

Inferno: XXXI-XXXIV

16 March 2020



Dolce Stil Novo

- the most important literary movement of the 13th century in Italy. Influenced by the Sicilian School and Tuscan poetry, its main theme is Love (Amore)
- The name Dolce Stil Novo was used for the first time by Dante Alighieri (Canto 24, Purgatorio)
- The woman is described as an 'angel' or as 'a bridge to God'. Rather than being material in nature, the 'Love' of the Dolce Stil Novo is a sort of 'Divine Love'.
- The first expression of this style of writing is credited to Guido Guinizelli and his poem “Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore”

Innovations of the Stilnovisti

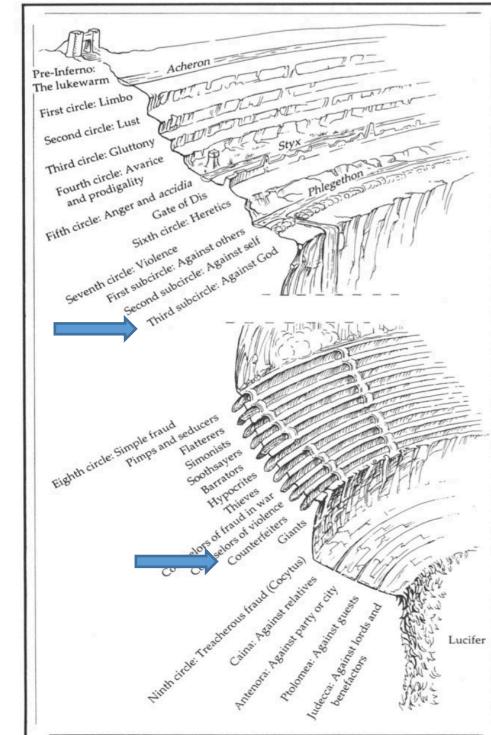
- Audaciously and dangerously yokes philosophy (theology) to Eros
 - Guinizzelli justifies himself with the same analogies which were his sin in the first place, throwing the blame back on the original writer, God, who made ladies so like angels
 - the “solution”: Guinizelli begins the process of making the lady more like God so that the two poles of the dilemma are conflated, with the result that the lover does not have to choose between them
- BEATRICE
 - She has come from heaven to earth as a manifest miracle
 - the portents of her death are the portents of Christ’s death
 - she *is* the incarnate number nine
 - These literary devices of Dante take Guinizzelli’s solution an enormous step further along the road from simile to metaphor, from assimilation to, to appropriation of, the divine
- How The Divine Comedy overcomes the stilnovisti
 - From amorous hyperbole, Dante transitions to true theological speculation.
 - Beatrice will teach Dante what true love is, and true love has nothing to do with romance, possession, passion. It is something much more sublime and spiritual.

Recap, Cantos XVII - XXX

- We were dropped off by Geryon
- We passed through the Malebolge, the circles of simple fraud
- We met the demons waging a mock war on the sinners
- We passed the sowers of discord
 - “Let Lucan now be silent [...] let Ovid be silent.” XXV 94 , 97
- We met Ulysses
 - “Then I grieved, and now I grieve again, when I / Consider what I saw, and I rein in my wit more than / Is my custom, / That it may not run without virtue guiding it, so / That, if a good star or something better has given me / What is good, I may not deprive myself of it.” XXVI 19-24
- We met Master Adam and Sinon
 - “Now keep looking, for I am not far from / quarreling with you!” [...] Like one who dreams of harm, and, dreaming, / Wishes he were dreaming, so that he yearns for what / Is as if it were not, / So I became, unable to speak, wishing to excuse / Myself, and I was excusing myself all along, though I / Did not think so.” XXX 131-141

