

Inferno XIII - XVII

March 2, 2020

The Noble Castle of the 4th Canto

- What makes the canto/castle so very fearsome to Borges?
- Borges chooses to write about Canto 4 of the 100 Cantos he can choose from. What is so important, do you think, about this canto to Borges?
- What contrasting role does ‘writing’ play in Cantos 4 and 5? What is crucial to Dante, do you think, about this contrast?
- Do a close reading of *ll. 67-69*:
“Our way had not led far from where I slept,
when I saw a fire that overcame a hemisphere of
shadows.”

La bella scuola

- Homer (Limbo) – *Illiad* and *Odyssey*
 - Legendary Greek author, the study of Homer is one of the oldest topics in scholarship, dating back to antiquity
- Horace (Limbo) – *Satires, Odes, Epistles, Ars Poetica*
 - The leading Roman lyric poet during the time of Augustus
- **Ovid (Limbo) – *Metamorphoses (Book of Transformations)***
 - **Roman poet during the reign of Augustus**
 - **His *Metamorphoses* chronicles the history of the world from its creation to the death/deification of Julius Caesar within a loose mythico-historical framework**
 - **One of the most influential works in Western culture**
- Lucan (Limbo) – *Pharsalia*
 - Grandson of Seneca the Elder, rhetorician during the reign of Augustus
 - Roman poet during the generation following Augustus's rule
 - *Pharsalia* is an epic poem that detailing the civil war between Julius Caesar and the Roman Senate
- **Virgil (Limbo) –**
 - **Roman poet during the reign of Augustus**
- *Statius (Purgatory)*
- *Dante (destined for Paradise)*

