



The Divine Comedy

Dante Alighieri

1321 AD

Lacrimosa - Requiem (Mozart)

Lacrimosa dies illa
Full of tears shall be that day

Qua resurget ex favilla
When from the ashes shall arise

Judicandus homo reus
The guilty man to be judged;

Lacrimosa dies illa
Full of tears shall be that day

Qua resurget ex favilla
When from the ashes shall arise

Judicandus homo reus
The guilty man to be judged;

Huic ergo parce, Deus
Spare us by your mercy lord

Pie Jesu Domine
Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus

Dona eis requiem
Grant them eternal rest,

Dona eis requiem
Grant them eternal rest. Amen.





Greatest Fear / History

Overview

Inferno: A Lenten Reading

February 4th, 11th

March 17th

Purgatorio / Paradiso (Laura Lucht / Fall 2024)



The Divine Comedy

Overview



"The death of Satan was a tragedy / For the imagination."

Wallace Stevens - Poet

"The repertoire of evil has never been richer,
yet never have our responses been so weak."

Andrew Delbanco - Literary Critic

The Divine Comedy

Why Dante?

"The ugly fact is: books are made from books. The novel depends for its life on the novels that have been written."

Cormac McCarthy

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead.

T.S. Eliot

Art begets art.

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Why Dante?



"If you're going through Hell, keep going."

- Winston Churchill

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Why Dante?



Collective Knowledge?

