

A Century in Dante Research: Morals, Politics, and Philosophy in Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to show how research on Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* has changed in the last century when looking at morals, politics, and philosophy. *Inferno* is one of the three stories in *The Divine Comedy*. Peer-reviewed articles, journals, books, and encyclopedias were used for research and literary theories were used to analyze the research. The research articles are referenced to show how research has changed, such as examining weaknesses of theories and strengths of others. Looking through a century of research, comparisons from older and newer articles gives information on how research on *Inferno* has changed. With politics, a century of research shows the shift of topics from Dante's involvement to Florence as a whole. With morality, the topics of *Inferno* differ as the century goes on, from focusing on Dante's moral opinion to focusing on women in *Inferno*. With philosophy, the research focuses on how Dante incorporates philosophy into *Inferno* and shifts to how Dante treats the philosophers he looks up to. References to Dante's life were used to show the structure of the book and how people in his life influenced the writing thereof. The incorporation of political figures is discussed along with the incorporation of philosophers from Dante's time. Due to COVID, there are limitations to the study and the research that is available.

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Chapter One, Introduction

When it comes to researching literature, there are many struggles that may get in the way. There's always the question of what topic can maintain enough interest for both the researcher and the researcher's audience, and what topic is going to have enough information to fill in the gaps? Thinking creatively and considering all aspects of a piece of literature can be hard, especially one that is hundreds of years old. Narrowing down the research until a concrete idea forms takes time and consideration. There's something refreshing about creating an original research topic, and when it comes to Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*, there is enough research to begin searching for a strong topic.

The Divine Comedy is exactly one-hundred Cantos long ("cantos" meaning "song") and provides much information. *The Divine Comedy* is split into three parts: *Inferno*, meaning Hell, *Purgatorio*, meaning Purgatory, and *Paradiso*, meaning Paradise. Within these three works, Dante puts himself into his own epic poem but as a pilgrim, walking down a path of growth. While research on all three books is easy to find, *Inferno* remains one of the most talked about literary works within the realm of the English field. There are still translations being made on it into different languages along with research still being done within the last five years, which helps to determine the popularity and societal significance of the book.

Strictly focusing on *Inferno*, there is still so much research on the work that it can become overwhelming. Not only that, but research information on Dante's life quickly becomes oversaturated with all the information. The book was popularized in 1427, which means the book has had over five-hundred years to be critiqued and researched. At a glance, the researcher's first thoughts may be that there's nothing left to talk about. Looking at *Inferno* and all its parts, on paper it appears as an extremely theological text, with references to God, Judas, Satan, and other

important religious figures that are present in Catholic tradition. With the plethora of research, one can determine the key points that highlight Dante's life, and these areas include his take on the idea of morality, his upbringing and incorporation of philosophy into *Inferno*, and his extreme involvement with politics that inevitably lead him to his exile.

Statement of the Problem

Research on *Inferno* has covered the areas of literary theories, theology, politics, and more. Interestingly, there is not much research about researching *Inferno*. Looking at a century of research about *Inferno*, there is a notable correlation between the year the research is published and what the research is about. While some researchers from the mid-20th century focus on different aspects of *Inferno*, researchers from the 21st century will focus on other literary theories and general ideas. Looking at research in particular areas helps understand how research changes with time, allowing for insight into the interpretation and analysis of these changes. Regarding changes in research on morals, politics, and philosophy in *Inferno* helps to understand how research is built upon and how new research fills in gaps and weaknesses.

Background and Need

Before getting into the context about the criticisms and shifting of opinions on Dante's *Inferno*, the background for the information is key. Dante's *Inferno* is a text that is over five-hundred years old yet is still talked about in many literary areas, with critics making new opinions and revelations on the subject. Dante has crafted a wondrous world with many layers, both literally and metaphorically, and there is a reason that *Inferno* is still discussed within the English curriculum. To reiterate, the purpose of reviewing information over the course of the last century not only narrows down the research needed to envelope oneself into the information, but also provides enough information to gather a formulative opinion on how research has changed

since the book's publication in 1427. This helps avoid any gaps throughout the years where research information may repeat itself.

Morals. Morality is a subjective and sometimes arbitrary aspect of life, especially within the context of literature. Dante's *Divine Comedy* attempts to explore the concept of morality, where Dante Alighieri sends himself through a journey in *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. Some articles focus on how Dante layers *Inferno*, where he puts Simonists lower than the wrathful. Other research uses literary theories to analyze *Inferno*, such as new criticism or feminist theory. The incorporation of political figures and their punishments, along with criticism of Dante-pilgrim and Dante-writer for how they both handle themselves.

Marc Cogan's research focuses on using feminist theory to analyze the text and references Medusa, talking about the incorporation of women within the text. Jeffery Tambling's research focuses more on the tyrants and political figures in *Inferno* and criticizes how Dante layers the circles of Hell, namely where he puts the tyrants and where he puts other people. James Torrens' research focuses on the idea of "moral sin" in *Inferno* along with how colleges shouldn't attempt to censor or leave *The Divine Comedy* out of the curriculum. All the articles focus on different Cantos in *Inferno* and discuss the real-world implications of the text along with using literary theories to analyze the text.

Politics. Politics in Florence during Dante's life are vastly different than they are nowadays, especially when looking at it from the eyes of the United States. Dante is heavily involved in politics and in the White Guelch party, which is against the Holy Roman Emperor. His use of politics stems into both areas of morals and philosophy, such as the way he writes the text and the way Dante-writer punishes those he knows in *Inferno*. There's criticism of who

Dante puts into *Inferno*, with many researchers giving a nod to how Dante-pilgrim treats political figures and how Dante-writer punishes them.

Aileen Feng's research notes the importance of referencing the original Italian text and how other writers have used it in their writings. Feng focuses on the importance of "Canto XIII" which discusses Dante-pilgrim's meeting with Pier delle Vigne. Lloyd Howard and Elena Rossi's research focuses on Dante-writer's relationships with those he puts in *Inferno*. He puts Tegghiaio, Iacopo, and Guido into the Circle of Sodomy, Ciaccio in the Circle of Gluttony, and puts many other political figures in other areas. Sarah Landas' research focuses on many of the Circles and discusses the Judecca Ring in particular and how those who inhabit it reference Dante-writer's political opinion.

Philosophy. Dante has an extremely philosophical background that helps him write *The Divine Comedy*. He uses his educational background to help him dive into big philosophical questions, namely those when referencing theological text. He includes philosophy from Aristotle, Plato, and others, making clear correlations between his teaching and his writing. At one point, as well, Dante goes to universities to teach philosophy classes. While philosophy is important to Dante, the use of it in *Inferno* goes beyond his teachings and incorporations of it, but how he puts ancient philosophers into the *Inferno* and how he describes them and their teachings.

Peter Biller's book talks about how philosophy is a standing pillar in Florence during Dante's life and discusses the teachings that Dante receives. It talks about "Canto VII" and how Dante's vernacular shifts after his exile from Florence. It also begs the question of why this change occurs after his exile. John Freccero's research focuses on "Canto I" and relates it to Augustine's "Confessions" essay, such as how Dante takes a similar journey that Augustine

writes about in his essay. Jesse Gellrich's research focuses on Dante's influence from Plato and points out how different passages attempt to address philosophical questions and give them an answer. Gellrich's research also touches on the idea of *The Divine Comedy* being an autobiography for Dante, albeit leaving out a few key points throughout his life.

