Circle with ice encasing his eyes. Alberigo explains that when a traitor kills his guest, as he had done, the sinner’s soul is immediately inhabited by Satan, bypasses Minos for directions, and is whisked straight into the frozen lake in Ptolomea. The sinner’s body remains alive on earth. It is said that Satan also grabbed Judas the very second he betrayed Jesus Christ. Dante borrows the idea here.

Fra Alberigo is quick to identify another Genovese, Branca d'Oria, who with the help of his nephew conspired to murder his father-in-law, Michel Zanche, at a banquet in his home. As it happens, Zanche is in the Fifth Ditch of the 8th Circle of Hell with barrators and swindlers (read Canto XXII). Dante is in disbelief regarding Branca and

does not want to be made a fool. Alberigo convinces Dante that some people are so evil that Satan enters and remains in them for the rest of their lives, while their soul rots in Hell. Commentator Barbara Reynolds says, “Of all his contrivances for anticipating the damnation of individuals still alive, this is the most malicious. Vindictive too is his refusal, after his false pledge, to remove the ice from Alberigo’s eyes.”³⁹

Branca d’Oria is the last contemporary of Dante’s mentioned in the *Inferno*, and like Cante de’ Gabrielli, he outlives Dante by many years, all the while knowing that he is going to Hell, or is actually already there. Dante’s humiliation of that living person, Branca d’Oria, is complete. As Reynolds noted, the inclusion of d’Oria was especially cruel and mean spirited.

Like so many other contemporaries in the *Inferno*, Dante uses Fra Alberigo and Branca d’Oria as vessels to arrive at his real target, in this case the Genovese. Dante writes in Canto XXXIII: “O, men of Genoa, race estranged / from every virtue, crammed with every vice / why have you not been driven from the earth?” He unleashes the hateful, bigoted diatribe against Genoa just as he had previously against the people of Florence, Bologna, Pistoia, Siena and Pisa. Dante thinks the Genovese should be exterminated. Reynolds recognizes Dante’s vindictive design: “Nor do we know why Dante, finding in Ptolmea, in company ‘with the worst spirit from Romagna’, two souls from Genoa, calls for the destruction of all the inhabitants . . . Here Dante takes a stance not only of moral outrage but of moral vengeance.”⁴⁰ Dante sees people from other Italian provinces as somehow inferior to him and unworthy of living. He was in effect being a vindictive bigot who used the *Inferno* to punish enemies and advance his bigotry.

Conclusion

Dante Alighieri is admired and maybe even revered by most *Divine Comedy* commentators. It is easy to see why. The *Divine Comedy* is a wealth of information about medieval history, theology and philosophy. It is an incredibly entertaining literary journey through the underworld. The imagination and poetic confidence to accomplish it, with an innovative 14,233 line rhyme sequence, was nothing short of extraordinary. The accolades go on and on and have for several centuries.

So how do we dare criticize such a poet? For starters, he would. Dante spoke truth to power and did not hesitate to challenge anyone, including popes, kings and other writers. Most Dante commentators prefer to concentrate mostly on the substantial weight of the *Divine Comedy* across a number of disciplines and assumed his design and intentions were intellectually pure. They were not. Dante's biggest failing sin was neither Lust nor Pride as he would have his readers believe, but rather Wrath. The *Inferno* is filled with it. Dante was devious in his design of Hell. Dante commentator Fabian Alfie says of Dante:

His insults cannot be studied in the abstract. Invective strikes a particular individual, and therefore that person's unique traits and life history are relevant . . . The seventh bolgia of fraud in *Inferno* serves as a case in point. Dante has just observed the hellish transformations of the thieves . . . But in the first tercet of *Inferno* XXVI he does not denigrate the thieves themselves. Instead he inveighs against the city of Florence . . . The poet underscores the dual conception of identity that is intrinsic to derision. The thieves are individuals, of course, which is why they suffer personally; but they are also symbolic of their citizenship. The complex notion of identity is not specific to the passage of the thieves, but rather provides the dramatic force of much of the *Commedia*.⁴¹

In too many instances in the *Inferno*, Dante is not really so concerned with the sin as much as he is the sinner and what he represents, thus contradicting the high-minded purpose most commentators assign to the work. Dante is far more petty than many scholars seem to realize. As Alfie noted, Dante does not seem particularly interested in the sins of many contemporaries. They are a means to another end. “Symbolic of their citizenship,” as Alfie put it, the contemporaries’ collective inclusion in Hell are often there to highlight why a particular place should be destroyed.