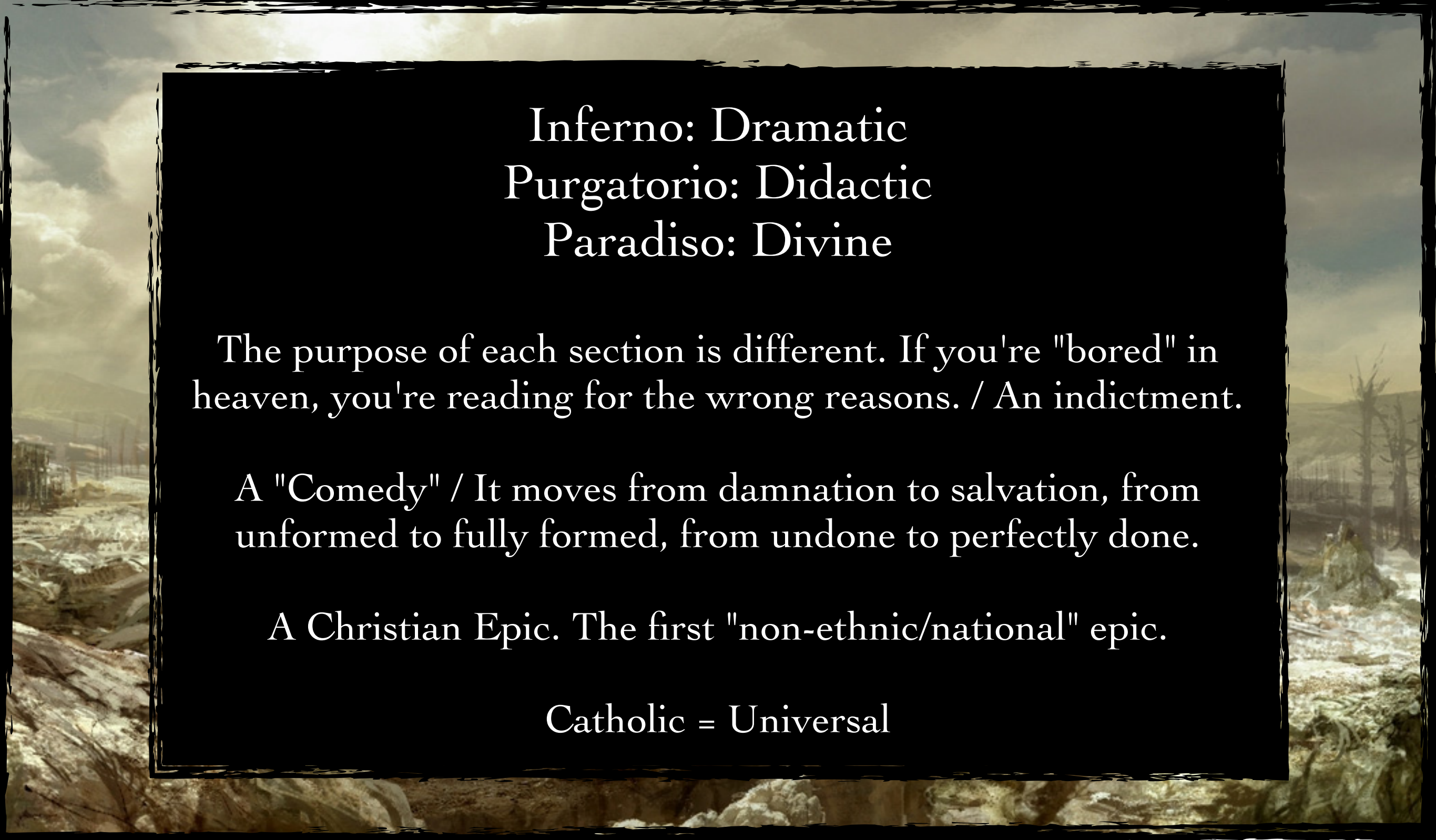
The Divine Comedy

Overview



The Divine Comedy

A Cathedral



Inferno: Dramatic
Purgatorio: Didactic
Paradiso: Divine

The purpose of each section is different. If you're "bored" in heaven, you're reading for the wrong reasons. / An indictment.

A "Comedy" / It moves from damnation to salvation, from unformed to fully formed, from undone to perfectly done.

A Christian Epic. The first "non-ethnic/national" epic.

Catholic = Universal

The Divine Comedy

Overview

Epic Conventions

In Medias Res

Homeric Simile (88)

Invocation (Canto II)

Stock Epithet

Inheritance of Greek/Roman Myths

Premise: The Christian Narrative is thesis / culmination
of pagan antiquity, not the antithesis.

Act 17:24-28

The Divine Comedy

Overview

Reference:

The Illustrations of Doré

Dante's Inferno / Birk and Sanders

Dante: The Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man / Barbara Reynolds

