

Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* remains relevant throughout literature today as it explores the uncertain journey of life after death, fascinating people whilst also reminding them that there are consequences for their actions, no matter their beliefs or circumstances and emphasising that regardless of status, everyone will eventually have to undertake the quest into the unknown world of death. The translation of key themes, the ideas of heaven and hell, all actions having consequences and the combination of physical and emotional journeys undertaken by characters, intertextually gives us insight into the significance of these ideas and allows the audience to make judgement on whether they are still relevant in modern times.

Dante Alighieri is a Florentine poet who aided in establishing Tuscan dialect as a common vernacular and pioneered the use of the Italian language in writing as opposed to the more formal language, Latin. Often referred to as 'il Sommo Poeta' in Italy, or 'the Supreme Poet', Dante is most famous for writing the '*Divine Comedy*', an epic poem separated into 3 parts, '*Inferno*', '*Purgatorio*' and '*Paradiso*'. It is assumed he was born in 1265 as he alludes to a date around this time in the *Divine Comedy* however his actual birth date is unknown. He died at the age of approximately 56 in September 1321. His father, Alighiero di Bellincione, was a White Guelph, a faction of Guelphs who wanted freedom from Rome. Dante fought with the Guelph cavalry in 1289 and this suggests a possible reason as to why religion was such a prominent aspect of Dante's poetry. Dante was contracted to an arranged marriage with Gemma di Manetto Donati at 13 years of age however he had already fallen in love with Beatrice Portinari and later references his love for Beatrice numerous times in his poetry, including Canto I of *Inferno*.

The plot of *Inferno* follows the character 'Dante', both the hero and everyman of the poem, guided by Virgil, an epic poet and the archetypal sage and caregiver, through the 9 circles of hell and showcases the numerous punishments that sinners face because of their actions. Dante is first established as both the hero and the everyman in the opening lines, "Midway on our life's journey, I found myself / In dark woods, the right road lost". By writing "our life's journey" and linking it with the 'generic' phrase "the right road," Dante links his personal experiences with that of all humanity, highlighting the idea that this poem conveys both a physical and emotional journey that all humans must face. The two characters meet when Dante is attacked by three wild animals and the ghost of Virgil rescues him and explains that he was sent by Dante's deceased true love, Beatrice, the archetypal innocent, to protect him. This corresponds with the first three stages of Joseph Campbell's 'Monomyth', call to adventure, refusal of call and supernatural aid as Dante initially turned away from the path, deeming it too difficult to follow but is then aided by Virgil. The duo begin their journey through hell, crossing the threshold from life to the *Inferno* and starting their quest in Limbo. The *Inferno* is representative of the archetypal setting of the underworld, a place where the hero encounters fear and/or death and this allows the audience to infer the nature of the challenges in which Dante will face. Upon reaching the Gates of Hell, Dante reads "through me you enter into the city of woes/ through me you enter into eternal pain,/ through me you enter the population of loss. . . / abandon all hope, you who enter here," inscribed on the gates. The repetitious use of "through me" personifies the Gates and acts as a means of foreshadowing the depressing and destructive journey ahead of Dante and Virgil but it also serves as a means of personifying Hell itself, giving it a voice and allowing it to issue a final warning to the hero and his accomplice.

Limbo, or the 'belly of the whale' in Campbell's Monomyth, is reserved for non-Christians or people who weren't baptised and is where people are forced to live in an 'inferior' version of heaven. Then comes the 2nd circle and the start of the monomyth's 'road of trials', containing those guilty of lust, where sinners are violently blown back and forth by endless storms and raging winds, the strong winds symbolize the inner restlessness of someone who is tempted by desire for 'fleshly pleasures'. In this circle, Dante meets the soul of a young woman, Francesca da Rimini, the archetypal character