While true that many commentators have noted Dante’s viciousness in the *Inferno*, they usually color their opinion through the prism of Christian justice. Which means they think he was justified and that any harsh impropriety by the pilgrim or poet is understandable and therefore forgivable. But not really. Dante’s vindictiveness is mistaken as Christian justice when in reality it is nothing more than personal retribution. For many contemporary characters, their real sin was crossing Dante or making his life miserable. So to Hell they go.

The entire construction of Hell serves Dante’s personal vendetta and has little or nothing to do with Christian justice. Since when is murder a lesser sin than simony? Where in the ten commandments does God tell Moses, “Thou shalt not betray your country or political party?” Surely God does not relegate traitors to party a lower place in Hell than murderers? Does God really believe that hypocrites or counterfeiters are deserving of greater punishment than the violent? Sowers of discord are among the most evil people? Really? Are flatterers,

panderers and seducers really worse than the Lustful, who have carnal relations with other people's spouses? What is really going on in Dante's Hell?

Dante's vision of Hell is properly constructed from the Gates of Hell until The Great Barrier and Waterfall. In other words, the first half of Dante's Hell includes most if not all of the seven deadly sins: pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth. All other sins emanate from those. That theological construction is the traditional Christian view. As Dante moves past the Great Barrier and Waterfall in Hell, we are introduced to his contrived lower Hell, where he gives God a helping hand and defines still greater sins that would have Satan exerting ever stiffer punishment. It serves Dante's purpose and not God's. The lower section of Hell is a Dante embellishment, so as to make his enemies suffer a worse fate than simple Christian justice ever would.

Dante's lower Hell is called Malebolge, which includes panderers, flatterers, simonists, sorcerers, grafters, hypocrites, thieves, deceivers, sowers of discord, and counterfeiterers and as well Caina, Antenora, Ptolomea and Judecca, that include traitors of varying kinds. Dante would have us believe that those are worse sins than the seven deadly sins, including murder. It is preposterous. Not coincidentally, included in the lower depths of Hell are a preponderance of Dante's sworn enemies. People and places he loathed. He conveniently created a more severe place to punish them.

In the first half of Dante's Hell, before the Great Barrier and Waterfall, he punishes mainly political opponents. The Italian contemporaries he includes consist mostly of Ghibellines and Black Guelphs, rivals he hated. He beats up the

brother of a Black Guelph who seized his Florentine home, Filippo Argenti. He gets into a heated argument with the most successful Ghibelline leader, Farinata degli Uberti, whom he rejoices to see suffer. Other political enemies are also encountered, and Dante relishes their eternal discomfort. The poet uses his masterpiece to score political points that he was otherwise powerless to achieve. Rendered irrelevant in his prime by his forced exile from Florence, Dante struggles to have his say and finds his voice in the writing of the *Inferno*. He shows profound frustration. All of his angst fomented his vindictive spirit, and there is hell to pay.

Past the Great Barrier and Waterfall, in the lower half of Dante's Hell, Dante caters mostly to his bigotry. Characters are placed in a particular spot, grouped in a particular sequence for the sole purpose of defaming their city and hence ethnicity. We might think Tuscans are all of the same Italian heritage, but Dante and many others of his era saw distinct differences among them.

Dante wastes no time in getting right to it. In the First Ditch of the 8th Circle of Malebolge, Venedico Caccianemico is encountered for the purpose of damning all of Bologna as pimps and whores. Next up in the Third Ditch, Dante places Pope Nicholas III there as a precursor to attacking Popes Boniface VIII and Clement V, and thus the papacy as a whole. He makes the point that simonist popes keep coming every twenty years with no end in sight, a scourge on the Church. In the Fifth Ditch, Dante targets his Black Guelph successor, Cante de' Gabrielli, who issued his exile and was still alive, a political payback that departs momentarily from his bigotry but is a good example of his personal animosity.