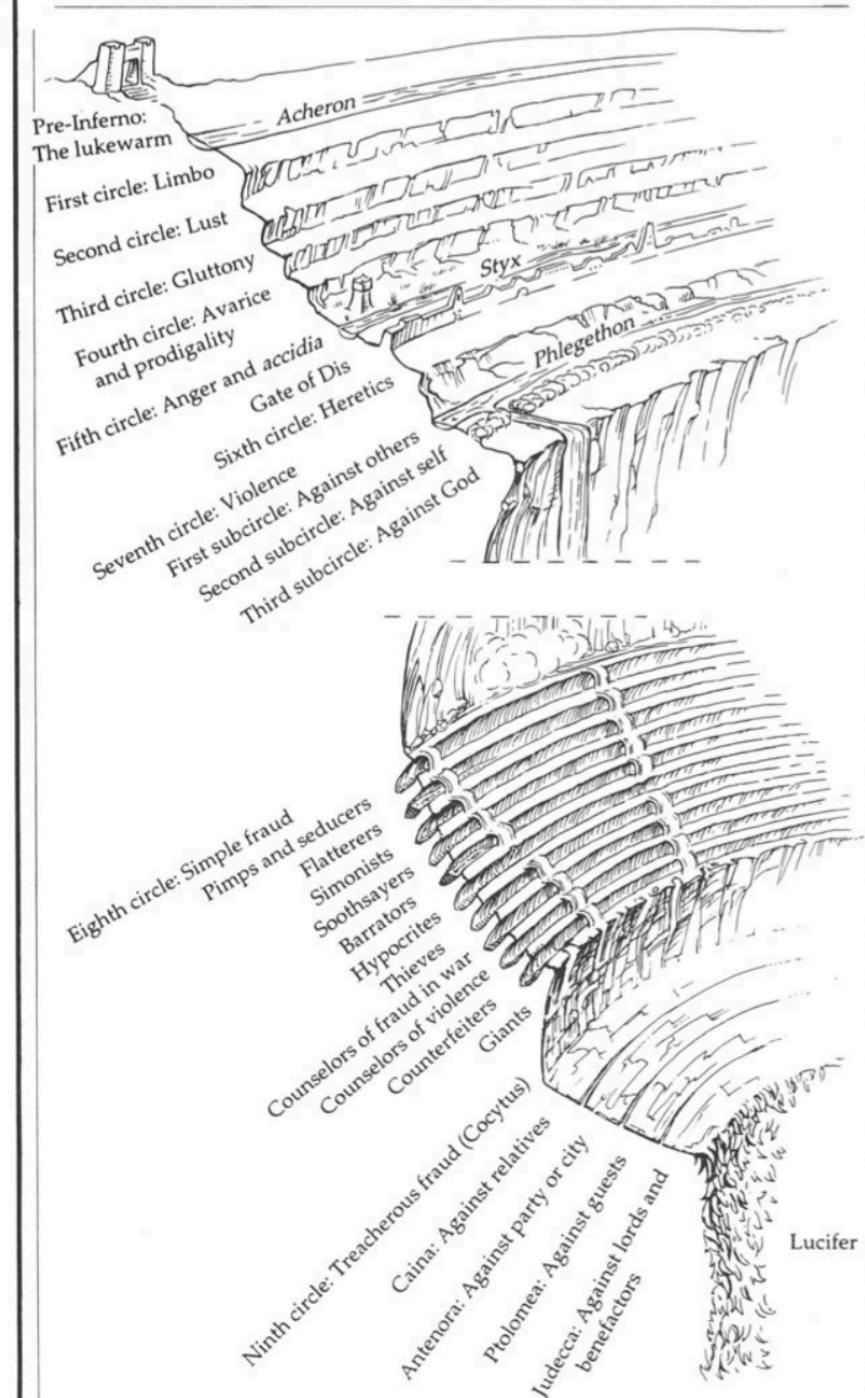
Florentine Banking and the Merchant Class

- Commercial Revolution
 - International trade needs and effects
 - Needs -> protection on long trips
 - Effects -> demand for 'exotic' goods, such as silk and spices
- Increased merchant activity
 - Transition of power from feudal sites of production to cities where merchants gathered
 - Weekly fairs became the space of trade
- Usury
 - Was provisionally allowed for in the 13th century by a papal dictate
- Florence as banking epicenter
 - International banking powerhouse
 - Florin was the most traded currency in Europe
- Tuscan Banking families as patrons
 - For example, the Medici
- The Merchant of Venice?
 - Venice was another, indeed the first, leading merchant city, Shakespeare's tale is about Antonio (merchant) and Shylock (moneylender)