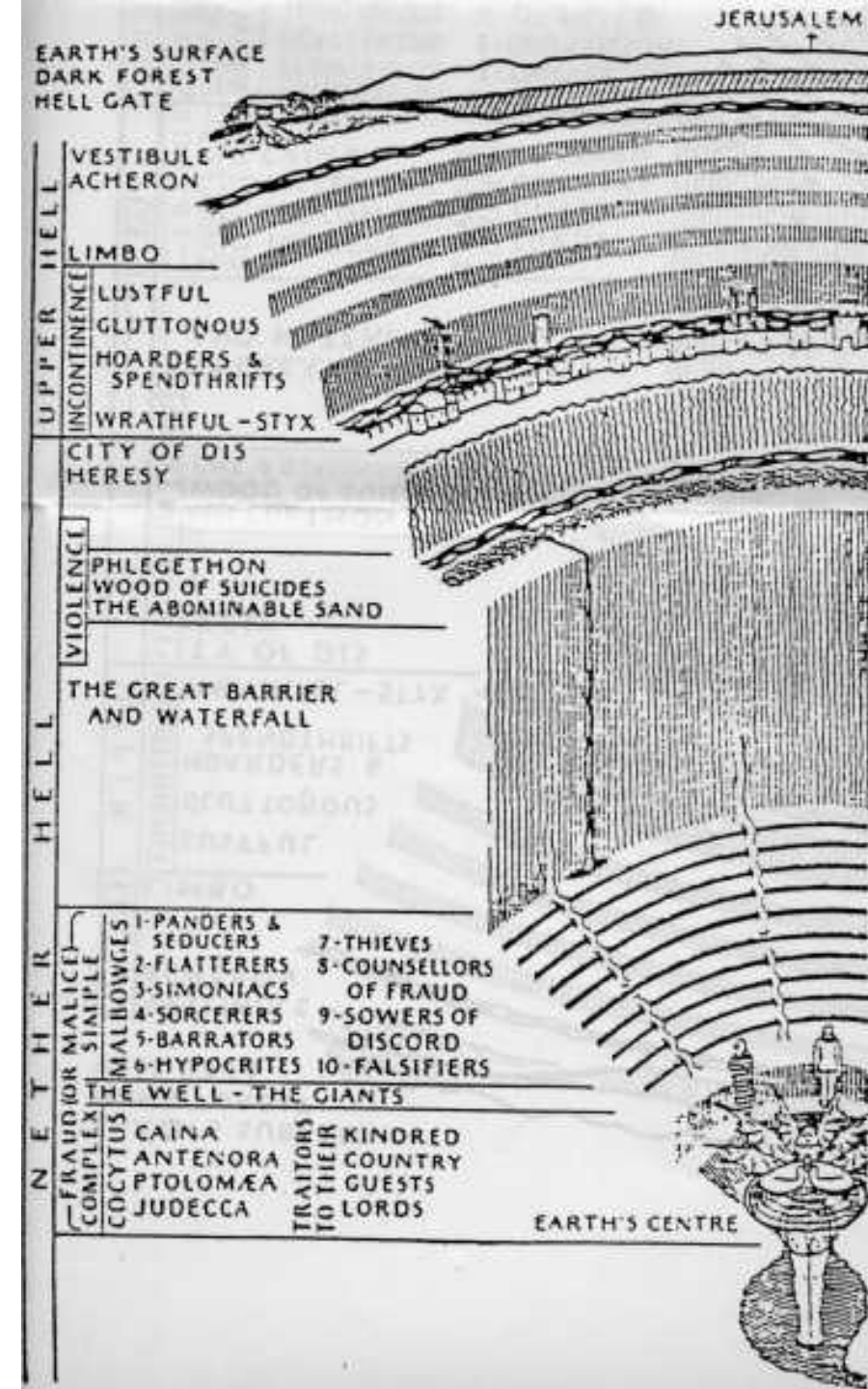
Trope of incommunicability

Group Discussion

- PLOT (REVIEW): What has happened so far, leading up to the cantos we read for today?
- PLOT: What happened in today's reading?
- ANALYSIS (REVIEW): What have been the main themes, motifs, plot devices, literary goals, etc. of the poem so far, as pointed out by me or as noticed by you?
- ANALYSIS: What of those literary devices and goals did you notice in this reading?

Dante's journey this week

- Seventh Circle
 - The murderers
 - The suicides
 - The blasphemers, sodomites, usurers
- The abyss/cataract



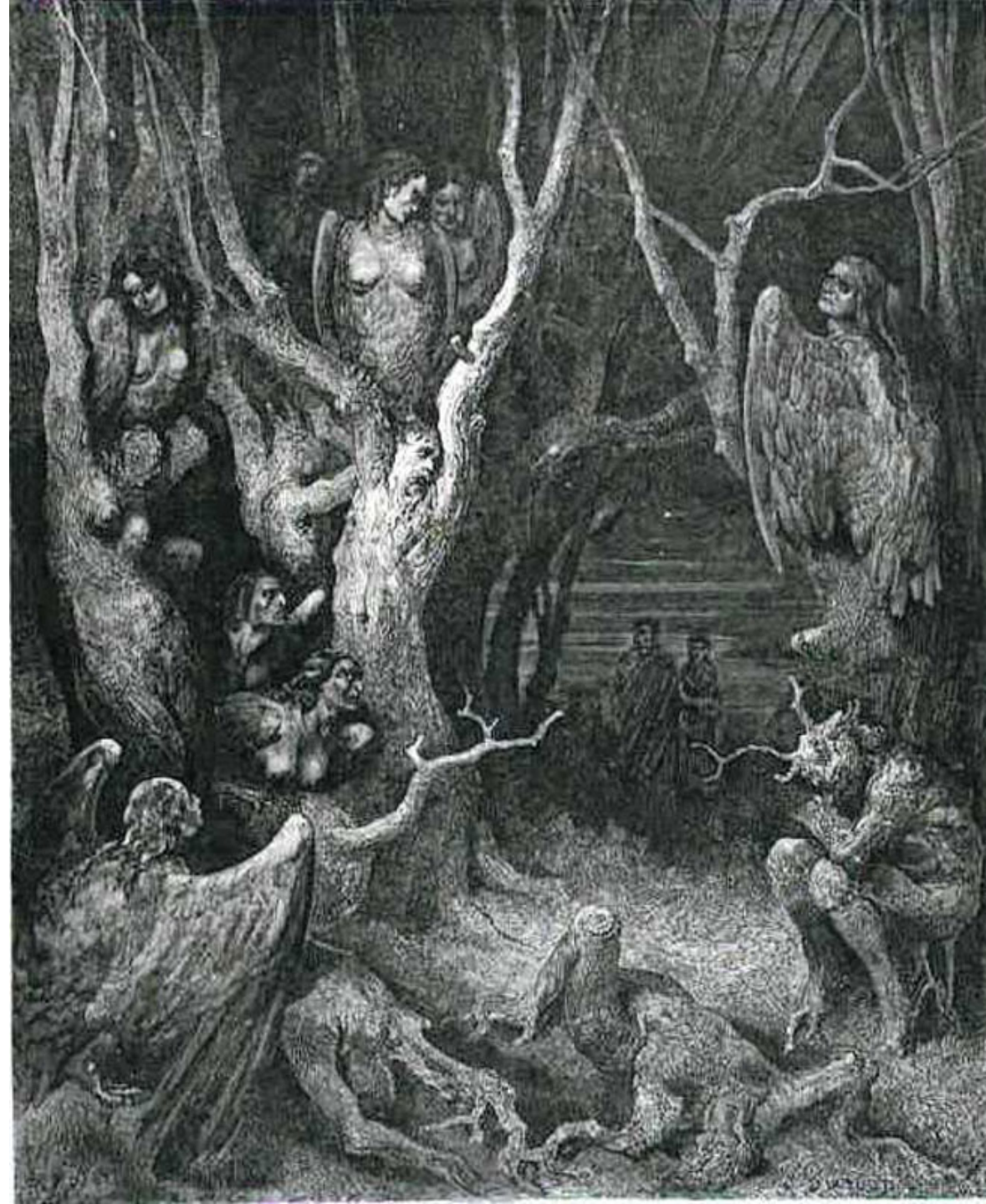
Murderers

- Steeped in the Phlegethon up to level that their sins deserve
- Contrapasso?



Suicides

- Turned into vegetation
- Contrapasso?