Dante gets back on track in the Seventh Ditch of the 8th Circle, when he eviscerates Vanni Fucci for the purpose of hatefully attacking all of Pistoia, which he hopes will burn to the ground. While he is at it, Dante encounters five thieves from Florence, who may or may not have been thieves, who represent all that is wrong with his city, and like Pistoia, they should be destroyed. The sooner the better he says.

Dante is on a roll through lower Hell. In the Tenth Ditch, he encounters two Sieneese, who mention four more Sieneese, all placed there for the sole purpose of smearing the Sieneese as a “fatuous” people. Particular sins are synonymous to certain places, all of which he condemns.

After abusing a political rival, Bocca Degli Abati, in what was obviously an exhibition of personal animus, Dante moves on to the Second Ring of the 9th Circle where he tells a gruesome story about Count Ugolino and Archbishop Ruggieri. Except the purpose of the story was not really about those sinners but rather the barbaric nature of Pisa, which should also be destroyed. Dante finishes his romp through lower Hell by telling the treacherous stories of Fra Alberigo and Branca d’Oria, found in the Third Ring, which he does for the larger purpose of calling for the extermination of Genoa. It was not really about those two sinners but rather the particular place they were from. The Genovese must be destroyed.

Dante groups almost all of his contemporary characters in an orderly fashion. There are not among the five thieves one Pisan, one Lucchesi and so on. No, they are all five Florentine. Same with other sinners in other provinces. The point was not about the sin. Dante groups contemporary characters in such a way

as to arrive at his main point, that those people are merely representative as to why Bologna, Pistoia, Siena, Pisa, Genoa and even Florence should be reviled or exterminated. He vindictively roots for genocide.

The lower construction of Dante's Hell was seemingly meant to house those despicable enemies and enjoy revenge. Dante sought to improve on the Christian view of justice, taking it places the Church had never thought to go. He sympathizes with the lustful in the somewhat uncomfortable outskirts of Hell and obliterates traitors in the most torturous depths. The punishment had everything to do with his own life experience.

For many of his contemporaries, Dante's Hell had far more to do with vindictive reprisal than Christian justice. Bigots hate, and Dante hates absolutely. His political, personal and provincial enemies are systematically taken to task in Hell, and he exacts overwhelming revenge. It is the ultimate punishment and satisfaction to place one's enemies in Hell. And the ultimate achievement in literature to be so brilliant as to make it all appear so normal and acceptable. In a sense, Dante's splendid poetry, couched in theology, masks his Wrath. The reality of it, though, is that Dante was incredibly bigoted, mean spirited, small and petty. There was never a hint of a mea culpa from him about his hatred, perhaps the impetus of the *Divine Comedy*.

Following the conclusion to this paper is an addendum listing Dante's contemporaries in the entire *Divine Comedy*. Observe in *Purgatorio* that of nineteen Dante contemporaries, 58% (eleven) are creative people such as poets, artists and musicians. Dante saves his own kind, or at least puts them on the path to salvation. There are a

couple Ghibellines in Purgatory saved by repentance at death, seemingly the only way possible for them. Even in Purgatory, Dante gets even with enemies. A woman (Pia) is included probably to shame her Siennese husband. A close friend, Forese Donati, prophesies his brother Corso to Hell, perhaps the former's real reason for inclusion. Sapia and Rinieri are probably included to tarnish still further Siena and Tuscany. A pope is saved, though it probably helped that he served only one month. Dante's very close friend Nino Visconti is there, and he is probably the source for the Count Ugolino story in *Inferno*. There is a kind and generous man from Lombardy that few seemed to have known.

Dante clearly wanted to achieve not only vindictive retribution but also critical acclaim for his poetry. Who would give that to him? Politicians, clergy, lawyers, businessmen, townspeople? No. It would be his fellow poets and other creative artists. Showing salesmanship or a politician's good sense of schmoozing, Dante floods *Purgatorio* with poets and artists, who later rave about his literary accomplishment. It appears calculating.