Canto XXXI

- The Giants/Towers
 - Nimrod
 - Ephialtes
 - Antaeus
- Entrance to another circle
 - Treacherous Fraud



Canto XXXII

- Ninth Circle: Cocytus
 - 1st Subcircle: Cain
 - Traitors to kin
 - 2nd Subcircle: Antenora
 - Traitors to country or party
 - Bocca del Duca



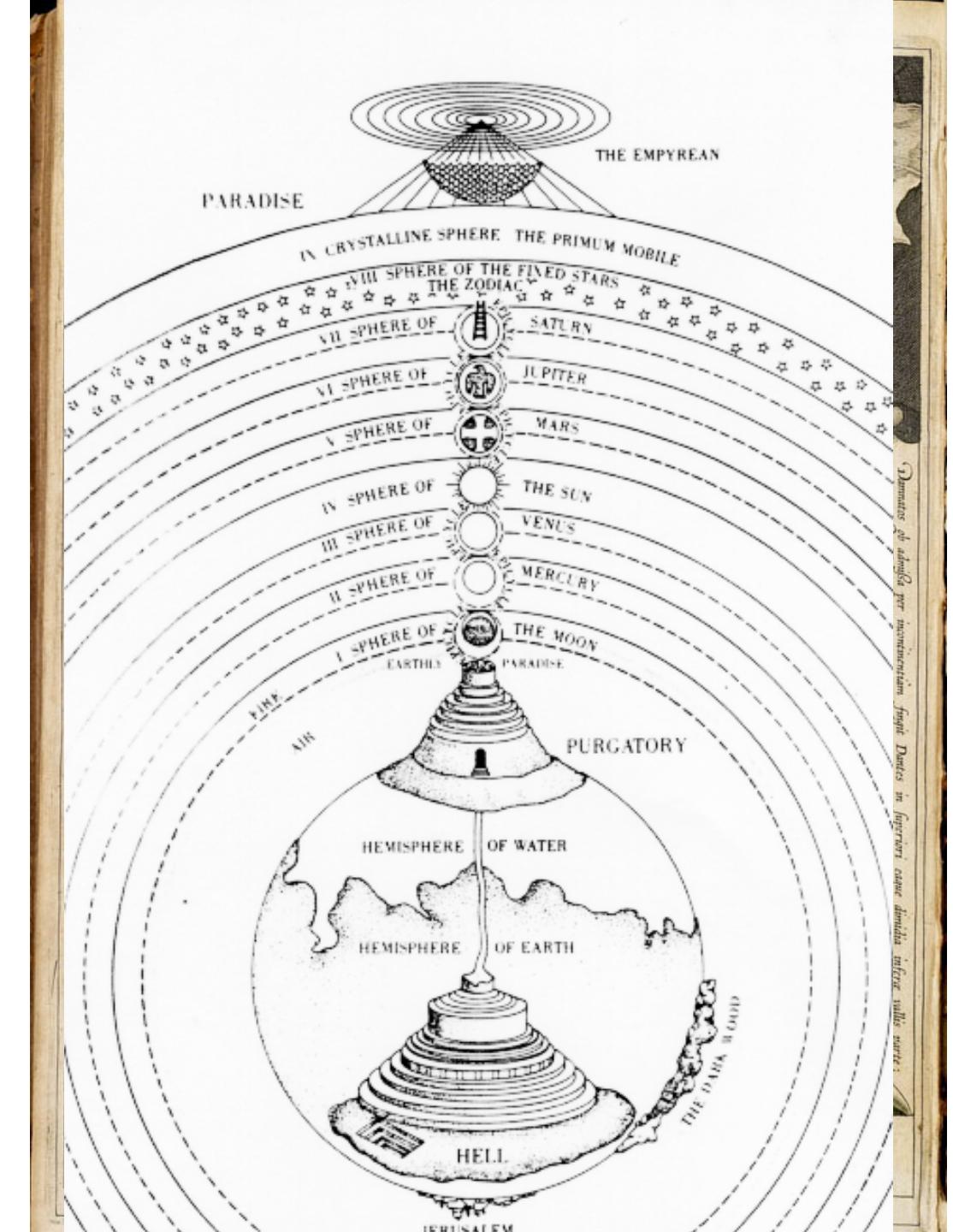
Canto XXXIII

- Antenora continued
 - Count Ugolino
- 3rd Subcircle: Ptolomea
 - Traitors to guests



