

Inferno

Cantos XXIII - XXVIII

Class 5, Fall I 2024



Domenico Petarlini, Dante in exile, 1860

CANTO XXIII Hypocrites



For the Providence that gave them the fifth pit
to govern the ministers of Its will,
takes from their souls the power of leaving it.



The outside is all dazzle, golden and fair;
the inside, lead, so heavy that Frederick's capes,
compared to these, would seem light as air.



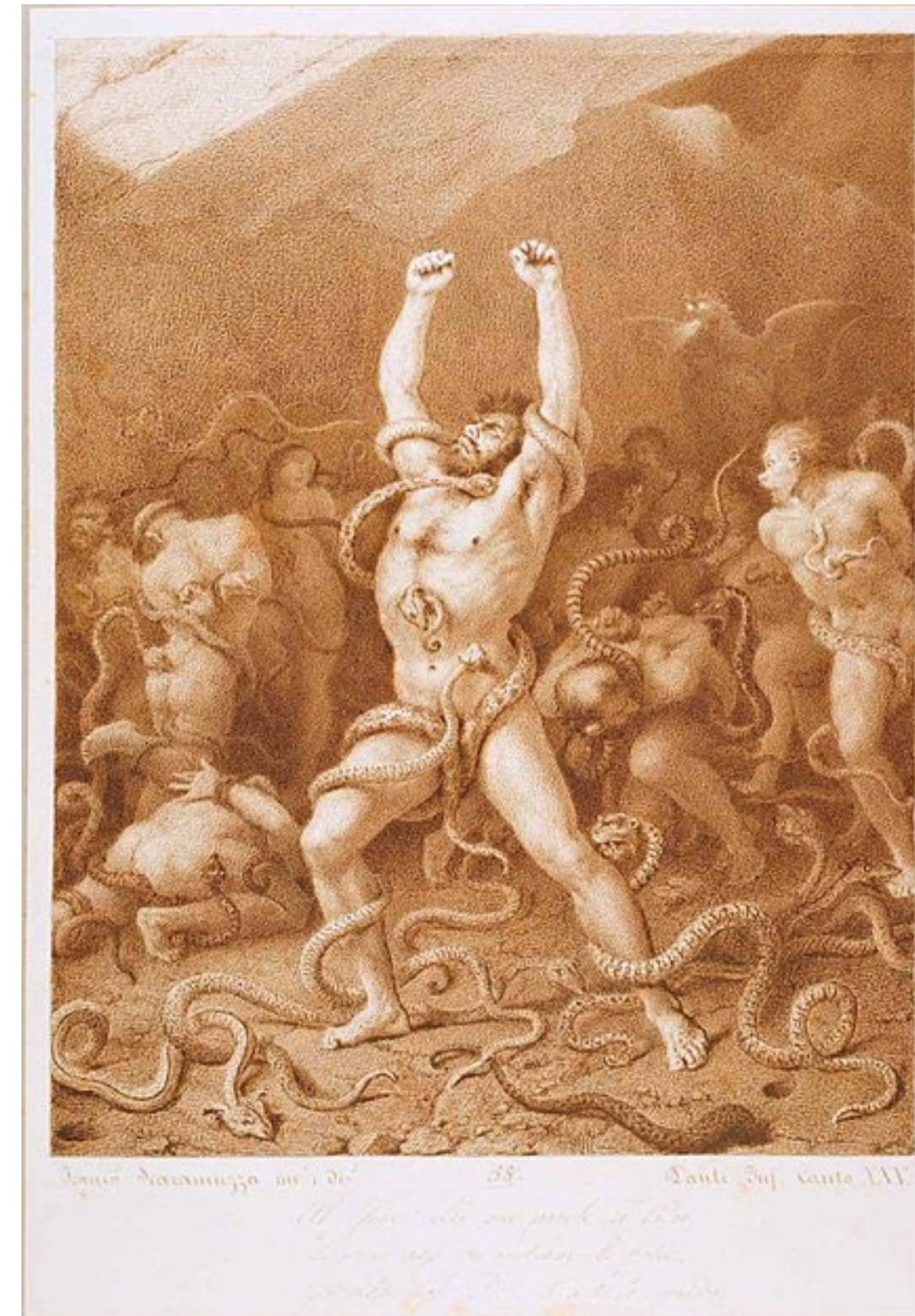
...That one nailed across the road
counseled the Pharisees that it was fitting
one man be tortured for the public good.

CANTO XXIV

Thieves



and there great coils of serpents met my sight;
so hideous a mass that even now
the memory makes my blood run cold with fright.



Francesco Scaramuzza
1803-1886
“I am Vanni Fucci, the Beast..”



John Flaxman 1755-1826

One of the damned came racing round a boulder,
and as he passed us, a great snake shot up
and bit him where the neck joins with the shoulder.

No mortal pen — however fast it flash
over the page — could write down *o* or *i*
as quickly as he flamed and fell in ash;

CANTO XXV THIEVES



When he had finished, the thief — to his disgrace —
raised his hands with both fists making figs,
and cried “Here, God, I throw them in your face!”