Meanwhile, Heaven is nearly devoid of contemporaries, almost as if Dante hardly ever met anyone genuinely good. There are only eight contemporaries in Heaven, and half of them are saints such as Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, whom Dante never met. That leaves really just four people he knew. One is Beatrice, whom he idolized, adored and loved from afar. Frankly, he did not know her very well. Another is Prince Charles Martel, whom he knew for only three months and died at age 23. No other personal friend rates as highly as that fleeting relationship. A third was Cunizza da Romano, the sister of the brutal Ghibelline tyrant Ezzelino Romano, whom Dante placed

in Hell. Cunizza was a neighbor to Dante in his youth when she was nearing the end of her long life. What is odd about her, however, is that she had numerous marriages and affairs. Francesca is crying in Hell while Cunizza is enjoying Heaven, despite both being naughty girls. Go figure. Another contemporary of Dante's was Piccarda Donati, who was pulled from a convent by her brother Corso to marry a Florentine nobleman. She died soon after. It is entirely possible that Piccarda's inclusion in Heaven was to juxtapose Corso's evil, meaning that even while placing contemporaries in Heaven, Dante is partially driven by his Wrath. It is incredibly striking that outside of several poets and a handful of friends, Dante seems to have known so few people worthy of salvation in either Purgatory or Heaven.

Dante turns Hell upside down to torture still harsher those he hates most. He gratuitously included a disproportionate share of artists in Purgatory. He is almost at a complete loss to think of anyone he has ever known other than a beautiful young girl who barely ever spoke to him and three others he hardly knew, worthy of Heaven. Dante appears to have been a cunningly brilliant, mean old man with a vivid imagination, a wicked pen and an axe to grind against most everybody. The real Dante Alighieri clearly was a sanctimonious, wrathful man who never admitted it. He needed to atone for it in *Purgatorio*. Or tone it down in *Inferno*. Had he done either, tempered his mean streak, controlled his Wrath, Florence may have welcomed him back. They did everybody else.

End

Addendum To Paper

Highlighted characters included in paper analysis.

Paradiso: 8 Contemporary Characters

Beatrice Portinari. / Idolized perfect woman Dante barely knew her. His guide

Piccarda Donati. Canto III / Forese & Corso's sister, forced to leave convent

Charles Martel. Cantos VIII / Dante friend, Charles II of Anjou son, died at 23

Cunizza da Romano. Canto IX / Ezzolino's sister, many husbands, affairs

Thomas Aquinas. Cantos X, XI, XIII / Dominican theologian, Scholasticism

Albert of Cologne. Cantos X, XI, XIII / Thomas Aquinas disciple

Siger of Brabant. Cantos X, XI, XIII / Thomas Aquinas disciple

Bonaventure. Cantos XII / Franciscan theologian, influenced *Divine Comedy*

Purgatorio: 19 Contemporary Characters

Casella. Canto II / Florentine (or Pistoia) singer friend of Dante

Manfred. Canto III / King of Sicily, Frederick II son / poet, musician, philosopher

Belacqua. Canto IV / Florentine musician friend of Dante

Buonconte da Montefeltro. Canto V / Ghibelline leader / death repent, "Mary"

La Pia Tolomei. Canto V / killed by Siena husband Paganello de' Pannocchieschi

Sordello. Canto VI / 13th cent poet, troubadour from Mantua in northern Italy

[Nino Visconti](#). Canto VIII / exiled Pisan Guelph leader, Dante's close friend

Oderisi da Gubbio. Cantos X, XI / artist, manuscript illuminator from Umbria

Provenzano Salvani. Cantos X, XI / Sienese Ghibelline general, late repent

Cimabue. Canto XI / Florentine painter

Giotto di Bondone. Canto XI / exceptional Florentine painter, friend

[Sapia](#). Canto XIII / Sienese woman rejoiced at Ghibelline Siena defeat

Rinieri da Calboli. Canto XIV / Leading Romagna Guelph slams Tuscany

Marco Lombardo. Canto XVI / generous man of Lombardy, forgave debts

Pope Adrian V. Canto XIX / died one month after election, Dante's first saved pope