Summary. To summarize, the current research that exists highlights the importance of an everchanging society and how researchers interpret their own personal lives into the writing of *Inferno*. Within the context of morals, politics, and philosophy, researchers pinpoint how the morality that Dante signifies in *Inferno* relates to the 20th and 21st century; looking at the research over the last century, there is enough information to determine that, since the book's conception, there's enough information to see change in the world and see change in *Inferno* and how the text is interpreted, as well. Throughout the last century, there's been a large shift in moral, political, and philosophical opinion, and as these opinions begin to change, the research on *Inferno* shows new representations of Cantos and lines, all while incorporating different translations as the years go on.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to look at research from 1920-2020 discussing *Inferno* and looking at how the research has changed. Looking at these changes shows how new problems arise when filling in weaknesses and how interpretations of text changes when literary theories become less important. To compare articles, year-long gaps between research, such as comparing an article from the 1920s to the 1950s, shows what new problems arise that are later filled in by articles from the 1980s. Using structuralism and formalism to analyze the text of *Inferno* help to understand the use of feminist theory and Jungian theory when researching *Inferno*.

Research Questions

1. How has researchers' opinions on Dante's incorporation of morality, politics, and philosophy changed throughout the last century?
2. How does Dante's life influence research and analysis of *Inferno*?
3. What limitations are present when limiting research to morality, politics, and philosophy, and what limitations are present limiting research to only one century?
4. How does the incorporation of theological text within *Inferno* increase or decrease the relevance of the three areas of research?

Significance to Field

Dante's *The Divine Comedy* has remained extremely relevant and important in English literature. *Inferno* still remains heavily researched, as much of the research presented in this thesis has articles as recent as 2017. The research conducted in this thesis will help emphasize what weaknesses remain regarding morals, politics, and philosophy in *Inferno*. It will help future researchers see what research is already strong and show what gaps still need to be filled when doing future research on *Inferno*. Since there is limited research present on researching Dante, this thesis seeks to fill in that area and show a broad example of how the research should be filled in the future.

Definitions

1. Canto – “One of the major divisions of a long poem” (“Canto”). Also Italian for “song.”
2. Freudian Theory – “Of, relating to, or according with the psychoanalytic theories or practices of Sigmund Freud” (“Freudian”). His theories focus on psychoanalysis of characters, the ideas of “uncanny,” and the ideas of the Oedipus Complex.

3. Jungian Theory – “Of, relating to, or characteristic of C. G. Jung or his psychological doctrines” (“Jungian”). His theories primarily focus on archetypes of characters and the study of personalities within individuals.
4. Feminist Theory – “The theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes” (“Feminism”). Feminist theory is an extension of feminism where researchers analyze characters in literature and relate them through the ideas of a feministic viewpoint.
5. Queer Theory – “An approach to literary and cultural study that rejects traditional categories of gender and sexuality” (“Queer theory”).
6. Sin – “An offense against religious or moral law” (“Sin”).
7. New Criticism – “An analytical literary criticism that is marked by concentration on the language, imagery, and emotional or intellectual tensions in literary works” (“New Criticism”).
8. Critical Theory – “An approach to social philosophy which focuses on providing a reflective assessment and critique of society and culture to reveal and challenge power structures” (“Critical Theory”).
9. Structuralism – “A method of analysis that is related to cultural anthropology and that focuses on recurring patterns of thought and behavior” (“Structuralism”).
10. Formalism – “Marked attention to arrangement style or artistic means usually with corresponding de-emphasis of content” (“Formalism”).
11. Circles of Hell – In *Inferno*, there are nine Circles of Hell and some have Rings within them; the Rings represent different levels of punishment for that sin (see Appendix A for a detailed outline and definition on the Circles of Hell).

Limitations

The biggest limitation to researching Dante's *Inferno* revolves around language. No matter what translation is read or if the original Italian text is read, researchers still need to translate their work into English for those who do not speak Italian, and this causes a disconnect between the original work and the research. Incredible research has still been done on *Inferno*, but there's still the issue of the inability to read from the original text. Accessing research articles during COVID has made research extremely difficult as access to certain articles have become restricted

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the research, an IRB form was sent to the IRB for Anna Maria College. There are no human test subjects and no studies being involved with human participants, therefore there are no ethical considerations for this thesis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis seeks to answer the question of how *Inferno* is a moral allegory that incorporates politics and philosophy from Dante-writer's life. Looking at a century of research from 1920-2020 allows for insight into the gaps and weaknesses that arise when conducting new research and focusing on how research is strengthened throughout the years. Looking at the way Dante layers *Inferno* is important to all three areas of research and aims to give a look into how Dante-writer feels when writing the poem, along with how real-life events affect him and his writing.

Chapter Two, Literature Review

Information on Dante's *Inferno* stems from years of critiques and reviews, accompanied by various translations. Dissecting the research of morals, politics, and philosophy over the last century involves different steps to be taken, but the most important thing is understanding the significance of looking at the research over the last hundred years. Dante's *Inferno* has not changed, as it is a work of literature that has remained the same since its conception; but various translations and a greater understanding of proper translation has created many different translations that perceive the text in various ways. The Norton Critical Edition of *Inferno* is not translated in the same way as another one, although it could be similar. This principle does not remain the same with research, as the ideas surround politics, morals, and philosophy have changed drastically over the last century, and narrowing the research down to one hundred years still allows for great insight into how research on Dante's *Inferno* has changed.

The literature review addresses three areas of research related to Dante's *Inferno* and how the text has been interpreted from a moral, political, and philosophical standpoint. In the first section, research studies related to how research on morality in Dante's *Inferno* has changed over the last century and how *Inferno* is heavily influenced by Dante's own morals as a person. In the second section, there is a discussion on how Dante is heavily influenced by politics and includes real people from his life into *Inferno*, along with a correlation between American and Florence politics; the research on politics in *Inferno* change throughout the years, relating to the researcher's political state of affairs. Finally, the last section discusses how Dante's philosophical influence is incorporated into *Inferno*, and the research on philosophy discusses the important figures and what aspects of philosophical teachings Dante incorporates into his writing.

Morals. Researching morality and Dante's *Inferno* involves looking at the year the research is published, what area of morality that the research discusses, and how it applies to *Inferno*. The research done over the last century shows how life during the time changes the opinion and reception of research on morality in *Inferno*. This is not to say that morality in *Inferno* changes, but that the analysis and interpretation of it changes with how opinions change.

In Marc Cogan's research, he talks about how the setting and worldbuilding in Dante's *Inferno* strengthens its relation to be a moral work. Those in the *Inferno* and their punishments are representative of how Dante feels those individuals should be punished; he creates his own system that puts people into different circles of Hell. For example, Virgil (Dante's guide through his journey) is trapped in Limbo because he is a pagan and, therefore, was never baptized; his punishment is an eternal longing for Heaven, and with Limbo being on top, the eternal desire is only strengthened by the closeness to it. Other people that Dante knows, such as Filippo de Caviccioli who inherits Dante's property when he is exiled (30).