Reader, should you doubt what next I tell,
it will be no wonder, for though I saw it happen,
I can scarce believe it possible, even in Hell.

CANTO XXVI

Evil Counselors



MS. Holkham misc. 48, p. 40

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He answered me: "Forever round this path
Ulysses and Diomedemove in such dress,
united in pain as once they were in wrath.

Constantine Cavafy

1863-1933

ITHAKA



*As you set out for Ithaka
hope the voyage is a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
angry Poseidon—don't be afraid of them:
you'll never find things like that on your way
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,
as long as a rare excitement
stirs your spirit and your body.
Laistrygonians and Cyclops,
wild Poseidon—you won't encounter them
unless you bring them along inside your soul,
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.*

*Hope the voyage is a long one.
May there be many a summer morning when,
with what pleasure, what joy,
you come into harbors seen for the first time;
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations
to buy fine things,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
sensual perfume of every kind—
as many sensual perfumes as you can;
and may you visit many Egyptian cities
to gather stores of knowledge from their scholars.*

*Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.*

*Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.*

*And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,
you will have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.*

CANTO XXVII Evil Counselors

Later, when I was dead, St. Francis came to claim my soul, but one of the Black Angels said: “Leave him. Do not wrong me..”

Joseph Anton Koch
Austrian 1768-1839



Priamo della Quercia 1400-1467

is there peace or war in Romagna? for on earth
I too was of those hills between Urbino
and the fold from which the Tiber springs to birth.



Anonimo lombardo, (1440 circa)

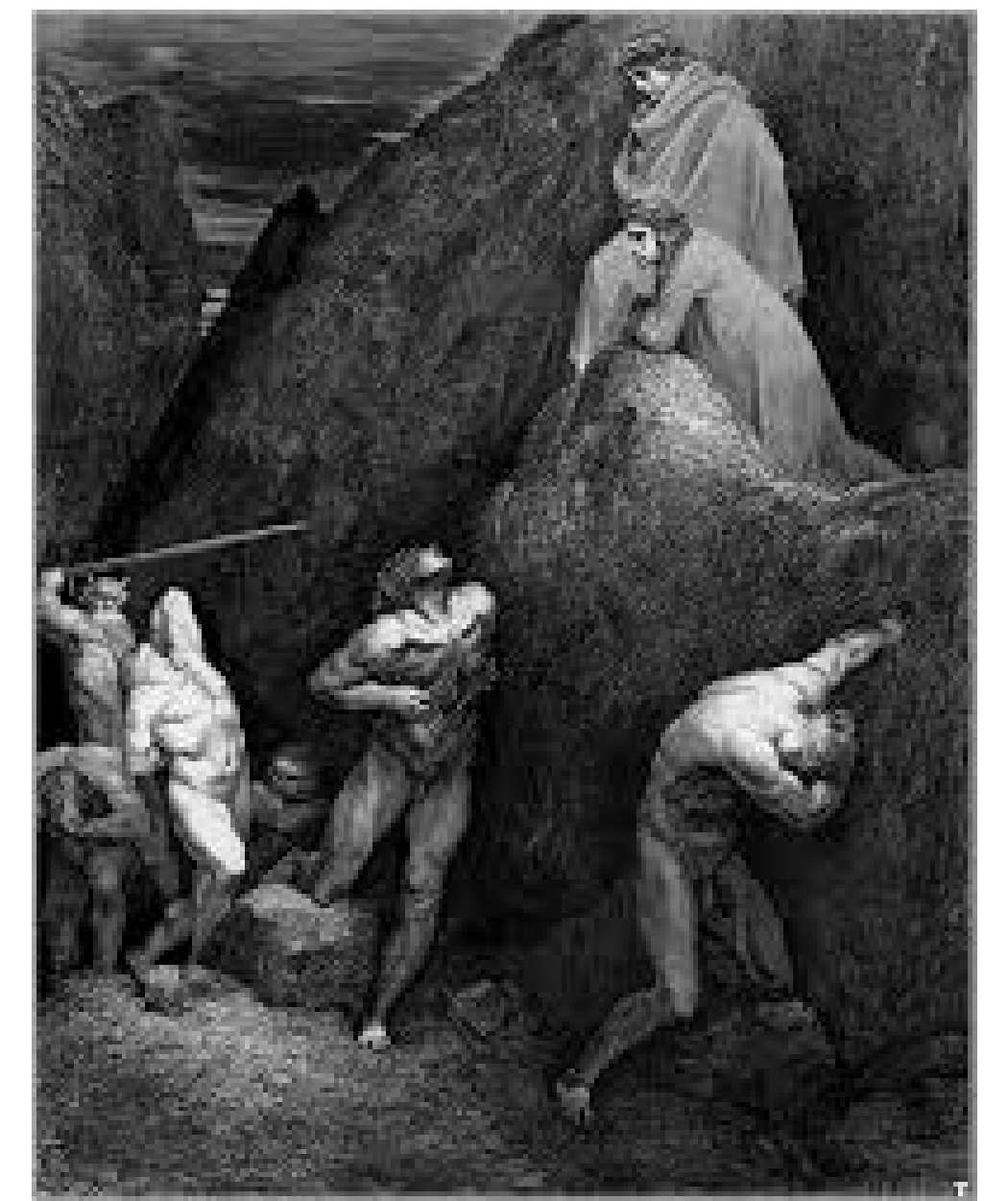
“Dante e Virgilio sul ponte con Guido da Montefeltro”

CANTO XXVIII

Sowers of Discord

It held the severed head by its own hair,
swinging it like a lantern in its hand;
and the head looked at us and wept in despair.