[Forese Donati](#). Cantos XXIII, XXIV / Dante friend, poet, saved by praying wife

Bonagiunta da Lucca. Canto XXIV / poet from Lucca, praises Dante in canto

Guittone da Arezzo. Canto XXIV / poet from Tuscany

Guido Guinizzelli. Canto XXVI / New style poet influenced Dante and others

Inferno: 68 Contemporary Characters

[Pope Celestine V](#). Canto III / Abdicated papacy after 5 mo., Boniface then elected

Francesca da Rimini. Canto V / Killed by husband for affair with his brother

Paolo Malatesta. Canto V / Killed by brother for affair with his wife, Francesca

Ciacco. Canto VI / Apparently Florentine Dante friend, unknown glutton pig

[Filippo Argenti](#). Canto VIII / Brother of Boccacino, confiscated Dante home

[Farinata degli Uberti](#). Canto X / Ghibelline leader at Montaperti, big Guelph loss

Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti. Canto X / Florentine epicurean phil., Guido's father

[Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini](#). Canto X / lost his soul for the Ghibellines
 Obizzo II d'Este. Canto XII / purchased a woman from her brother for sex
 Guido di Monforte. Canto XII / revenge killing of his cousin in a church
 Lano da Siena. Canto XIII / suicidal member of Spendthrift Club of Siena
 Brunetto Latini. Canto XV / Scholar, statesman, philosopher mentor to Dante
 Bishop Andrea de' Mozzi. Canto XV / transferred by Pope Boniface after scandal
 Francesco d'Accorso. Canto XV / Bologna lawyer placed among sodomites
 Tegghiaio Aldobrandi. Canto XVI / Florentine Guelph commander among sodomites
 Iacopo Rusticucci. Canto XVI / Florentine Guelph leader, among sodomites
 Guido Guerra. Canto XVI / Florentine Guelph leader, among sodomites
 Guglielmo Borsiere. Canto XVI / Florentine Guelph, not much known
 Catello di Rosso Gianfigliuzzi. Canto XVII / Florentine nobleman, usurer
 Ciappo Ubriachi. Canto XVII / Florentine Ghibelline nobleman, usurer
 Reginaldo degli Scrovegni. Canto XVII / Paduan Guelph nobleman, usurer
 Vitaliano del Dente. Canto XVII / Paduan nobleman, usurer, prophesied as coming
 Giovanni di Buiamonte. Canto XVII / Florentine nobleman, usurer, not dead yet
[Venedico Caccianemico](#). Canto XVIII / Pimped his sister to Obizzo II d'Este
 Alessio Interminesi. Canto XVIII / Lucca White Guelph noble, among flatterers
[Pope Nicholas III](#). Canto XIX / Simonist pope known for nepotism
[Pope Boniface VIII](#). Canto XIX / Duped Dante, exiled him, a warmonger
[Pope Clement V](#). Canto XIX / Corrupt pope who moved papacy to France
 Guido Bonatti. Canto XX / Astrologer, advised Frederick II, Ezzelino, others
 Mastro Asdente. Canto XX / Parma soothsayer prophesied against Frederick II

Ciampolo. Canto XX / Navarre corrupt politician for Spanish king

[Cante de' Gabrielli](#). CantoXXI / Florence Podesta who exiled Dante, was still alive 1300

Fra Gomita. Canto XXII / Pisa swindler, betrayed Nino Visconti and hanged

Michele Zanche. Canto XXII / Conniving Bologna politician killed by his son-in-law

Catalano de' Malavolti. Canto XXIII/ Bologna Guelph, Florence podesta, hypocrite

Loderingo degli Andalo. Canto XXIII / Religious Bologna Ghibelline, among hypocrites

[Vanni Fucci](#). Canto XIV / Pistoia thief, stole from sacristy, an innocent executed

[Agnello Brunelleschi](#). Canto XXV / One of 5 Florentine noblemen thieves (Cianfa)

[Cianfa Donati](#). Canto XXV / One of 5 Florentine noblemen thieves (Agnello)

[Buoso Donati](#). Canto XXV / One of 5 Florentine noblemen thieves (Cavalcanti)