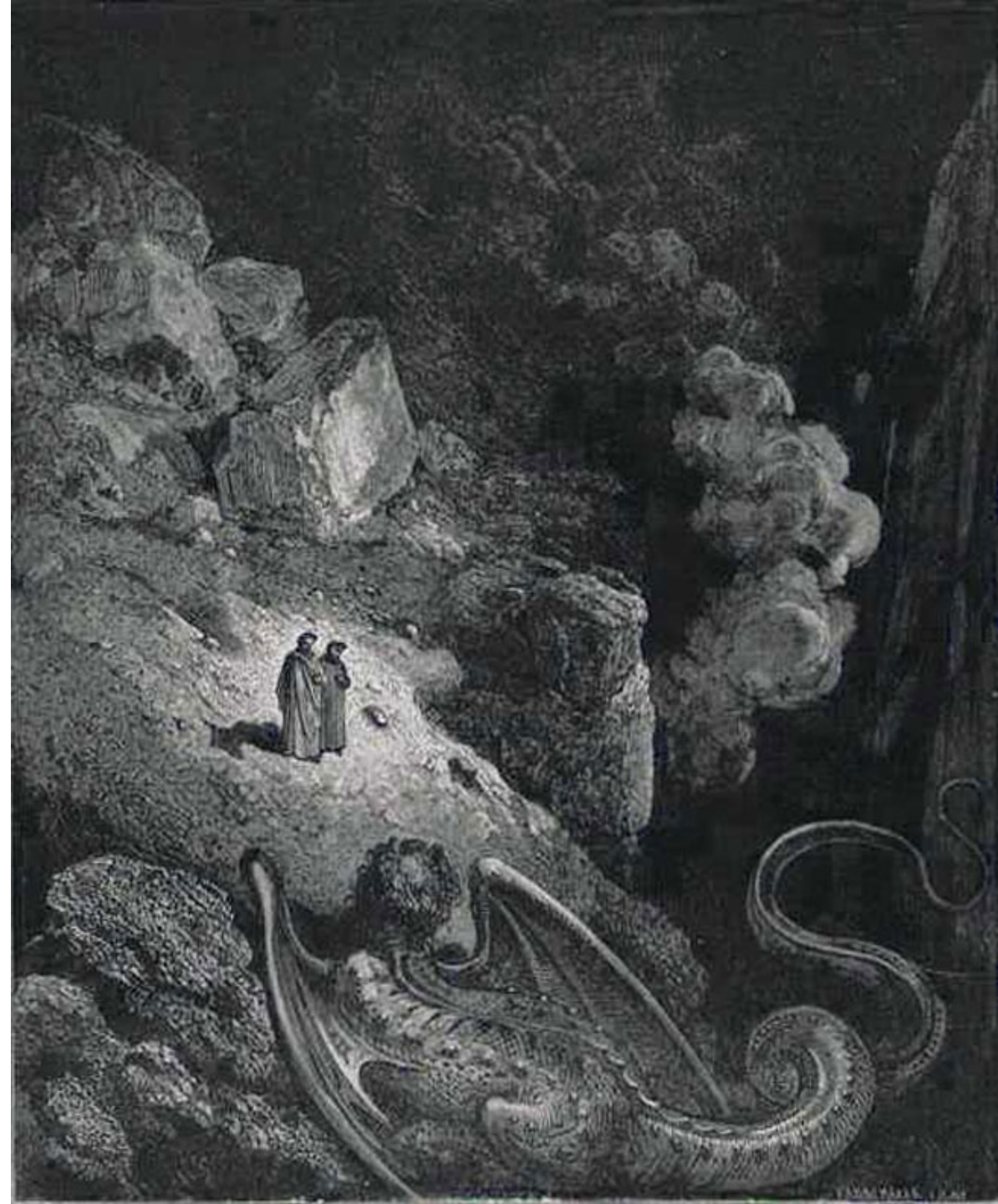
Blasphemers, Sodomites Usurers

- A sandy plain in a storm of fiery rain
- Blasphemers are forced to lie upon the sand
- Usurers crouch on the sand with heavy bags of money around their necks
- Sodomites run through the storm in groups
- Contrapasso?