Cogan references other works such as Ovid's *Metamorphosis* to draw references to the importance of moral theory in *Inferno*. The purpose, as well, is to enlighten the reader to how the punishments for sin relate to the moral punishments to wrath, such as drawing relation to those in the circle of wrath being "unrecognizable" (259). Cogan makes an example of how sinners in *Inferno* are "punished by the sin itself, and their passion provides an image of the sin, not its opposite" (260). The research references the importance of sin and how its adverse effects on life lead people into different areas in the Circles of Hell. Dante is going through his journey in Hell because sin steers him off his "true path," albeit unspecified sin, but Cogan talks about different areas where Dante is shown performing sin (262). Cogan's reference to Dante's personal sin is that it emphasizes the importance of his journey.

An important quote from the article references the poeticism and the morality of the sinners in *Inferno* and how they are punished for their sins. The article says, “There is a powerful double sense of justice in punishing the damned by the reenacting of their sins” (259). Whatever sin people perform while they are alive, they pay for by eternally committing the sin, which Cogan references as that “powerful sense of justice” (He also says, “The pains of the damned are more revelation than retribution; they compare difficult moral emblems which shadow forth each sin’s inward nature” (258).

With Jeffery Tambling’s research, he focuses on the moral differences between the Circles, such as Circle VII where those who commit violence against themselves are sent to are put under those who commit violence against others. He also mentions the importance of blood within Circle V (Wrath) and how it “conceals the faces” of the violent individuals (Tambling). The purpose of this article is to make strict reference to “Canto XII” of *Inferno*, which talks about the sinners who are wrathful. Tambling talks about how the Canto references other violent sinners who kill themselves and kill others, doomed to repeat the same actions of violence and murder, but focuses on “Canto XII” which makes direct reference to different tyrants that have blood on their hands.

One of the important figures Tambling references is Guido da Montefeltro Forli in “Canto XII.” Forli is covered in blood to a point that Dante says he doesn’t recognize him at first, and even kicks him in the head when he first shows himself because of how unrecognizable he is (82). Dante has a similar experience with Malatestino who is another tyrant that killed many innocent people during his reign. One important quote from this work mentions, “Blood produced from the bodies conceals bodies” (83). Tambling mentions that it’s imperative to notice the different people and the blood they’re covered in because they are trapped in a moral Hell; he

uses Structuralism to analyze the layers of *Inferno* and where Dante is placing these people based on their morality in life.

The purpose of this article is to make note of the morality that Dante puts into *Inferno*, from a theological aspect and from a mortal sin aspect. Torrens talks about how things like translations may try to “skew the truth” of the original Italian text, saying that so many translations have been done that the original intention and meaning of lines can act as a censor for the work. Torrens says it’s important for universities to still reference this text to provide to show how literature and moral opinion has changed over the last few centuries since its publication and that even if some of the text is seen as offensive to the modern moral opinion, at one point it wasn’t as such.

Morals center around the way Dante-writer includes real people into the *Inferno*. The research focuses on the way people in *Inferno* act when alive and how Dante believes they should be punished for their sins. While some articles focus on specific cantos, other articles reference the overall theme of *Inferno*. Some articles reference the importance of blood while others reference the role of women in the work, but overall morality centers around how people are treated and how Dante believes they should be punished.

Politics. Politics from country to country are always different. The United States is different from England which is different from Florence; when referencing politics, as well, the way that different countries run begins to change as time goes on. Different policies are put into place, different political leaders come to pass, and ultimately the highs and lows of the country are seen when looked through a scope of a century. The moral opinion of society can often derive from the political climate that researchers discuss. Many political figures are referenced in

Inferno, namely those from Florence that Dante knows during his life before his exile along with ancient political figures that were extremely corrupt and violent.

Aileen Feng's research focuses on how references to the original Italian text is important; it helps to see the differentiations from the text I'm currently reading to another person's translation of the text of "Canto XIII" particularly. It also mentions Dante's political life, with Petrarch in "Canto XIII" remembering Dante for his political work in Florence. Not only that, but Pier delle Vigne is referenced, as Dante meets him and knows him without Pier introducing himself by name. Another key fact of the research is the role of women in politics during Dante's life along with the role of women in *Inferno*.

The purpose of this article is to reference how impactful politics are in Dante's life and how he incorporates important figures into *Inferno*. With that, the research seeks to view how women are represented from a political standpoint but includes moral views on women. Women aren't really present in Florence politics, but Dante's inclusion of women in *Inferno* adds to the fact that women are not included in politics, as all their sins are related to the common sexualization of women during the 1300s.

The article uses feminist analysis to relate the political and moral side of *Inferno*. Feng's research talks about the incorporation of Medusa and the use of the "male gaze" in the text. With politics, however, Dante meets Pier and avoids telling Dante about the reason that he's in Hell. In his life, Pier is the secretary of Frederick II but is imprisoned for allegedly betraying him, leading him to his suicide. Feng says that Dante places Pier among the suicide woods instead of the Circle of Traitors which shows that Dante himself believes that Pier is innocent. There is no evidence to state why Pier is imprisoned, and Feng speculates that there is a background conspiracy that never became known.

In Lloyd Howard and Elena Rossi's research, they focus heavily on all the different political figures that Dante has personal relationships with and how he incorporates them into *Inferno*. Ciaccio is in the Circle of Gluttony, Tegghiaio, Iacopo, and Guido appear in the Circle of Sodomy, and many other political figures show up in different Circles. Dante purposely put these people into specific Circles because of his own personal opinions on them and how they act in life; most of these political figures are not dead, rather they are people who worked together to put Dante into exile or were political opponents of the White Guelch party that Dante is part of. They use "formulas" to analyze the text; what they do is use the original Italian text and relate particular lines (such as "per l'aura fosca" being used in reference to both Catalona and Mosca, political figures in history) to how they are used in context.

The purpose of this article is to relate the original Italian text and how Dante's phrasing relates different political figures with their sins. While some people that Dante reference are in different Circles, they still relate to each other through how they treat Dante before his exile. Calanto and Loderingo were two people of the Black Guelch party that worked to remove Dante from Florence. The article mentions that Florence began to have issues within the political field and also began to have issues budgeting their money and, overall, began to fall apart after exiling Dante. He was extremely active in politics and the White Guelch party that he was a part of struggled to get back on their feet after his exile.

Sarah Landas' research focuses on both the moral and political influence within *Inferno*. Landas talks about how Dante chooses to have Virgil be his guide throughout his journey of *The Divine Comedy* because many people during the Medieval era believed poets like Virgil "to be sages" Landas' research helps to analyze how Dante's incorporation of politics is used as a means of avoiding prosecution for criticizing other political parties in Florence, which ultimately

fails since he is exiled in 1302. The final Circle of Hell houses two political sinners which Dante uses to represent the worst sin that people can commit: treachery to benefactors or political figures.

This article's purpose is to highlight key aspects of the text that emphasize how political *Inferno* truly is. The final Circle of Hell has the Judecca Ring, which holds Judas, Brutus, and Cassius. Brutus and Cassius were involved with the plot and murder of Julius Caesar and Dante's inclusion of these two within the lowest Circle showcases his opinion on their attempt to murder a benefactor, one that they also referred to as friend. Virgil's inclusion as a mentor may appear to stem from a religious standpoint, but Landas argues that Virgil is the bridge between "the church and the empire" (93). Dante sees Virgil as a sage with "supernatural powers," he is also regarded as an incredible historical poet, which helps him inspire Dante throughout his journey (Landas 94).

