OVID THROUGH THE INFERNO:
A STUDY OF OVIDIAN MYTH IN DANTE’S INFERNO

By: Michael Mignanelli
Circles of Hell in Dante’s Inferno
“Let Ovid fall silent, for in his verse he transforms Cadmus into a snake” (Inferno, 25.97-8)
Abandon All Hope, You Who Enter Here
Punishments meted out to sinners in Dante Alighieri’s Inferno

FIRST CIRCLE (LIMBO)
Unbaptized / Virtuous Pagans
Struck with grief from a lack of God’s presence

SECOND CIRCLE
Lustful
Blown about by violent and endless wind

THIRD CIRCLE
Gluttons
Bombarded with rain, hail, and black snow

FOURTH CIRCLE
Hoarders
Forced to push boulders to the center of the circle

FIFTH CIRCLE
Wretches
Engaged in combat with one another on the surface of the River Styx

SIXTH CIRCLE (CITY OF DIS)
Heretics
Locked in burning stone coffins

SEVENTH CIRCLE (PLAIN OF FIRE)
Violent
Forced to swim in a boiling stream of blood

Suicides
Transformed into thorny trees that are ripped apart by Harpies

EIGHTH CIRCLE (MALEBOLGE)
Flatterers
Immersed in human excrement

Diviners
Consigned until their heads are backward and they cry until blind

Corrupt Politicians
Immersed in a pool of boiling pitch

False Counselors
Wrapped in individual columns of flame

NINTH CIRCLE (PIT OF HELL)
Betrayers of Kin
Lodged head first in blocks of ice

ANTENOR
Betrayers of Country
Forced to eat one another

PTOLEMEA
Betrayers of Guests
Lodged head up in blocks of ice with frost freezing their eyes so that they cannot cry

JUDAS
Betrayers of Benefactors
Controrted and lodged completely within blocks of ice
THE VIOLENT

RING ONE

Violent
Forced to swim in a boiling stream of blood

RING TWO

Suicides
Transformed into thorny trees that are ripped apart by Harpies

RING THREE

Blasphemers / Sodomites / Usurers
Condemned to a desert of blazing sand with a constant rain of fire
Illustration by: Gustave Doré (1832-1883)
THE FRAUDULENT

EIGHTH CIRCLE (MALEBOLGE)

2. Flatterers
   Immersed in human excrement

4. Diviners
   Contorted until their heads are backward and they cry until blind

6. Hypocrites
   Forced to wear cloaks of lead
   Chased and bitten by reptiles

8. Corrupt Politicians
   Immersed in pool of boiling pitch

10. Falsifiers
    Compelled to scratch their itching skin

9. Schismatics
   Split from chin to groin by sword

POUCHES

NINTH CIRCLE

1. Pimps / Seducers
   Whipped by demons while marching

3. Simoniacs
   Placed in holes head first with their legs exposed and burned

5. False Counselors
   Wrapped in individual columns of flame
Illustration by: Sandro Botticelli (1445-1510)
THE FRAUDULENT

EIGHTH CIRCLE (MALEBOLGE)

- Flatterers: Contorted until their heads are backward and they cry until blind
- Hypocrites: Forced to wear cloaks of lead
- Thieves: Chased and bitten by reptiles
- Schismatics: Split from chin to groin by sword
- Falsifiers: Compelled to scratch their itching skin

TENTH CIRCLE

- Pimps / Seducers: Whipped by demons while marching
- Simoniacs: Placed in holes head first with their legs exposed and burned
- Corrupt Politicians: Immersed in pool of boiling pitch
- False Counselors: Wrapped in individual columns of flame

NINTH CIRCLE
Illustration by: Giovanni Stradano (1523-1605)
THE FRAUDULENT

EIGHTH CIRCLE (MALEBOLGE)

1. Pimps / Seducers
   Whipped by demons while marching

2. Flatterers
   Immersed in human excrement

3. Simoniacs
   Placed in holes head first with their legs exposed and burned

4. Diviners
   Contorted until their heads are backward and they cry until blind

5. Corrupt Politicians
   Immersed in pool of boiling pitch

6. Hypocrites
   Forced to wear cloaks of lead

7. Thieves
   Chased and bitten by reptiles

8. False Counselors
   Wrapped in individual columns of flame

9. Schismatics
   Split from chin to groin by sword

10. Falsifiers
    Compelled to scratch their itching skin

NINTH CIRCLE
10th Bolgia: Falsifiers

- Alchemists
- Imposters
- Counterfeiters
- Liars
Painted by: Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863)
Why does Dante use Ovidian myth in an epic so closely focused on Christian morality?