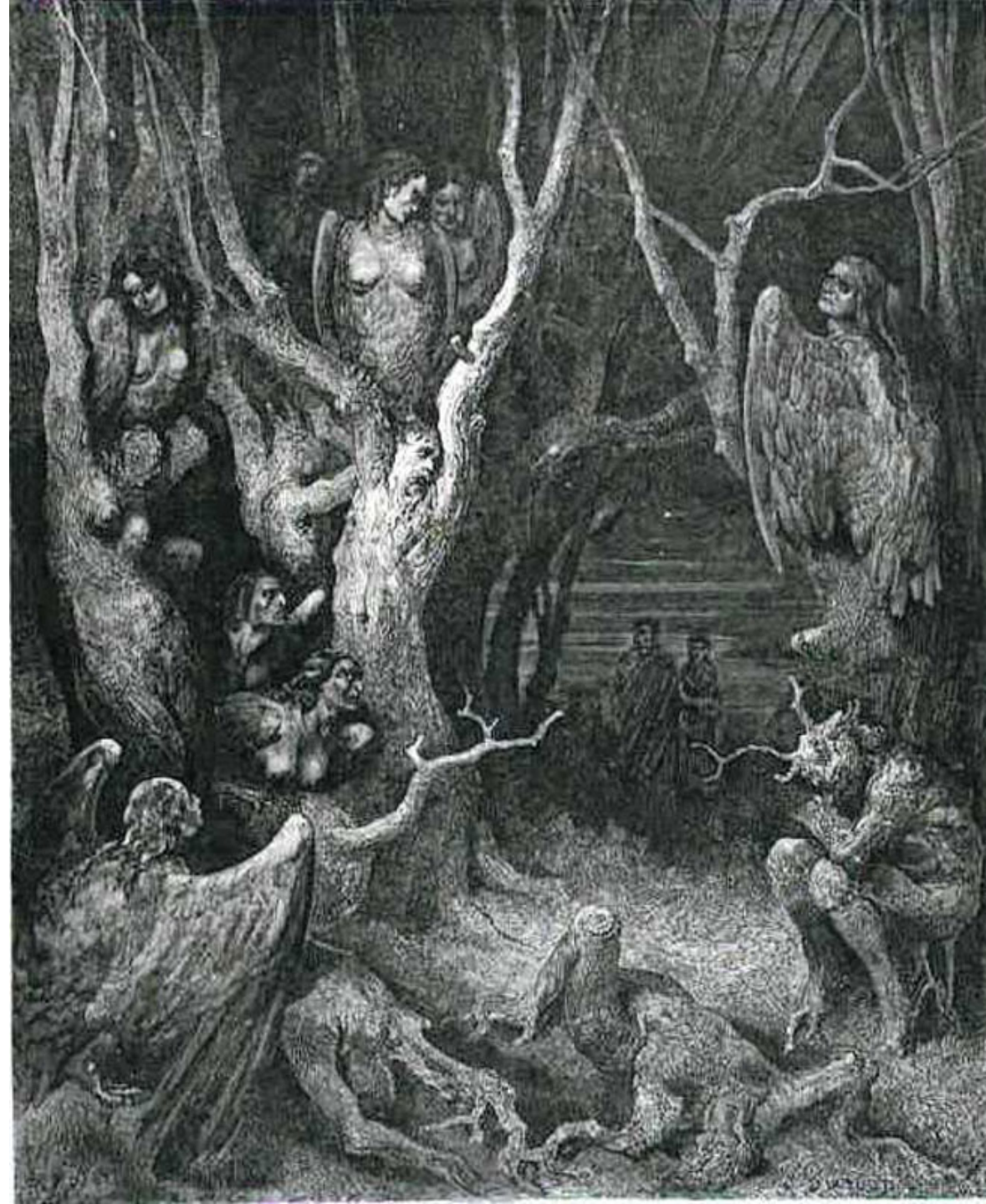
And then?

- After Dante makes it past the fiery plan, what happens?