[Francesco Cavalcanti](#). Canto XXV / One of 5 Florentine noble thieves (Buoso)

[Puccio Sciancato](#). Canto XXV / One of 5 Florentine noblemen thieves, Ghibelline

[Guido da Montefeltro](#). Canto XXVII / Ghibelline warrior, monk, aided Boniface

Fra Dolcino. Canto XXVIII / Heretic preacher, sower of discord

Pier da Medicina. Canto XXVIII/ sowed discord between Malatesta and Polenta families

Geri del Bello. Canto XXIX / rascal Dante cousin killed and not avenged

[Griffolino d'Arezzo](#). Canto XXIX / Siennese alchemist, counterfeiter of metals

[Capocchio](#). Canto XXIX / Siennese alchemist, counterfeit metals, burned at stake

[Giovanni Stricca](#). Canto XXIX/ Spendthrift Club of Siena, mentioned, shamed

[Niccolo Salimbeni](#). Canto XXIX / Spendthrift Club of Siena, mentioned

[Caccia d'Asciano](#). Canto XXIX / Spendthrift Club of Siena, mentioned, shame

["Abbagliato" dei Folcacchieri](#). Canto XXIX / member Spendthrift Club of Siena

Gianni Schicchi. Canto XXX / Impersonated Buoso Donati, deathbed will, took his mule

Maestro Adam. Canto XXX / Counterfeited gold coins in Romena, Englishman

Napoleone Alberti. Canto XXXII / killed brother Alessandro re: inheritance, Ghibelline

Alessandro Alberti. Canto XXXII / killed brother Napoleone re: inheritance, Guelph

Vanni dei Cancellieri. Canto XXXII / fomented Guelph strife, killed second cousin

Sasol Mascheroni. Canto XXXII/ Killed cousin for inheritance, rolled in barrel

Uberto Camicione de' Pazzi. Canto XXXII / Killed a relative

Carlino de' Pazzi. Canto XXXII / Betrayed White Guelphs, sold a castle to Black Guelph

[Bocca Degli Abati](#). Canto XXXII/cut off hand White Guelph flag bearer at Montaperti

Buoso da Duera. Canto XXXII / allowed French passage to Benvenuto battle

Gianni de' Soldanieri. Canto XXXII / Betrayed Ghibellines in favor Guelphs

Tebaldello Zambrasi. Canto XXXII/ Betrayed Ghibelline Faenza to Guelphs

[Count Ugolino](#). Canto XXXII / Traitor to Guelphs and Pisa, Ruggieri starved

[Archbishop Ruggieri](#). Canto XXXII/ killed 4 innocents, betrayed Ugolino/Visconti

[Fra Alberigo](#). Canto XXXII / traitor to guests, revenge killed his brother and cousin

[Branca d'Oria](#). Canto XXXII/ traitor to guests, killed father-in-law for his wealth

Bibliography & Notes

1. Alighieri, Dante. *La Commedia*. Foligno, Italy: Johann Numeister and Evangelista Angelini da Trevi, 1472: There were 300 copies printed in the original run of which only fourteen survive. In 1555 the publisher Gabriel Giolito changed the title to *La Divina Comedia di Dante*, making that the first insertion of the word *Divine*. It is commonly known in English as *The Divine Comedy*. In the past two hundred years there have been roughly 15 major English translations of the entire work. This paper relies heavily on Jean and Robert Hollander's verse translation with Robert Hollander's commentary.
2. Alighieri, Dante. *La Vita Nuova*. 1295: Italian to English translated - *The New Life*.
3. Hollander, Robert. *The Scandal of Dante's Catholicism for Contemporary Readers Part 2*. Dallas: University of Dallas, 2009. Web. 3 Feb. 2016. Hollander made the Cassius Clay and Dante ego comparison at a University of Dallas lecture on March 23, 2009. He described Dante as having a huge ego and intimates that if he ever were to have taken power in Florence after exile, he likely would have gone after his enemies. In other words, Hollander alludes to Dante's vindictiveness.
4. Alighieri, Dante. Dante, *Paradiso*. *Paradiso*, Canto XXV. Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Vintage, 2012.
5. Snider, Denton J. *A Biography of Dante Alighieri: Set Forth As His Life Journey*. St. Louis: Mound City Press, 1922, 335.
6. Toynbee, Paget. *Dante Alighieri: His Life and Works*. London: Methuen & Co., 1900, 91.