of the lover, who recounts her adulterous love affair and the audience are lead to believe that Dante shows sympathy to her in this situation. Upon hearing her story, Dante recounts "I fainted, as if I had met my death./ And then I fell as a dead body falls," in which simile places Dante in a common setting with the deceased souls of Hell and reinforces the dark undertones of the poem. Dante and Virgil then travel to the 3rd circle of hell, gluttony, where sinners are punished by standing or lying in endless icy rain and sludge. The 4th circle, reserved for sins of greed, where souls are left to joust with heavy boulders, often being crushed in the process, symbolic of being crushed by the weight of their greed and the material possessions they kept which damned them to this circle of Hell. The 5th circle, anger, drowns the wrathful and sullen in the swampy waters of the river Styx. Here, Dante angrily rejects a sinner named Filippo Argenti, the archetypal outlaw, who has reached out to him for help, a stark contrast to his feelings of sympathy towards Francesca. The quote "Wedged in the slime, they say: 'We had been sullen in the sweet air that's gladdened by the sun'," personifies the air of the world above ground and uses 'sweet' and 'gladdened' to emphasise the contrasting atmospheres of the living as opposed to the underworld. After crossing the river Styx, the second threshold of the poem, they reach the 6th circle which punished heretics by trapping them in flaming tombs for eternity. The 7th circle is reserved for those who committed violence in their lifetimes and the 8th circle, the fraudulent, is separated into 10 stony ditches connected by bridges. The 9th circle of hell, reserved for the treacherous, is divided into four sections and the punishment for each is different depending on the severity of the sin. All souls are trapped, frozen in ice and those who have committed more serious treachery are buried deeper in the icy lake. The 4th and most serious section of the 9th circle is named Judecca after Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus and below this circle, and in the deepest part of hell resides Lucifer, the betrayer of god and archetypal magician, God representing the archetypal character of the creator, who is frozen to his waist in the ice and deemed to an eternity of painfully flapping his wings to escape. The 9th circle of the *Inferno* is representative of 'the Ultimate Boon' in Campbell's monomyth as it serves as the climax of the poem and the most confronting encounter for Dante. This is then followed by the 'magic flight' in which Dante and Virgil climb down Lucifer's back and emerge from the *Inferno* at the opposite side of the Earth to where they started which corresponds to Campbell's 'crossing the Return Threshold', also symbolising the end of the 'voyage and return' archetypal plot. The concluding lines of Dante's *Inferno*, "To get back up to the shining world from there/ My guide and I went into that hidden tunnel. . ./ Where we came forth, and once more saw the stars," uses metaphor to represent the stark contrast between regular life and Hell, "the shining world" and "stars" also using imagery to emphasise the beautiful nature of returning from Hell and resuming life with the prospects of one day reaching Heaven or Paradise.

Season 10, episode 2 of the television series *Criminal Minds*, *Burn*, uses ideas and key elements of *Dante's Inferno*, such as the 9 circles of hell, sin-specific punishment and the idea that all actions have consequences, to recount the emotional journey Mr Leu undertakes and relates the ritualistic murders of his victims to the punishments outlined by Dante Alighieri in *Inferno*. The Behavioural Analysis Unit (BAU) is called to inspect a series of homicides that are suspected to be the work of a serial killer. The victims are shown to have been brutally murdered in very different ways, the first strangled and left in the mud and the second hit with a car, however, upon further inspection, Dr Reed uncovers roman numerals etched into the rooves of the victims' mouths, III and IV respectively. This leads the BAU to believe that there were 2 previous murders before they were called in to analyse the case. While this is happening, the scene cuts to a middle-aged man who is tied in a bathtub of muddy water. Another man, who is later revealed to be Mr Leu, approaches but he is masked to hide his identity. Whispering of "Abandon all hope, ye who enters here," in the background of the scene repeatedly alludes to the severity of the events to come and gradually grows louder until it becomes a yell as opposed to a whisper and this is when the 2nd man tries to drown the restricted man, opting to bash him over the head with a hammer when he struggles. This

line is a literary allusion to *Dante's Inferno* as in the epic poem, the line "abandon all hope, you who enter here," is inscribed on the Gates of Hell, acting as a warning and, similarly to in *Inferno*, utilises foreshadowing to demonstrate the dark nature of the events to come. The scene returns to the BAU who have uncovered two more homicides fitting the profile of the investigation, the first victim asphyxiated by gas with I carved in his mouth and the second violently electrocuted with II carved in his mouth. Later in the episode, Mr Leu is shown trapping another middle-aged man in what appears to be a coffin and setting it alight, burning the man alive; the low angle shot from the trapped man's point of view emphasises the power Mr Leu holds in the situation and the disbalance of power between the two characters. The BAU responds to this quickly and it is here when Dr Reed realises how each murder is connected, the burning coffin sparking a memory from *Dante's Inferno* in which heretics are trapped in a burning tomb in the 6th circle of hell, further emphasised by the realisation that this is the 6th murder. In the 1st circle of hell, sinners are blinded by fog, in this episode, the first victim is gassed. Similarly, electrocution is symbolic of and electrical storm in the 2nd circle, strangulation and left in the mud is symbolic of wallowing in mud in the 3rd circle, being crush by a car is symbolic of being crushed by boulders in the 4th circle and drowning is directly representative of drowning in the swampy water of the river Styx in the 5th circle. These direct connections between *Dante's Inferno* and the 2014 television episode allow the audience to understand the significance of the *Inferno* in a literary setting while also communicating that there are many ways in which classical texts can be adapted to a modern setting. The mental quest undertaken by the main character also follows Joseph Campbell's Monomyth as the narrative shows Mr Leu's 'call to adventure', the need to avenge his brother, the 'road of trials' consisting of the various murders, the 'atonement with father', the 'ultimate boon' in which he is captured by the FBI and finally the 'rescue from without' when Mr Leu is able to accept his wrongdoings and reflect on his past.