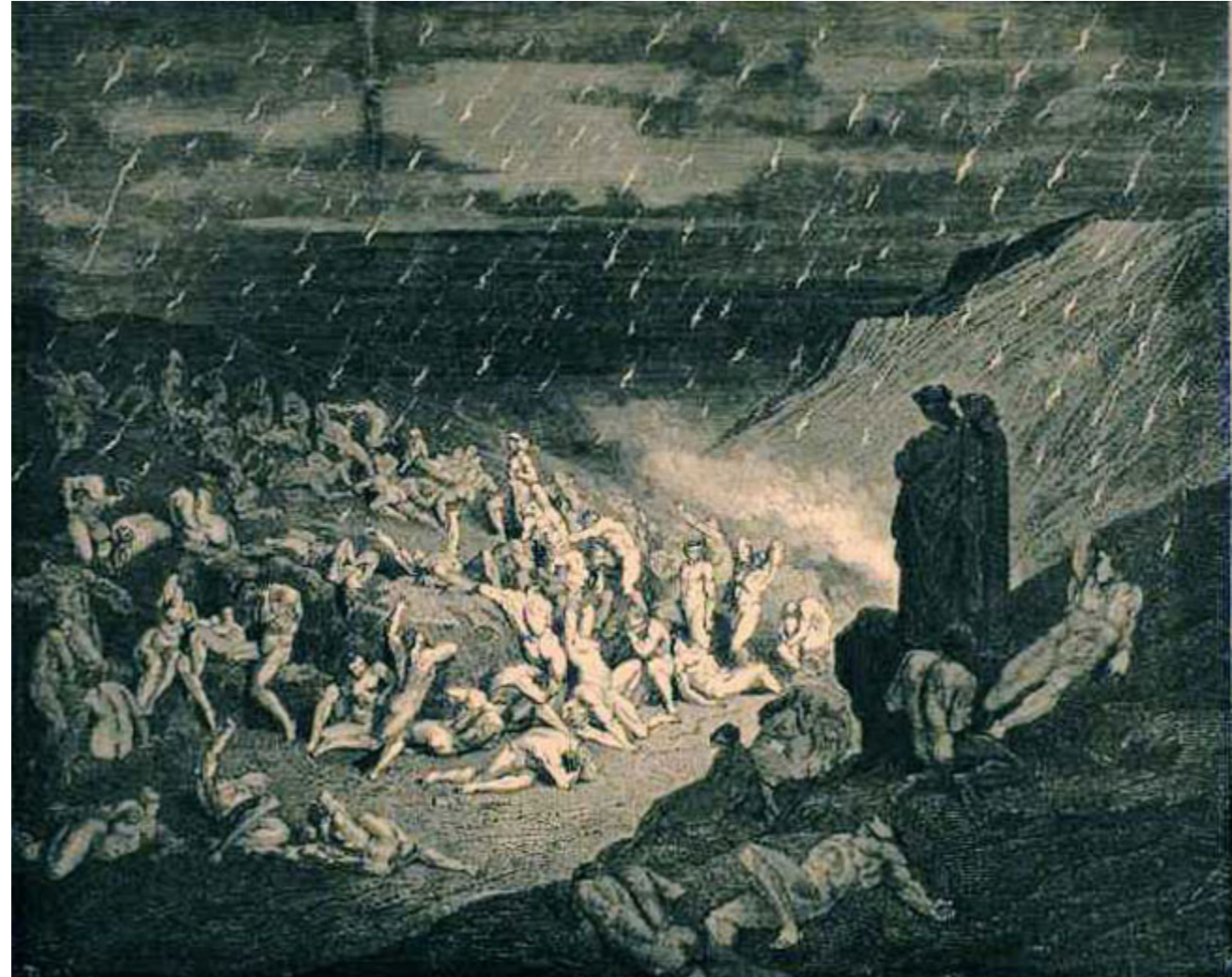
Canto XIII

- Virgil: “therefore look / carefully; and you will see things that would / make you disbelieve my speech.” ll. 19-21
- Virgil: “If he would have believed me first,’ replied the sage, / ‘O wounded soul, what he has seen only in my / rhymes, / he would not have stretched his hand against / you.” ll. 46-50



Canto XV

- Brunetto Latini: “What fortune or destiny leads you / down here before your last days? [...] If you follow your star, you / cannot fail to reach a glorious port, if I perceived / well during sweet life; [...] Your fortune holds so much honor in store for / you.” ll. 46-47, 55-57, 70-71



Canto XV

- Dante-Pilgrim: “You used to teach me how man makes himself / eternal; and how grateful I am for that, as long as I / live must be discerned in my language. [...] What you narrate about my path I am writing / down and keeping to be glossed, with other texts, by / a lady who will now, if I reach her. [...] As long as my conscience does not reproach me I am / ready for Fortune, whatever she will. This pledge is not new to my ears: therefore let / Fortune turn her wheel as she pleases.” ll. 85-95



What is the interplay between free will and determinism in the Divine Comedy?