Canto XXXIV

- 4th Subcircle: Judecca
 - Traitors to lords and benefactors
 - Brutus
 - Cassius
 - Judas
- Descent through center of the universe
- Ascent to view the stars



Recap of Dante's Various Journeys

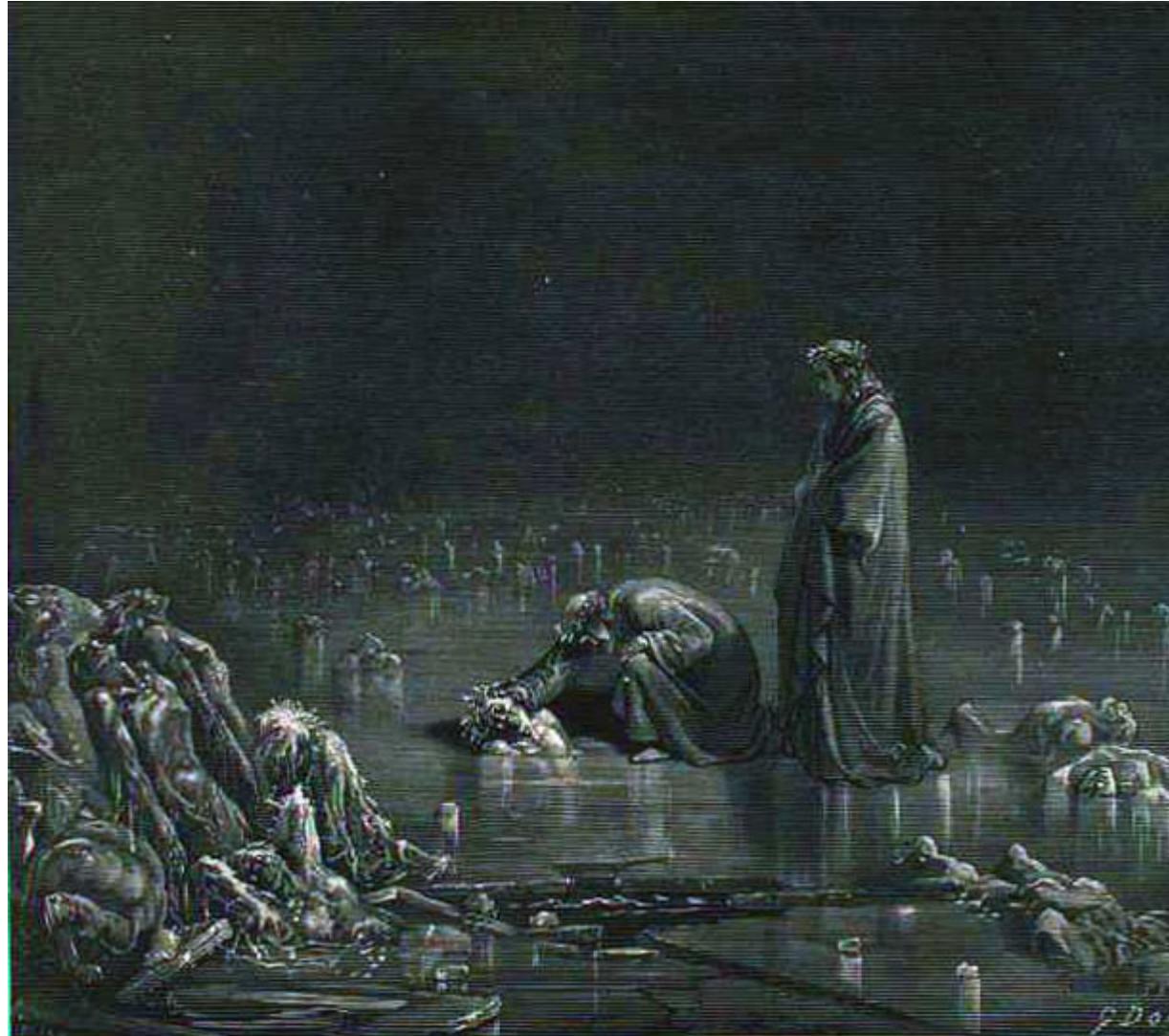
- We asked where the truth of the literal sense lies?
 - Dante describes interpretation in his famous epistle to Can Grande della Scala, saying the *Divine Comedy* was: "of many senses. A first sense derives from the letters themselves, and a second from the things signified by the letters. We call the first sense "literal" sense, the second the "allegorical", or "moral"."
- We saw Dante-pilgrim progress along his physical journey, his poetic journey (with Ulysses) and his moral journey (between Cantos 29 and 30).
 - Physical Journey -> He moves through lower Hell
 - Poetic Journey -> He encounters Ulysses
 - Canto 26: "Then did I *grieve* and now I *grieve* again." I. 19
 - Moral Journey -> Between Cantos 29 and 30, his attitude to the shades in Hell changes
 - Canto 30: -> "I turned / toward him with such shame that it still dizzies me in / memory." II. 133-135
- In both of these moments of transformation, Dante-author makes a point of joining the pilgrim and the author in the experience, and so, perhaps, we could argue that we can understand the *literal* meaning to be the *literal meaning*. That is, Dante, who is sitting at a desk, transformed by this experience.