Politics center around how Dante's political involvement influences his fellow politicians' punishments. Dante writes in other political figures that he has never met, such as Brutus and Cassius, but still incorporates them into the *Inferno* to punish them how he sees fit. His involvement in the White Guelch party helps inspire him to include politics into the poem, but the research discusses how his exile influences his writing about these political figures later in the poem.

Philosophy. Dante's ability to incorporate his education from school into philosophical teachings through subtext is prevalent in *Inferno*. Dante has a philosophy-oriented upbringing, studying the works of Aristotle and Plato namely, and many researchers mention his education background to interpret the text. Some of the research focuses on Plato's philosophy which is the

most apparent in *Inferno*, but other sources focus on specific Cantos where Dante is influenced by other philosophers.

In Peter Biller's book, it gives a look into Florence's political climate during the 13th and 14th centuries. He gives a history of the political parties that are ruling and how the political wheel turns in Florence, and chapter 14 primarily focuses on Dante's life from a philosophical standpoint. While the book discusses how politics work in Florence, it also talks about the rich philosophical viewpoint that acts as a pillar in Florence. There are many schools of philosophy, one of which Dante attended as a child and a few universities that Dante goes back to so he can teach for a time.

The book talks about the way Florence is impacted during the 13th and 14th century as a whole, and chapter 14 namely talks about Dante's influence on the politics in Florence and how his exile was felt throughout. Because of his exile, as well, Biller believes that, though Dante's epic poem of *The Divine Comedy*, he is coping with the loss of his homeland; he never returns to Florence after he is exiled and dies as an outcast in 1327, but he keeps up with Florence's current state of affairs during his exile, hearing about the different political parties and how they are winning or losing over one another.

Dante creates a Dante-pilgrim character to go through the throes of woe with *The Divine Comedy* (Biller 142). Most importantly, Biller mentions there is a shift of character after the Canto VII, which many critics believe to be a direct relation to Dante being exiled around this time. The entire book talks about the way Florence is impacted during the 13th and 14th century as a whole, and chapter 14 talks about Dante's influence on the politics in Florence and how his exile was felt throughout. Because of his exile, as well, Biller feels as though his epic poem of

The Divine Comedy is his way of coping with the loss of his homeland as he is in exile until his death in 1327.

With John Freccero's research, he focuses on "Canto I" of *Inferno* and suggests that Dante's worldbuilding of the "dark wood" he finds himself in is referencing Saint Augustine's "Confessions" essay. He looks at the entirety of *The Divine Comedy*, moving between all three parts of the work where Cantos line up with the philosophical teachings that Dante includes. Freccero discusses how Dante's political life is influenced heavily by his philosophical teachings, as well. Dante is influenced by Augustine's "Confessions" so far as Freccero's research determines that many parts of Canto I are heavily influenced by his essay, including the journey of enlightenment.

The purpose of the book is to discuss Dante's life from a philosophical standpoint. He grows up in a religious household, as many people in Medieval Florence do, and eventually turns to studying Augustine and ancient philosophy. Throughout his life, Dante writes several philosophical essays that emphasize his viewpoints on the subject and how he himself is influenced by the teachings. In "Canto I," the philosophical discussing in "Confession" entices Dante to write about a "death and resurrection of the self," whereas *Inferno* draws a line between life, death, and consequences for straying from the path of righteousness (19).

Jesse Gellrich's research focuses on the importance of Dante's ability to mythologize Medieval Florence and how philosophy shapes *Inferno*. Gellrich uses Charles Singleton's translation of *Inferno* to point out references to Plato in the text and represent Dante's philosophical influence throughout the story. Plato made an argument that there are "imitators" that have attempted to steal his work and way of writing. Gellrich believes that Dante is exempt

from this argument because Singleton points out that *Inferno* acts as a “special kind of history” (153).

The purpose of the article is to represent how the history of philosophy helps *Inferno* stand as a classic. Many critics within the field of philosophy defend Dante’s application and influence of Augustine’s “Confessions” and Plato’s teachings to create a fictitious autobiography that encompasses the very being of philosophy in Medieval Florence. Gellrich says that *The Divine Comedy* as a whole doesn’t seek to act as an entire autobiography, as it leaves out important religious influences that Dante has, however its intention is to “beguile us by its realistic detail and to put us into [his] world” (145). The poem is meant to act as a history of Dante himself, how he changes throughout *The Divine Comedy* and how he grows into a different person by the end.

While Gellrich talks about his religious and political influence, she makes references to how philosophy is the ultimate influence for *Inferno*. One interesting thing about the article is that it incorporates new criticism. Gellrich’s analysis of *Inferno* references Plato’s analysis of human development. Dante’s pilgrimage through *Inferno* requires “continual correction and adjustment” (150). She insinuates that *Inferno* is meant as a text that Dante writes to grow as a person with the insight to philosophical teachings.

Philosophy centers around how Dante is raised and how he uses his teachings in *Inferno*. Referring to philosophers such as Plato and Augustine, research point out the correlations and references that Dante makes to them. Throughout the research, new criticism is used to analyze the inclusion of philosophy in *Inferno* and how it helps to answer big philosophical questions of Dante’s time. There is discussion about how the education system in Florence influences Dante

and how his life as a philosophy teacher, along with essays he wrote before his exile, are involved in *The Divine Comedy*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the three areas of morals, politics, and philosophy have many layers within them. Dante's involvement in politics and philosophy shape his morality that lead him to crafting the world of Hell in such a particular way that his influence can be dissected. This can be seen with the incorporation of new literary theories, such as feminist theory and New Criticism, along with viewing politics from different countries that are compared to the political aspect of Florence in the 1300s. The literary theories help analyze the work presented and the interpretations that researchers make. Formalism remains particularly popular throughout the century, but the incorporation of New Criticism and Structuralism become more apparently toward the end of the 21st century.

Chapter Three, Methods

Introduction

In *Inferno* by Dante Alighieri, the themes covered in the book span across morals, politics, and philosophy that represent Alighieri's personal life and things he's experienced up until and during his exile from Florence. The purpose of this thesis is to look into how the research has changed and how, over the last century, opinions on morals, politics, and philosophy have changed. To do this, different forms of research are looked at throughout the last century to analyze how literary theories change, along with using literary theories to analyze the text of *Inferno*.

Sample

The range of dates for the articles is from the 1920s to 2020. More specifically, the earliest research article presented is 1921 and the most recent article presented is 2017. While the information doesn't specifically span over a century, any articles that are published within the gap years are non-essential, as later articles begin to build upon the information that was lacking. The comparison of 20th century articles to 21st century articles allows for a starting point of research and ends with research that incorporates new ideas; while the new ideas are good, this creates a broader range of weaknesses because there's no new research being published to fill in those gaps yet. The use of literary theories becomes present within the last century and there is a focus on how these literary theories begin to show in research and where they begin to leave the research on *Inferno*.