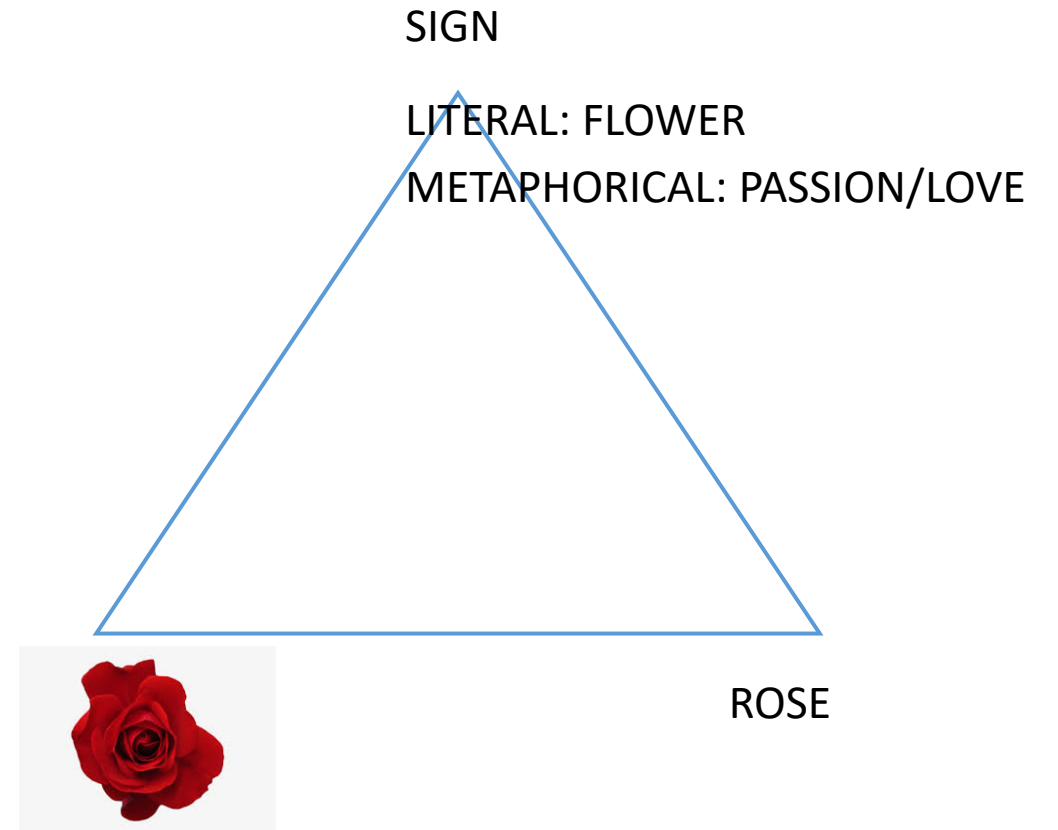
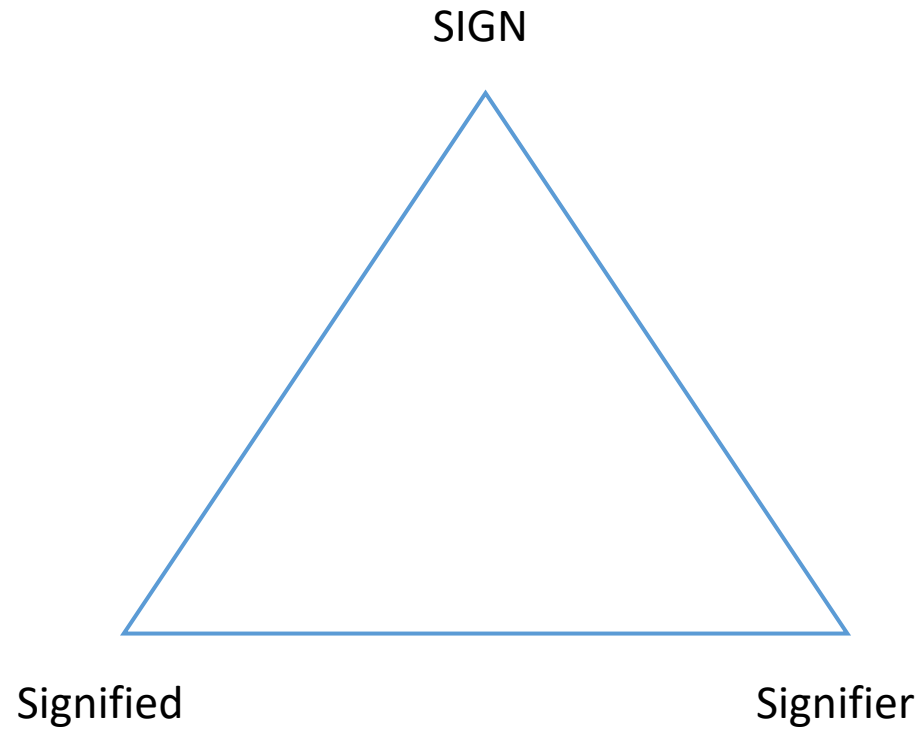
Canto XVI

- Dante unties his belt and Virgil drops it in the abyss.
- Dante-Pilgrim: “I cannot conceal it, and by the notes of / this comedy, reader, I swear to you, so that they not / fail to find long favor, / that I saw, through that thick and dark air, a figure / swimming upward, fearful to the most / confident heart.” 16. 127-132
- *Why does he address the readers here, and reference his Comedy here? And swear on it here? What is so important about this moment?*