DISCUSSION: The end of the pilgrim's first trial

- Dante has successfully made it to the 'light' that he was attempting to arrive at in Canto 1, when he was blocked by the beasts.
- We have seen that God's will has allowed for his journey to take place, but we have also seen that life is combination of God's will and free will.
 - What has Dante-Pilgrim (or Dante-Author) had to accomplish in order to be allowed to continue on his journey?

DISCUSSION: Treatment of Bocca (Canto XXXII)

- How does Dante treat Bocca?
- Why does he treat him this way?
- How does Dante-Pilgrim's treatment of the souls in Canto XXXII reflect the revelation at the end of XXX?



Lucifer

- Describe Satan/Lucifer.
- What is most striking to you about Dante's depiction of him?
- Is it the same or different from how you have heard Satan described in the past? How?
- Why does Dante choose to describe him this way? What is his contrapasso?
- The final cantos are, in a sense, anticlimactic. Why might Dante-author have chosen to organize the Canticle this way?



DISCUSSION: Ugolino

- Who is Ugolino? How did he die?
- What adjectives would you ascribe to his speech?
- Is it similar to any other sinners' speeches in *Inferno*?
- How does Dante-pilgrim respond? Does Dante-pilgrim's response surprise you? Why or Why not?



PATTERNS: What stood out to you, formally, during the reading? What about the content?

- Apostrophes?
 - "How then I became frozen and feeble, do not ask, / reader, for I do not write it, and all speech would be / insufficient. I did not die and I did not remain alive: think / now for yourself, if you have wit at all, what I / became, deprived of both." XXXIV 22-24
- Tropes of incommunicability?
 - "How then I became frozen and feeble, do not ask, / reader, for I do not write it, and all speech would be / insufficient." XXXIV 22-24
- Body metaphors?
 - Mouths, chewing, devouring
 - The center of the universe is at Lucifer's anus, Dante thus 'exits' through the anus in a body metaphor that to a large degree progresses from the head down through the body.
- City metaphors?
 - The giants are like the towers of medieval towns where clans built their own towers for warfare and espionage
 - This is called 'Dis' again XXXIV 20
 - Dante names and criticizes many Tuscan cities in these cantos.
 - Monteriggione, above all Pisa and Genoa
- The bridging of the Classical and the Biblical?
 - We see the giants come from both traditions, Nimrod from the Old Testament, Ephialtes is the son of Neptune, Antaeus is from *Pharsalia*
 - We see that the three greatest sinners are a bridge. Judas, the worst, was a traitor to Jesus. Brutus and Cassius to Julius Caesar

“E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle.”