The research presented is a combination of books, peer-reviewed articles, and essays. The books don't all touch solely on *Inferno* but provide insight into Dante's life and his work with Florence regarding politics. There are five articles discussing philosophy, eight articles

discussing morality, and six articles discussing politics. A few sources incorporate a mix of the three; some contain philosophy and morals, others contain politics and morals, and one article referencing all three areas. The articles regarding morals range from 1968 to 2017, the articles referencing philosophy range from 1921 to 2008, and articles discussing politics range from 1949 to 2015. There are minor gaps in between years, however most of the information over the five year period remain the same, and the lack of articles from each individual year of the last century allow for avoiding overly repetitive information and seeing a greater expansion on the weaknesses from articles as early as 1921.

Theories

Much of the research presents their own theories that are present in analyzing *Inferno*. Some of the theories that the research incorporates includes feminist theory, queer theory, New Criticism, Freudian theory, and Jungian theory. These theories are representative of the time that the articles are published; articles that are published when Freudian and Jungian theories are popular will incorporate these theories more, but as research begins to steer away from these ideals, queer and feminist theories become popular. These theories are mostly tied to the idea of morality, but also tied to the fact that psychoanalytic theory trickles down into things like feminist and queer theory; in a way, these theories still seek to psychoanalyze people, but shift to making critiques on the representation of the sexes and their status within the text.

The theories used to analyze the analysis are Formalism, Structuralism, and Critical Theory. Structuralism seeks to analyze “recurring patterns of thoughts and behavior” (“Structuralism”). This theory can be used to analyze the grouping of the research with how each article presents its strengths and weaknesses. If one article talks about Dante’s influence from Plato, and another article talks about the same subject, Structuralism will be used to analyze and

critique how the strengths and weaknesses have shifted, and if there are any new weaknesses presented or any new strengths created. With Formalism, the theory itself seeks to look at the structure of literature and how it is presented. Using Formalism with Dante wouldn't be as necessary if the text was in the original Italian, but because the structure of the Norton Critical Edition of *Inferno* is different, Formalism is used to represent the differences between textual analyses of the research. Lastly, with critical theory, it is the umbrella term for theories like feminist and queer theory. Structuralism seeks to critique literature in its representation of societal norms that are detrimental to society and how it functions.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, different research from different years are compared and contrasted. The research has weaknesses and strengths that can be built upon when referencing one article to another. If one article talks about a specific Canto or section of *Inferno*, another article may refer to that same Canto and provide more information. One of the biggest issues with the research is that there are varying translations of *Inferno*, so when one article references a passage in *Inferno*, the reading that the thesis writer may be interpreting may be different than the translation that the researcher is translating. Some articles also refer to the original Italian to provide their own translation of the work which makes it difficult to allude to the translation that the thesis writer is using.

When one article is from the 1980s and another article is from the 2010s and both talk about different analytical theory, a conclusion can be drawn that the focus in analytical research has changed; one article talks about how the women in Dante's *Inferno* are represented and how it reflects the societal value that women hold in Alighieri's lifetime, whereas another article talks about Freudian theory where there's something uncanny about Dante seeing a beguiled version

of Beatrice in the final circle of Hell. Ultimately, comparing the articles shows that there's almost too much change throughout the last hundred years to answer the question of how things have changed regarding research on Dante.

Conclusion

In conclusion, within the three areas of morals, politics, and philosophy, there's a century of research being discussed relating to Dante's *Inferno*. The articles are as early as 1921 and as late as 2017, covering a range of theories from Freudian and Jungian theory to feminist and queer theory along with New Criticism; with that, to analyze all the articles, Formalism, Structuralism, and Critical Theory. Comparing the research involves not only looking at the year that articles within the same area are published but looks into how the views on those articles change. For example, there's a clear different in society when one article talks about a political figure from the 20th century and talks about a different political figure from the 21st century.

Chapter Four, Results

Introduction

When it comes to research, literary theories and critiques of old works change similarly to the ways that society changes; new theories and developments are implemented and expanded on, more information about an author or about a story is found out, and Dante's *Inferno* is no exception. As the century goes on, more information is discovered about Dante Alighieri and his involvement in Florence regarding politics; moreover, more information about Dante's relationship with the ancient philosophers and, namely, his affiliation with religion. The biggest change in research on Dante is the everchanging aspect of literary theory that ties to morality. As morals in society begin to shift, literary theory begins to fit into the nature thereof. Freudian and Jungian theory begin to die down as more scientific research is done to disprove some of Freud's theories and how Jungian theory becomes repetitive in how it can be applied. These theories move onto more modern literary theories such as feminist theory and queer theory.

Morals

Two articles that talk about morality in *Inferno* are "The Wrath of Dante" by G.A. Borgese and "Medusa: The Letter and the Spirit" by John Freccero. "The Wrath of Dante" discusses the moral nature of Dante after his exile. Borgese mentions that there is a "significant gap between the composition of the seventh and eighth canto" (185). Borgese goes on to reference that, if the theories are true that Dante wrote the eighth Canto after his exile, that he is likely filled with anger and venting his frustrations into *Inferno*. Dante uses a lot of angry descriptions in the eighth Canto, saying that Phlegyas "should be as furious as the damned souls" (186), whereas this lack of composure was not present in the earlier Cantos. Dante as a pilgrim begins as a rather timid and scared man, curious about what journey awaits him and infatuated

with Virgil being his mentor. As this goes on, however, Dante becomes more comfortable with treating the damned poorly, such as kicking Ciaccio away when he first arises from the blood in the Circle of Wrath (63). “The Wrath of Dante” was published in 1938 and perpetuates the patriarchal ideal that men’s only valid emotion can be rage; instead of Dante presenting sadness, he presents rage, which represents the internalized misogyny and relation that sadness and cowardice are “female emotions” (64).

With “Medusa: The Letter and the Spirit,” published in 1986, this is one of the earliest articles that display the idea of feminist theory. While Freccero doesn’t outright say that it’s a feminist analysis of *Inferno*, he discusses the male gaze and how Virgil covers Dante’s eyes to avoid looking at Medusa (226). Freccero says that Medusa acts as an “antiethical object” that requires Virgil to cover Dante’s eyes, making uncovering an “antiethical action” (227). Within the context of morality, this means that Dante is insinuating that looking at a woman is antiethical, and because Medusa’s gaze turns men to stone (rather, because Medusa’s nature is to not be objectified by the male gaze), Virgil covers Dante’s eyes, to shield him from repulsion.

Coming to 21st century research on *Inferno*, one of the earliest and strongest research articles is “Allusions in Dante’s Inferno” by Sarah Landas. The work touches upon all three areas of morals, politics, and philosophy, and one of the most important things that it discusses is how Dante disavows corrupt religious leaders and “denouncing certain political actions by individuals as well as countries” (Landas 97). Many of the political figures that Dante puts into the Circles of Hell are people that he knows, and Landas makes an important note that the levels of Hell are done with an intention. That intention is that the lower the Circles go, the further away from God those sinners are. Dante’s moral beliefs line up with the levels of Hell, starting with the first Circle that houses the virtuous pagans. Many poets and philosophers stay housed in this Circle

because they either lived before Christ or lived soon after Christianity became a leading religion; following that, the second Circle contains those who are violent, and it continues on. The context of the layers of Hell represent Dante's moral nature being put into *Inferno*, whereas those who inhabit those circles reference the political and philosophical ideals that Dante maintains.