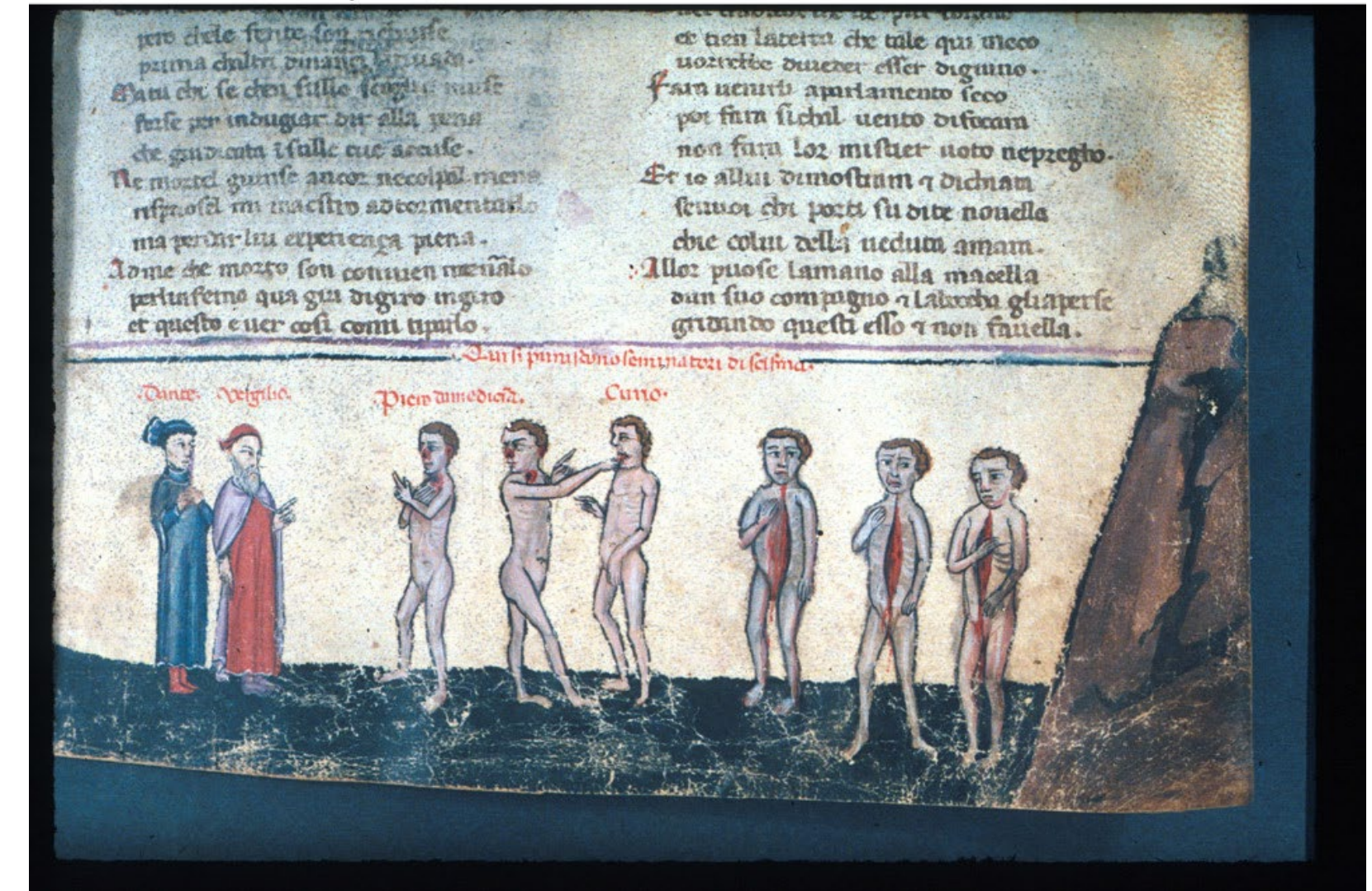
“Behind us, warden of our mangled horde,
the devil who butchers us and sends us marching
waits to renew our wounds with his long sword..”



“See how Mahomet’s mangled and split open...”

MS. Holkham misc. 48, p. 43

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Ah, how wretched Curio seemed to me
with a bloody stump in his throat in place of the tongue
which once had dared to speak so recklessly.