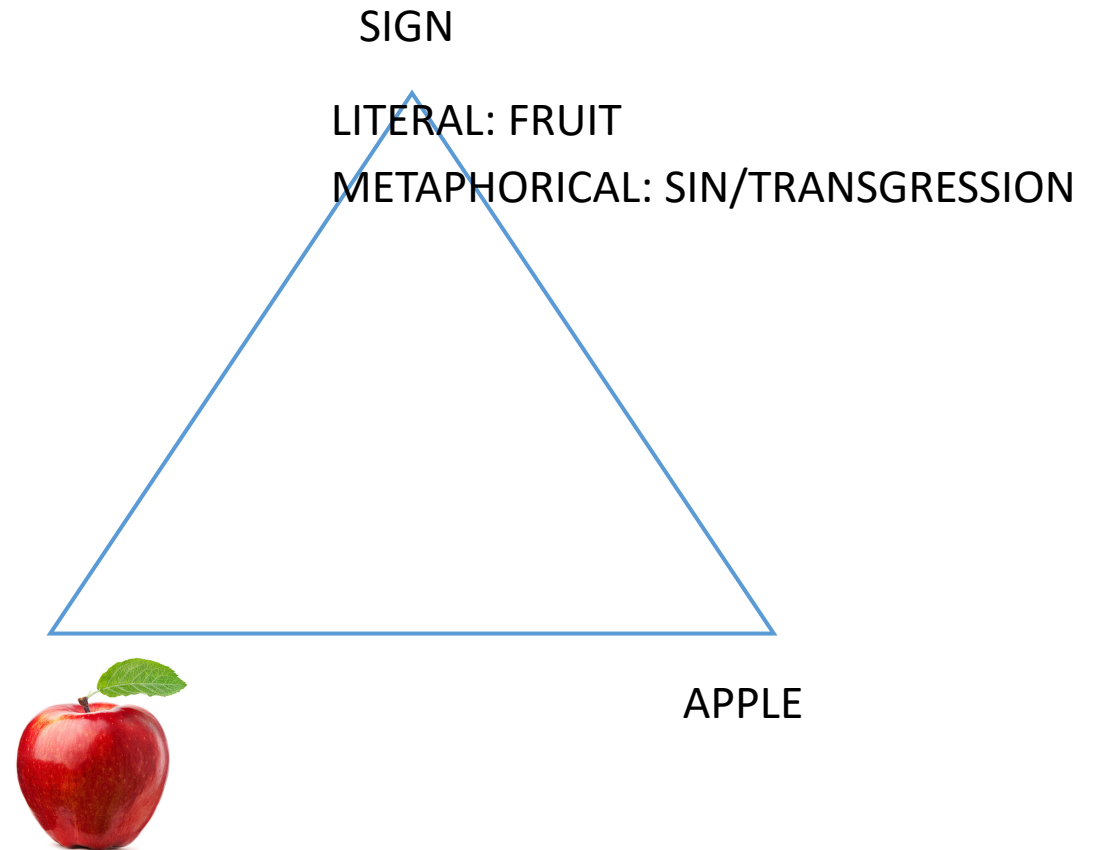
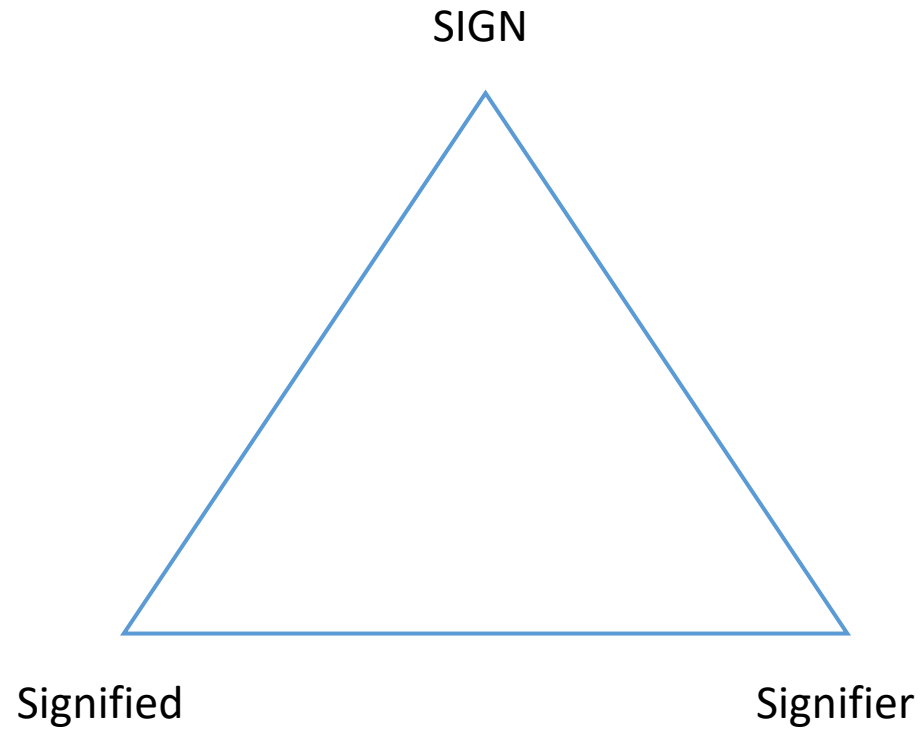


What are the words saying and what do the words mean?