Many of the research articles presented in *Dante and the Unorthodox: The Aesthetics of Transgression* discuss how Dante's unorthodox morals were once orthodox among his audience. The book was published in 2005, and the articles centrally focus around the subject of morality and how Dante's interpretation of what right and wrong are slowly change throughout *Inferno*. Some researchers in the text say that Dante rebuilds himself from the ground-up; he reenacts his morality as he goes through his journey, eventually coming out of *The Divine Comedy* with a new sense of moral esteem and the ending of *Inferno* sets Dante up to begin transcending the unorthodox nature of some of his morals. Dante as a writer seeks to undergo this change the same way he writes himself in *Inferno*; that there will be a form of transcendence that allows him to exceed his own expectations.

Three years later, Marc Cogan publishes "The Poetic Application of the Structure of Hell," which touches on many of the same ideas that *Dante and the Unorthodox* references. Cogan's research leads him to pinpoint specific writers, such as Ovid and Homer, as central figures for helping Dante grow into a new person and transcend his journey. The change from *Dante and the Unorthodox* to this article are not that different. Some of the weaknesses of *Dante and the Unorthodox* involve focusing too much on the theological aspect of *Inferno* and not offering enough information about the moral aspect, whereas Cogan's research fills those gaps by minimizing the research on theology and maximizing how Dante incorporates his own morality.

John Marinbon's article, "Virtuous Pagans, Hopeless Desire and Unjust Justice" discusses the importance of "Canto IV" and the distinction that Dante makes about "virtuous pagans" (Alighieri 3). The information he touches upon has been discussed in previous articles throughout the years on morality, however Marinbon's research fills in the gaps that previous articles have, which is narrowing down the discussion on Dante's implications with the idea of virtuous pagans. Many famous writers that Dante idolizes, such as Ovid, Homer, and even Virgil, along with philosophers that inspire Dante such as Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates, are sent to Limbo for the reason alone that they were either born before Christianity existed or did not get baptized at birth. When Christianity became increasingly popular, "baptism was imposed as a universal sacrament necessary to cleanse humans of original sin" (Marinbon). From the view of morals, Dante includes theological morality that is presented in Catholic tradition, but what's interesting about the research by Marinbon is that the consensus of placement of these philosophers and writers generally remains the same. Marinbon doesn't outright give an opinion about their placement in Heaven or Hell but justifies Dante's choice throughout his research and agrees that, within the context of theological morals, this is where they should be after death.

In Simone Marchesi's research, the article helps to paint a picture of where Dante's influences in the poem come from. Virgil is the mentor and guide for Dante, teaching him right from wrong and how to avoid sinning, but that in "Canto XV," Brunetto and him discuss "Florentine civic politics" along with why Brunetto is in Hell. The article states that Brunetto is in the Circle of Violence, particularly violence against nature; nature doesn't specifically pertain to the woods and the Earth, but namely it's referencing sodomy. Brunetto is said to have been in a homosexual relationship during his life and, therefore, is being punished. This reiterates the morality of Dante's time, albeit not how modern society thinks today and a rather oppressive

viewpoint, the article talks about how this interpretation is a product of its time. It's not necessarily Dante's personal belief, but within the context of his upbringing, this article brings that information to life. Importantly, too, it covers the entirety of *The Divine Comedy* and makes references to where Dante grows from his poor moral choices.

Politics

George Harper's research article is one of the earliest articles referenced in this thesis. It covers the theoretical concept of how Dante would react to Florence after his own death; Florence dwindles into ruins, the Black Guelch party rises to power as the White Guelch party begins to dwindle and struggle to get any financial backbone to regain power of Florence. Harper says Dante has a "political ideal" that is never reached in his life, nor is it reached after his death. The article states that Dante was a proprietor of the idea of separation of Church and State; combined with Dante's philosophical upbringing and his eventual conversion to Catholicism, he understands both sides and ultimately comes to the conclusion that, while philosophy spends most of its time relating to theology in different ways, and that he brings ideas of Catholic tradition into many of his writings, he's a believer in the act that the people of Florence will be more unionized with each other if they are given the freedom they deserve from the rule of the Holy Roman Empire.

Charles Davis' research emphasizes how powerful of a providence Florence was. He says that Florence "was already a metropolis [before Dante's involvement], one of the largest and most powerful cities in Europe" (425). The rich environment of Florence allowed for education to be some of the highest quality, leading Dante to have a strong sense of education within the field of philosophy from a young age. There's "secular education," but Davis says that it lacked "a conspicuous center" (427). While some areas of education in Florence were strong, the

religious teachings were static and relatively irrelevant. The learning of Latin and ability to read was extremely important. Davis' text helps to understand why *Inferno* incorporated religion, which is that classic literature at the time was scarce. While education was important, the main aspect of education was the secular education which taught students how to read and write, using the Bible as reference. For Dante to have his work reach the widest audience, he needed to include information from Catholic tradition so that his audience can relate to the information; if he referenced philosophical teachings, it wouldn't be as relevant to the relation, but his philosophical teachings are intertwined with the text of *Inferno*, which later on helps people to understand the concept of philosophy.

Marvin Becker's article, "Dante and His Literary Contemporaries as Political Men" emphasizes the research done in Davis' article, which is that Dante's political life and philosophical teachings are betwixt each other. To follow this, Becker criticizes the influx of theological teachings in Florence and that the men who exile Dante were blinded by this upbringing. He says religion isn't inherently bad, rather that the lack of separation of Church and State that Dante fights for while in the White Guelch party in Florence leads to his exile, which causes a chain reaction of bad luck for Florence. Davis' criticism comes from the understanding that Florentine politics emphasized running for public offices even without the innate desire to run; this is what separated Dante from many others within the political spectrum of Florence and ultimately what leads him to his exile.

Philosophy

In Charles Singleton's article, "Dante and Myth," Singleton discusses the relationship and correlation between Plato and Dante's writings. He says that the relationship between "the mythmaker and the philosopher are the same person," as both create conjunctive ideas for an

outside audience to interpret (483). With Dante's writing incorporating philosophical ideas when creating the structure of *Inferno*, it can be interpreted as a philosophical text. Davis says that while Dante's referred to as a "philosophical poet, it is not *his* philosophy" (485). Plato creates his own philosophies and attempts to answer them, whereas Dante brings about questions and gathers them into one grand epic poem. With this article being written in 1949, it helps to pave the path to future ideologies and interpretations of the philosophical teachings in *Inferno*.

Another article from John Freccero, called "Dante's Prologue Scene," focuses on Dante's incorporation of Augustine's philosophical teachings, namely one of his essays that discuss a life that lacks God as a guide will have an unsuccessful journey. Augustine writes about how he once attempted to take a journey to God like Dante does in *Inferno* but Augustine states that he failed in his journey to God. One important quote from the article is when Augustine is talked to by God, stating, "I might know the difference between presumption and confession; between those who saw where they were to go, yet saw not the way, and the way itself, that led not to behold only, but to dwell in the beatific country" (13). The author references that Augustine's journey is like Dante's, as the quote represents "reaching for something that appears unobtainable," which is how the prologue in *Inferno* begins (14).

