**In Class Writing Assignment – *Crime and Punishment***

**Do the ordering of the sins from the least in the highest to the worst in the lowest circles make sense to you? What does the ordering reveal about the Church doctrine in the 13th Century? About Dante’s views on these issues?**

* The ordering of the sins from least in the highest circles of hell and the lower you go it gets worse makes clear sense to me. This is because I am viewing this circle of hell thing as a punishment for varying degrees of one crime, one central sin. Selfishness. The higher one attempts to place themselves and exalt themselves via pleasure or power on earth without regards to others, the lower they will fall for eternity. “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction,” In the same way that every mirror has a reflection. If you view Dante’s hell as a literal reflection of earth in which those who don’t sin are near the bottom (of earth) and those who commit more sins or worse sins in an attempt to please or exalt themselves as higher up on the scale, then the reflection of that is there punishment, in which those who didn’t climb to high up the ladder of selfishness and sin don’t fall as far, and those who climb all the way to the top of life through their sin fall all the way to the bottom of hell.
* The ordering of the circles of hell shows us that Church doctrine in the 13th century was very legalistic, and more about respecting the authority of the church than anything else. Those that did not care about what the church said was right and wrong or what it taught (soothsayers, falsifiers, seducers, hypocrites) and were only out to make their own lives better by whatever means they could were punished the most harshly. The people who were the most selfish with their lives and actions and cared the least about other people or the truth of the church were in the lower circles of hell.
* This shows as well that Dante closely agrees with the ideals of the church, believing that the more you care about your own fate and forget about the fate of those around you, the greater your sin is, since those at the bottom of hell were those who did whatever they could to get power and pleasure, not caring for others or right and wrong, while those at the top barely being punished were good and kind people who just happened to worship the wrong God or fail to worship him.

**Do the punishments fit the crimes? Pick a circle in which they clearly do and another in which they don’t seem to and explain.**

I think that some of the crimes make sense, and some do not, I believe that in the earlier circles the crimes seem to be more appropriate, while in the later circles the prejudice of the era and Dante’s personal views askew the punishment.

* I think one of the most sensible and poetic circles of hell is actually the very first circle of the Virtuous Pagans. Since this circle is full of people who did not commit any crimes or sins, and were genuinely good people who just never pursued a fellowship with God, their eternity will be without the fellowship of God. Since they never wanted him in life, they are cursed with what they asked for, an eternity in which they can see the glory of paradise and constantly be reminded that they had the chance to enter it, but they never wanted to.
* On the other hand, the lower the circles go the crazier and more biased the punishments become. For example, in the first couple layers of the 8th circle the seducers and whores are punished by walking around naked, incredibly ugly and forever clothed in an unbearable stink. Now one of the first layers of Hell is the Lustful in Circle 2, which involves sexual sin, but the whores who seduce men with sex for a means of living are placed all the way in circle 8! I believe this difference is because of the prejudice the Church had against prostitutes and whores, believing them to be the lowest lifeform. If a holy man commits sexual sin it is only lust and a minor punishment by being forced to follow a banner with the wind, and if a whore commits the same sin he or she is punished by being forced to walk around naked and covered in filth like the wretched creature he or she is. Even though the whore in some ways can be seen as *more* admirable, since (and I am guessing here) many whores at the time only pursued prostitution as a means of making money because they have no other way to provide for themselves, whereas the Holy men just commit sexual sin out of pure desire, not out of any necessity.