The BAU assume that the murder suspect is committing the ritualistic acts of mutilation and homicide in conjunction with an emotional journey that he is undertaking, possibly because of a negative experience in their past. The quote "Assured he would enter paradise when he completed his journey" connects the idea of an emotional journey with the idea of life after death, heaven or paradise, and uses situational irony to convey the animalistic nature of the killings as, in *Dante's Inferno*, violence was viewed as a sin and would mean the guilty soul would never reach paradise. It is revealed that Mr Leu had many abusive experiences with his father throughout his childhood, the abuse eventually leading to his brother committing suicide. The grief suffered by Mr Leu is shown to be the driving force behind undertaking the journey inspired by *Dante's Inferno*, aided by his brother's 'soul'. This connection allows the audience to understand the connections between Mr Leu's brother and the sage character of Virgil as a companion and accomplice. The targets of Mr Leu's violence are revealed to be middle-aged men who are referred to as 'tough but fair' towards children, drawing the connection between the victims and Leu's father and alluding to the idea that Leu believes he is committing acts of justice, sparing the children from similar abuse to what he suffered. When Mr Leu is finally caught by the BAU and police, he is amid trying to bury another man alive and exclaims "I need to finish this journey", consolidating the prominent theme of the emotional odyssey undertaken by the main character. Mr Leu's determination to ensure that all actions have consequences directly relates *Dante's Inferno* as they both detail the punishments for committing abusive and negative acts in their lives. The religious connotations of *Dante's Inferno* are also present in *Burn* shown using crosses in various settings and the repetition of the Lord's prayer in the beginning of the episode.

Throughout this unit I was able to develop my understanding of how to use search engines, such as google, and compare various sources to compile an accurate research task on *Dante's Inferno* and its manifestation in an episode of the modern television series Criminal Minds titled *Burn*. I used websites such as Sparknotes.com and Shmoop.com as they had been previously recommended to be

by a teacher as excellent tools for drawing out key ideas in prominent texts and are both written and edited by PhDs and PhD candidates from top universities throughout not only America but internationally. While Shmoop.com uses a lot of humour in its posts, it makes the content easier to understand as it is aimed at younger people as opposed to scholars. Sparknotes.com was particularly helpful in drawing out connections between *Dante's Inferno* and the Archetypal Quest as it made connections between key settings and characters that are typically connected the archetypal quest such as the hero, everyman, threshold, underworld and Joseph Campbell's Monomyth.

Drawing knowledge from classwork pages I was able to contextualise the various characters in *Dante's Inferno*, such as Dante, Virgil and Lucifer, and connect them with characters in relation to the archetypal quest, for example, the hero, everyman, sage, magician and innocent. By looking at the documents 'From Betrayal to Violence: Dante's Inferno and the Social Construction of Crime' and 'The Speed of Fright: Temporal Dramas in Dante's Inferno' I was able to connect the ideas that were prominent in my research to the ideas presented in these critical analyses and make connections between the punishments described in the Inferno to the sins that correspond with them respectively. I was also able to make connections between Inferno and Joseph Campbell's 'Monomyth' and archetypal plots such as the quest and voyage and return by comparing websites and pulling out the information that was constant throughout. Other prominent archetypal connections I identified were the idea of crossing the threshold, referenced numerous times throughout Inferno and the concept of an underworld, the archetypal setting alluding to death and anguish.

By studying the key ideas in *Dante's Inferno*, I was able to develop my understanding of religious beliefs of Italy in the middle ages and from my study of Dante Alighieri's context I was able to identify prominent names throughout they poem that had direct significance to the poet himself. I was also further able to consolidate my knowledge on the common idea that 'all actions have consequences' as this idea was common throughout both my main text and its manifestations. I chose this poem as my key text as I was already familiar with the plot and structure presented by it and I was also aware of a possible text to use as a related text. After researching other possible related texts I came across the *Criminal Minds* episode, *Burn*, which was referenced in a blog post on Twitter; the episode sparked my interest as I have previous understanding of the television series however I had not come across this particular episode before and was interested to see the ways in which the tv series adapted the ideas of religion and consequential punishments into a modern day setting.

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