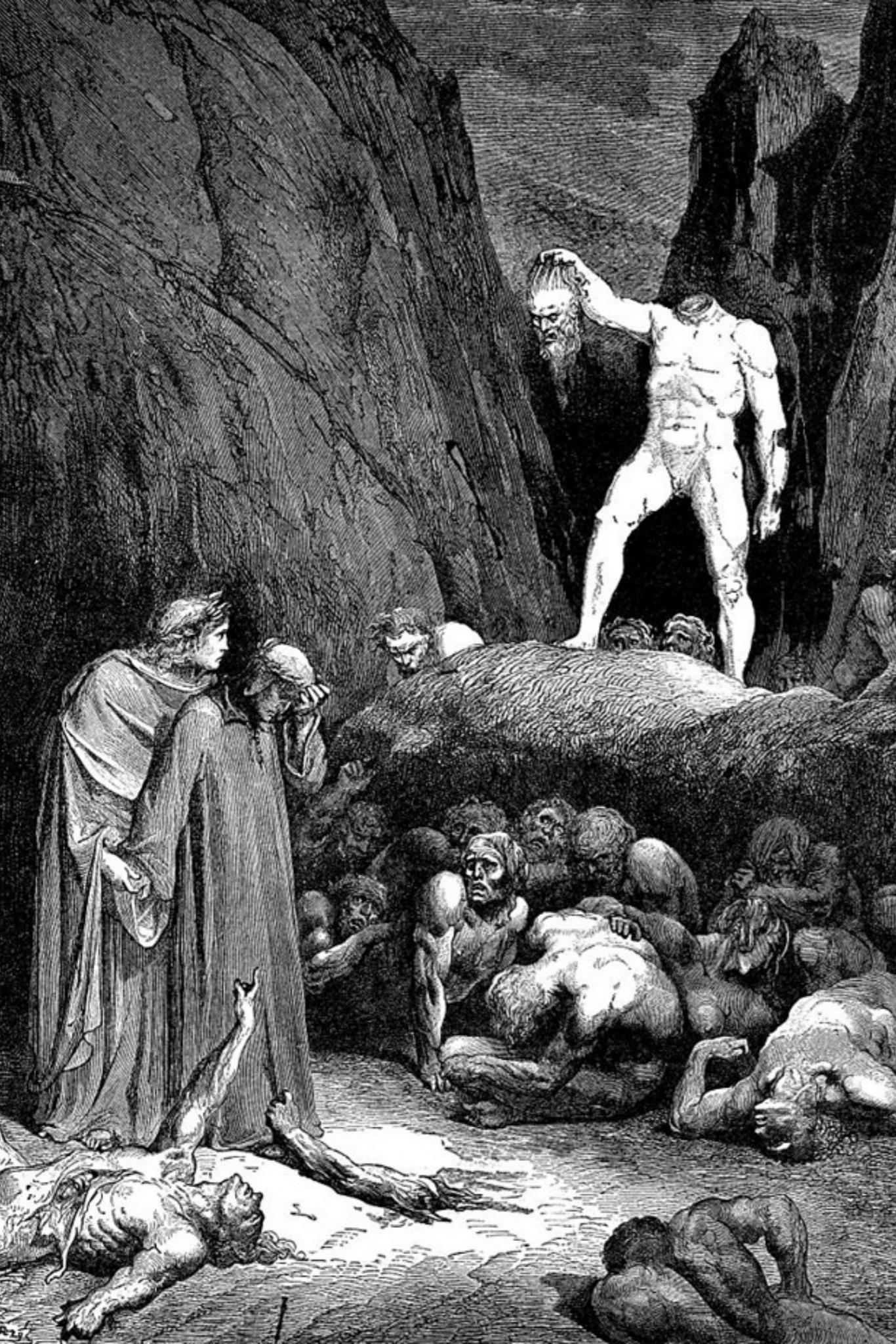
The Question of Translation

(Longfellow / Mandelbaum / Hollander / Ciardi / Sayers / etc.)



The Divine Comedy

Overview



Inferno

Part One



Inferno / Geography

- *The Divine Comedy*: 100 Cantos
- *Inferno* 1+33 / *Purgatorio* 33 / *Paradiso* 33
- Good Friday / 1300 C.E. / Dante is 35 of his allotted 70 (Psalm 89:10) / The Christian life should mimic the life of Christ (see *A Hidden Life* / 2019).
- Terza Rima (aba / bcb / cdc /ded) / Psalm 139:8 / "If I descend to the heavens ..."
- A great pit descends into the center of the earth (70).



Inferno / Geography

- Twenty-Four Circles (Least to Greatest / Limbo to Pride).
- Satan is at the center. Matthew 25:41 / "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'"
- Three Subdivisions: Incontinent / No Self-Restraint (Leopard) / Violence (Lion) / Fraud (She-Wolf)
- Jeremiah 5:6 / "Therefore a lion from the forest will attack them, a wolf from the desert will ravage them, a leopard will lie in wait near their towns to tear to pieces any who venture out, for their rebellion is great and their backslidings many."
- "The way up, and the way down, are one and the same."
- Heraclitus



Architecture

- Limbo
- Lust
- Gluttony
- Greed
- Anger
- Heresy
- Violence
- Treachery
- Pride

Incontinent

Violent

Fraud



Inferno / Economy

- In the end, there will be those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, "Thy will be done. - George McDonald.
- Hell is a "monument to human freedom."
- Dante (Pilgrim) / Virgil (Human Reason) / Beatrice (Divine Love - The Catalyst).
- Symbolic retribution / "Contrapasso" - to suffer the opposite (Fortune Tellers, Murderers, Gluttony)
- In the end, a person's multidimensional identity is consumed by one sin / vice. We lose diversity, spontaneity, breadth. We become monolithic. Ex: The singular preoccupation of addiction.
- Allegory / Plato - Bunyan - Swift - Orwell - Whitehead



Observations

- Not helpful as eschatology / reportage into the hereafter. Read as a meditation on the reality and consequence of sin - what happens when the "icons of God" reject His image and revelation.
- Dante forces us to reckon with our estrangement from God, the "Ground of Being" (Tillich).
- The Christian life is hard work. Work out your faith "awed by the goodness of God" (Philippines 2:12). The Bible doesn't lie to us about the human condition. No wish projection here: Feuerbach (1804-1872).
- There's nothing in the *Comedia* that you don't know already. See Hrabal. The work of poetry: to reveal eternal verities within the mundane. To make "darkness visible."
- *The Divine Comedy* attempts to account for the entirety of human experience. Does it succeed?



Canto One



Next Week ...

Survey the introduction by Dorothy Sayers.

Begin our Lenten reading next week.



“In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair ... the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die.”

Dorothy Sayers