The article "Two Dantes or One? An Essay in Transcendence and Theatricality" references both sides of Dante that are important to his philosophical upbringing: his ties to Christianity and paganism. The philosophers that Dante looks up to are referenced as "virtuous pagans," and thereby Dante's attachment to philosophy comes from his interest and education in philosophy (Alighieri 3). The article references that Dante's journey through a Catholic epiphany needs to start with Dante's original idolization of paganism. Dante converting to Catholicism isn't the primary goal of *Inferno*, but that his growth is represented from a theological standpoint

by understanding that he can idolize and appreciate the pagan philosophers while maintaining his own beliefs. In *Inferno*, Dante occasionally acts no better than the sinners in the lower Circles; he acts prideful, he acts with wrath, but Virgil teaches him that he must let those reactions go so he can grow.

Conclusion

In conclusion, many of the articles have built upon the weaknesses of previous research. Throughout the century, as new literary theories develop, they become incorporated and applied to *Inferno*, as is seen with critical theory. When moving to politics, the information relies on the knowledge of how Florence once was in the 1300s and help to shape Dante's life and its influence on *Inferno*. Research on philosophy shows which philosophers influence Dante greatly and begin to draw conclusions to where Dante gets his inspiration. As more is discovered relating to research, it is applied to *Inferno* to analyze the work and its context.

Chapter Five, Discussion

This thesis looks at a century of research revolving around Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* from the work of *The Divine Comedy*. *Inferno* is over 500 years old and is still heavily discussed in the literary field and there are still weaknesses and strengths with every new research article that discusses *Inferno*. Looking at a century of research on *Inferno*, many of the gaps have been filled, but the changing of morals, politics, and philosophy cause new weaknesses to arise. Articles from the 1900s tend to lean more toward literary analysis revolving around the male characters whereas new literary theories (such as feminist theory) center on the focus of women and background characters that are looked over in older research articles.

The design of the study is to analyze works from different years and relate them all to each other regarding morality, philosophy, and politics and how they influence Dante and his writing of *Inferno*; moreover, all these aspects are looked at through how the research on Dante has changed. More information has been discovered about Dante's life and more research has been conducted to create better points regarding *Inferno*. An important aspect of the design study is to look at a century of literary criticism and analytical research about *Inferno*, as even in one century, much of the research has shifted and changed due to the lives of said researchers who are relating *Inferno* to their own lives within the scope of morals, politics, and philosophy.

The design of the research is focused on two key aspects: the area (morals, philosophy, politics) that the research discusses and the year that the articles are published. The goal of this design is to focus primarily on how research has changed and how the weaknesses of the early research is touched upon with the later research. Discussing articles from the mid-to-late 2000s isn't effective if there's no information to build upon and show change. If there's reference to how one Canto is referenced in the 1900s and how that same Canto is referenced in the 2000s, it

signifies the growth of research on that particular subject. With that, each research article relates primarily to one area, so there's no overlap for one research article to cover two points, as using the same article for two areas will not show growth within a particular field.

Discussion

Morals. Much of the research from the 20th century spends time justifying Dante's choices with how he layers *Inferno*. He puts the Simonists below the violent and puts pagans above everyone else. Some of the research focuses on how, during Dante's time, this would be normal. During Dante's life, through secular education, there's the belief that homosexuality is a sin, which begins to change when entering the 21st century. With that, Dante uses his secular education to condemn individuals he both knows and admires in *Inferno*. He is heavily influenced by ancient philosophers yet still condemns them in *Inferno*. He is devout in his religion wherein even those he admires, such as Ovid and Homer, are still among the damned. Dante-writer is attempting to go through personal growth while having Dante-pilgrim go through moral growth; the pilgrim acts as a pillar for how Dante-writers wishes he acted while keying in his own ways of sinning. Whereas Dante-pilgrim sins in *Inferno*, Dante-writers feels as though he wants to commit these sins. The research points to the idea of Dante-writer using *The Divine Comedy* as both an autobiographical moral journey and his exertion of emotion.

The justification of Dante's work comes from him being a product of his time. Some of the 21st century accepts this idea and critiques it, however 20th century research doesn't focus on that as much. Much of Tambling's research discusses how universities shouldn't try to censor the work; at times it's grotesqueness is heavily detailed. With that, Tambling argues that universities shouldn't find the existence of the ring for Simonists to be offensive, and most of the 21st century research doesn't. They, instead, focus on analyzing it with critical theory and structuralism,

noting how Dante is a product of his time and how he would see the world in such a way.

Moving to the 21st century, topics of feminist theory and Dante-writer's moral standing are more focused on overall.

In the 21st century, feminist theory becomes more popularized and is used to analyze women's role in *Inferno*. Whereas Medusa has been discussed as the punisher of the male gaze, Beatrice is seen as the perfect virgin figure. She is guiding Dante to *Paradiso* and is his drive to get there. Dante meets other women, such as Medusa, who stand as temptation figures. Dante feels drawn to these lustful women, and the research discusses how throughout *Inferno*, Beatrice remains the ideal woman figure because of her passivity. She is dead, embodying the "perfect ideal" for men, which is a passive woman. Dante is tempted by these "active women" in *Inferno* but remembers the passive virgin Beatrice awaiting him. Personal and moral growth are present, as well, where people begin to criticize Dante's layering of the Circles. They understand that he is a product of his time but use it to critique how some of these ideals are outdated and that morality has shifted beyond the scope of rejection of those who commit suicide and those who are homosexual. *Inferno* is the beginning of Dante's moral journey, and the goal of *The Divine Comedy* is for Dante to become a better person.

Dante-pilgrim commits sins while in *Inferno*, such as kicking Ciaccio in the head when he first meets him, but there's a point where he meets Brunetto Latini among the Sodomites in Canto XV. Brunetto was exiled with the White Guelch party, but he wasn't exiled for being homosexual. From Dante-pilgrim's standpoint, he treats Brunetto rather kindly, saying he was a brilliant philosopher who has written great works. One interesting note is that Dante-writer still condemns Brunetto in *Inferno* to eternal damnation. So, while Dante-pilgrim represents moral and personal growth, it can be said that Dante-writer creates a paradox with allowing his pilgrim-

self to talk to a Sodomite and praise him while, by the same note, writing him into the Inferno to eternal damnation. 21st century research analyzes this facet and claims that *Inferno* is the melting pot of all Dante-writer's ill-feelings toward Florence, his exile, and generally his life. He writes Dante-pilgrim as a more ideal figure, still riddled with flaws but a much more realistic chance at becoming the person Dante-writer himself wants to be.

Politics. Dante, as previously stated, is extremely active in Florence politics. His involvement stems to how he punishes people he knows and even his shift in tone. There's a distinct difference in his tone from "Cantos I-VII" to "Canto VIII," where Dante-pilgrim starts as a rather timid man and becomes more violent; Dante-writer writes more aggressively. Anyone with education background in Florence would've received secular education, therefore Dante's incorporation of religion stems from a connection with his audience. He uses it to get his message across as everyone would understand the context of Hell and the punishments to follow, but Dante incorporates his own punishments and layers, using his own analysis from secular education. In Circle IX, in the Judecca Ring, not only is Judas there as the greatest traitor of God, but Brutus and Cassius are there, as well. They conspired against Julius Caesar, fitting into the Ring by being Treacherous against Benefactors. Dante-writer's political involvement sees the murdering of Julius Caesar in particular as one of the greatest sins in politics, and Judas' attempt on Christ's life as one of the greatest sins against God.