7. Boccaccio, Giovanni. *Life Of Dante*. Ed. William Chamberlain, 57-58. Trans. Philip Wicksteed. London: OneWorld Classics, 1904, 57-58 Boccaccio is a very witty writer and thoroughly enjoyable to read. His observations about people, men, women and love are as true today. He would be considered politically incorrect today, but in any bar absolutely, hilariously correct. He was Dante's first biographer, interviewing family and friends decades after his death. For some reason, perhaps because he too was a creative writer, many Dante commentators seem to think Boccaccio embellished some stories, including the one about the first seven cantos.
8. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante, the Inferno*. Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 158. The Hollander *Inferno* translation is preferred here for its poetic clarity thanks mainly to Jean and its insightful commentary thanks to Robert. A double bonus all in one book.
9. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*. Trans. Mark Musa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. 215. Print.
10. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante, the Inferno: Canto VI 58-60* Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 51.
11. Reynolds, Barbara. *Dante: the Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*. United Kingdom: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2006. 220. Print.
12. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante, the Inferno: Canto VIII 58-63* Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 151.
13. Mandelbaum, Allen, Anthony Oldcorn, and Charles Ross. *Lectura Dantis: Inferno: A Canto-by-Canto Commentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, 113.

14. Alighieri, Dante. Dante, *the Inferno Canto X 28-36* Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 187.
15. Lewis, R. W. B. Dante / *A Life*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2001, 4. The destruction numbers in Florence speak to a viciousness on the part of the Ghibelline victors who would raze so many city buildings. Easy to see why Dante returns their hatred in the *Inferno*.
16. Alighieri, Dante. Dante, *the Inferno Canto X 118-120* Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 193.
17. Ibid. 201.
18. Ibid. 331-32.
19. Mandelbaum, Allen, Anthony Oldcorn, and Charles Ross. *Lectura Dantis: Inferno: A Canto-by-Canto Commentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, 175.
20. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante, the Inferno Canto XIX 51-57* Translated by Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 347.
21. Ibid. 356.
22. Ibid. 391.
23. Ibid. 445.
24. Ibid. 457.
25. Reynolds, Barbara. *Dante: the Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*. United Kingdom: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2006, 186. Reynolds especially understands Dante's vindictive nature. She more than most stopped to question the motivation behind some of the more ugly episodes.

26. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante, the Inferno Canto XXV* 43, 67-69, 139-141, 148-151. Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 459-67.
27. Ibid. 477.
28. Alfie, Fabian. *Dante's Tenzzone with Forese Donati: The Reprehension of Vice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011, 57-58. Alfie recognizes the bigotry behind Dante's contemporary inclusions.
29. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante, the Inferno Canto XXVII* 67-69, 112-117. Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 501-03.
30. Ibid. 509.
31. Ibid. 539-41.
32. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante's Inferno: The Indiana Critical Edition*. Trans. Mark Musa. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, 215.
33. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante, the Inferno Canto XXXII* 78-81; 103-108. Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 591-93.
34. Reynolds, Barbara. *Dante: the Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*. United Kingdom: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2006, 220.
35. Alighieri, Dante. *Dante, the Inferno Canto XXXIII* 7-15; 79-84. Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 605-11.
36. Reynolds, Barbara. *Dante: the Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*. United Kingdom: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2006, 224.
37. Newsweek, Staff. *DANTE AND THE CANNIBAL COUNT*. Newsweek 2 Nov. 2002. Web. 16 Mar. 2016.

38. Alighieri, Dante. Dante, *the Inferno Canto XXXIII* 118-120; 136-141; 151-153. Trans. Robert Hollander and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2002, 613-15.
39. Reynolds, Barbara. *Dante: the Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*. United Kingdom: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2006, 226.
40. Ibid. 226.
41. Alfie, Fabian. *Dante's Tenzzone with Forese Donati: The Reprehension of Vice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011, 6.