Semiotics



Semiotics



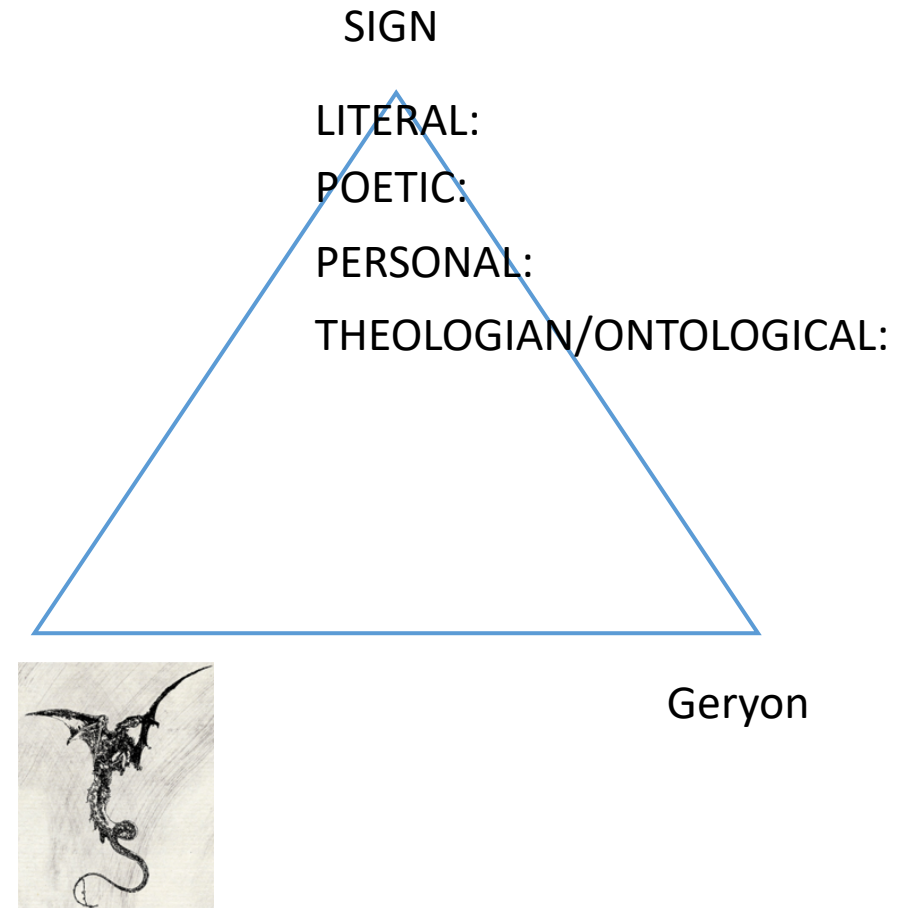
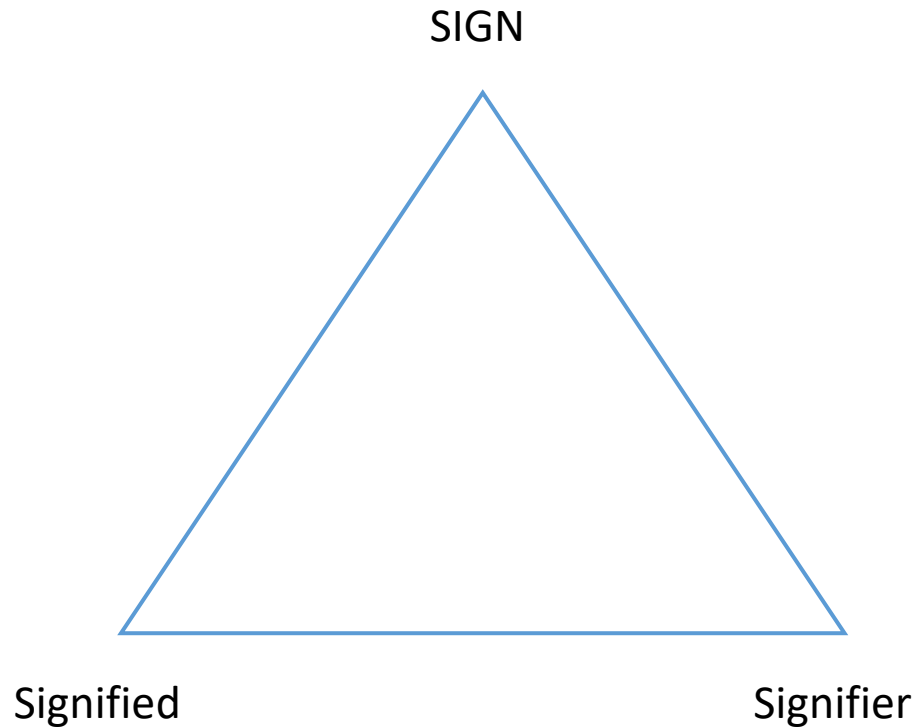
Freccero Reading

- “Always to that truth which has the face of / falsehood one must close one’s lips as long as one can, for without any guilt it brings shame.” 16 ll. 124-127
- What is the “contrast between fraudulent lie and fiction?” 169
- Where does the truth exist in Dante’s poem?

“Some new thing must answer [...] the strange sign.” ll. 115-116

“I swear to you / [...] that I saw a figure [...] / come swimming upwards...” ll. 128, 130-131

Where does the truth exist in the *Divine Comedy*?



- This is where we ended in class. The following slides deal with the Freccero reading and I will start next class with them and include the slides in next week's upload as well.
- I've included them here incase they help you to understand the Freccero reading before next week.

Freccero Reading

- Freccero lays it out like this:
- Dante doesn't think the allegory is theologian, because if he did, we would have to believe that Dante saw his story as true at all levels. That is, that it is "not fiction, but fact." p. 174
- Freccero says 'No. That's absurd, it would literally mean that Dante believes, aside from all the other fantastic sights, that he saw the message on the Gates of Hell in Italian in *terza rima*.'
- Rather, Dante's story is theologian, or Biblical, in the sense that the narrative copies the device of the Bible.

Freccero Reading

- Rather, Dante's story is theologian, or Biblical, in the sense that the narrative copies the device of the Bible.
 - The Bible is predicated on an act of Faith
 - -> If you believed this absurd thing, that Jesus of Nazareth died and came back to life, THEN you can begin to access and *believe* the truths that lie beyond that act of faith, which are largely ethical/moral/ontological.
 - The Divine Comedy is predicated on an act of Faith
 - -> If you believe that I, Dante, went down to Hell and met a monster named Geryon, THEN you can begin to access and *believe* the truths that lie beyond that act of faith, which are largely ethical/moral/ontological.
- That is, Dante doesn't want this to be read as allegorical. He wants it to be read for the TRUTHS revealed by the allegory.
 - "that truth which has the face of / falsehood"