There's much criticism of secular education during Dante's time and classic literature during Dante's life was scarce. There's more criticism moving into the 21st century of secular education, stating that Dante was a firm believer in the separation of Church and State (which was the stance of the White Guelch party). However, secular education motivated the Black Guelch party to oppose the White Guelch party, being in favor of the Holy Roman Empire. The

wrath of political men is talked about more during the 21st century, referencing how blood acts as a concealment for those in the Circle of Wrath. Their punishment is to drown in a river of boiling blood, and centaurs shoot arrows at those who attempt to rise too close to the surface for the magnitude of their punishment; in the ring of violence against nature/self, however, Pier della Vigna; he was the advisor to Emperor Frederick but those in the Emperor's court were jealous of Pier's position and blackmailed him, making him feel shameful, which made him commit suicide. When Dante arrives, he sees a man named Alexander (potentially Alexander the Great) who can only be seen from above the eyebrows.

Philosophy. Research on philosophy in *Inferno* doesn't change the topic of philosophy but changes whose philosophy applies to *Inferno*. In the 20th century, much of Plato's teachings are thought to relate heavily to *Inferno*. Dante-writer focuses on answering philosophical questions, with the Circles being representative of a moral and philosophical opinion. It creates the conversation of how others would layer the Circle; albeit, Dante-writer's layering stems from his secular education as he incorporates his own idea of what Hell looks like. Dante-writer's incorporation of theology in *Inferno* stems from secular teaching, but his background in teaching philosophy and writing philosophical essays help him answer questions other philosophers have asked, such as Plato's question of "possessing innate ideas that precede any knowledge that we gain through experience" (Landas 103). Dante-writer does not experience the turmoil Dante-pilgrim witnesses in *Inferno*, therefore alluding to Plato's question.

Dante-writer's journey begins in *Inferno* because he believes he is heading down the wrong path; Dante-pilgrim's journey begins in *Inferno* because his wife, Beatrice, believes that he is being led down the wrong path. *Inferno* is a wake-up call to Dante-pilgrim, to make him realize what his life could become if he does not get back on the path. Important philosophers

and political figures from history are contained here, which helps Dante to realize what could happen if he doesn't get back on track. Even though Dante-writer isn't in the physical embodiment of *Inferno*, he uses the moral allegory of *Inferno* to represent his own personal change and the habits and sins he wishes to leave behind. Relating to Augustine's "Confessions" essay, he is attempting to achieve something unachievable, but believes with God as his guide, he can make it through. Augustine's journey fails because of his lack of faith, but Dante-pilgrim's journey is a success in *Paradiso* because he has God to guide him.

Limitations

One of the biggest limitations when reading Dante's *Inferno* is the fact that, originally, the text is in Italian. Reading other people's interpretations and research can become challenging when people have different translations than the one currently being discussed. With the lack of accessibility to one consistent translation, some of the research articles either pull from different translations, or another issue is that some of the articles use the original Italian text and incorporate their own translations of the text which makes it difficult to properly relate their information on certain Cantos with the Cantos presented in the Norton Anthology translation of the text.

Another limitation of the thesis is the amount of research that is available. With COVID limiting access to online articles found on Anna Maria College's database website, along with libraries primarily being closed or having limited openings, the ability to do research has become rather constricted. There's enough information to do good research, but many articles were difficult to find and there are often access issues when trying to open them.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research can be expanded in a few different ways. One, the research can look at the conception of research on Dante's *Inferno* and incorporate the differences found in Medieval life from contemporary life, or even compare every century's lifestyle and how it affects the research that is done. Another recommendation for research is to include other areas of research, such as comparing and contrasting the use of theology and philosophy or researching the use of specific literary theories. Making a thesis that solely focuses on the evolution of literary theories and their application to *Inferno*.

Conclusions

Three major conclusions can be made from this study. The first conclusion is that morals shift parallel to the creation of new literary theories and research focuses on the relationship between Dante-writer and Dante-pilgrim heading into the 21st century. The second conclusion is that research on politics focus on Dante's influence from being in the White Guelch party and, heading into the 21st century, how his exile from Florence influences the writing of *Inferno*. The third conclusion is that research on philosophy in *Inferno* goes from focusing on philosophers and their influence on Dante-writer and goes into how philosophy impacts the writing of *Inferno*.

For the first conclusion, research on morality in *Inferno* during the 20th century focuses on Dante's moral opinion and doesn't spend much time incorporating literary theory into the analysis. Formalism and structuralism are used to outline *Inferno* and how its structure represents Dante-writer's moral opinions, but moving into the 21st century, literary theory becomes more prevalent in the research. The incorporation of literary theories such as critical theory and research on the role of women become more important. Whereas the presence of *Inferno* is the highlight of research in the 20th century, the 21st century focuses more on the characters in *Inferno* and how they relate to Dante's morality.

For the second conclusion, the 20th century research focuses on how Dante-writer includes political figures into the work and how his exile truly affects him. The way the political figures treat Dante-writer influence him to punish them in *Inferno*, even if Dante-pilgrim treats some of them with kindness. The 21st century research shifts focus on how the political climate in Florence during Dante's life influences him to join the White Guelch party and how he becomes bitter toward the Black Guelch party after his exile. While Dante was not there for the downfall of Florence after the Black Guelch party gains power, he was still aware of it by keeping up with Florence even in exile.

For the final conclusion, 20th century research on philosophy focuses on the philosophers that influence Dante. Dante studied philosophy in school through way of secular education and attempts to answer philosophical questions from Plato. 20th century research also focuses on how Augustine's "Confession" essay relates to *Inferno* regarding the enlightened journey. Moving to the 21st century, research focuses on how Dante was raised with a philosophical background and how he writes essays and teaches at universities for a time. It also focuses on how *Inferno* includes philosophers as virtuous pagans that are still condemned to damnation even if Dante looks up to them and appreciates all the work they've done.

Appendix A

The Circles represent the different layers, and the deeper Dante goes into Hell, the worse the sin and the punishment is. The first six Circles represent Incontinence, the seventh Circle represent Violence and is divided into three rings, and Circles eight and nine represent the Fraudulent, with Circle eight having ten rings and Circle nine having four rings. At the very bottom of these Circles is Satan's realm, the furthest place from God.

- a. Ante-Inferno – Neutrals
- b. Circle I – Virtuous Pagans
- c. Circle II – Lustful
- d. Circle III – Gluttons
- e. Circle IV – Prodigal and Miserly
- f. Circle V – Wrathful
- g. Circle VI – Arch Heretics
- h. Circle VII – Violent
 - i. Against neighbors
 - ii. Against self
 - iii. Against God
- i. Circle VIII – Fraudulent
 - i. Panderers and Seducers
 - ii. Flatterers
 - iii. Simonists
 - iv. Soothsayers
 - v. Grafters

- vi. Hypocrites
- vii. Thieves
- viii. Deceivers
- ix. Sowers of Discord
- x. Falsifiers
- j. Circle IX – Treacherous
 - i. To kindred; Caina
 - ii. To country; Antenora
 - iii. To guests; Tolomea
 - iv. To benefactors; Judecca

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