Modern Artistic Responses to Pre-Modern Miniatures of the *Divine Comedy*[1]

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As Barbara J. Watts has thoroughly demonstrated, Botticelli's illustrations of the *Divine Comedy* largely depend on pre-modern miniatures of Dante's text.[2] In fact, Watts notes that Botticelli's drawings of the mid-1480s turn even more towards the manuscript tradition than do his engravings from prior to 1481.[3] For example, while the engraving of *Inferno* IX is generally consistent in terms of perspective and depicts Virgil and Dante at left after just entering the gate of inner hell, the drawing of this episode joins British Library MS Yates Thompson 36 in locating that gate in the center foreground, employing a thin strip of landscape between the lower edge of the frame and the walls of inner hell, and tilting those walls to reveal their contents.[4] The drawing thus departs from the timing and illusionism of its most immediate forerunner to return to the pace and clarity of the miniatures. That is to say, it favors the expressive and explanatory power of its earliest predecessors over the artistic fashions of its own time.

Yet, though Botticelli may be the first post-medieval artist to have based *Commedia* images on those of the illuminators, he is certainly not the only one to have done so. Indeed, he may not even be the most faithful one to have done so. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, John Flaxman, William Blake, and Gustave Doré borrowed heavily from the miniaturists' compositions, and, in Doré's case, from their tone. And during the 1960s and 1970, Renato Guttuso, Rico Lebrun, and Leonard Baskin repeatedly invoked the visceral immediacy of those pre-modern prototypes. While all six artists thus drew on the miniatures in such a manner as to resist traditional models of art history, the last three painters treated the *Commedia* far more expressively and intimately than did the first three. Although Guttuso, Lebrun, and Baskin worked in a modern age often characterized by cynical detachment, they returned to the spirit of the late Middle Ages, of an era in which the *Commedia* was treated as hardly less sacred and perhaps no less important than Scripture. And, though Flaxman, Blake, and Doré emerged from a period that is often labeled "Romantic" and is usually characterized by overt expression of the artist's personal response to a subject, their illustrations seem far more detached from the *Commedia* than do those of their twentieth-century counterparts. They privilege subjects that foster aesthetic expressiveness rather than emotional reaction, and their compositions, which are, in fact, often blatantly stylized, draw on the miniatures only insofar as those models

will facilitate idiosyncrasies in the artist's mode of expression. Thus, Flaxman, Blake, and Doré produce more mannered illustrations than do Guttuso, Lebrun, and Baskin, and they depart farther from the spirit of *Commedia* miniatures and pre-modern commentaries than do those twentieth-century artists.

The earliest of the six illustration series, Flaxman's engravings of 1793, sometimes echoes the composition of the miniatures. For example, his frontal view of the Devil in *Inferno* XXXIV with two faces perpendicular to a third recalls the illuminators' most common response to Dante's rather ambiguous description of Lucifer, and Flaxman's floating, encircled busts of the blessed in *Paradiso* echo those of British Library MS Egerton 943 and Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal MS 8530.[5] But, more often than not, he departs from the subjects and compositions of the miniatures. In his illustration of *Inferno* XXIII, for instance, pairs of hypocrites march across Caiaphas and into the distance, rather than flanking him, milling about him, or stepping across him from left to right.[6] In the engraving of *Inferno* XXVII, Flaxman omits the flames that surround the false counselor Guido da Montefeltro in almost every miniature of this scene.[7] And, alone among *Commedia* illustrators, he shows a fallen angel hovering over Guido's body and "defending" that sinner's soul from Saint Francis. The engraver thus substantially departs on many occasions from the subjects and compositions of pre-modern models that he otherwise follows quite closely. That is to say, in his references to the miniatures, he employs an overt selectivity that would seem to reflect a specific agenda.

The precise nature of that agenda is debatable, but many of Flaxman's echoes of the miniatures and departures from them facilitate masterful displays of linear economy and control. Although he sometimes deploys line to articulate great emotion, as when portraying the swirls of drapery around ascending souls in *Paradiso* IX or the bursting rays around Peter's arrival in *Paradiso* XXIII, he generally uses line to embody restraint and authority.[8] In some instances, the discipline suggested therein is completely appropriate, as when the hypocrites' carefully controlled outlines convey the deliberation of their steps beneath cloaks of lead. But, at times, Flaxman's measured line departs from the most fundamental character of a subject, as when the crisp, highly symmetrical contours of Lucifer render him more decorative than intimidating. And rarely do Flaxman's line and composition suggest the same degree of emotional engagement with Dante's subjects as that found in the pre-modern miniatures. For example, as Flaxman's line closely and eloquently articulates the idealized body and rather feline head of the "black cherubim" above Guido da Montefeltro, it belies the supposedly vengeful nature of that guardian, particularly in relationship to the jagged contour that defines the no-less bitter Ulysses as he snarls at Virgil and at the pilgrim in Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 74.[9] And

the thick black line that differentiates Flaxman's blessed souls in the triumphal column of *Paradiso* XVIII conveys far less heavenly harmony than do the merged contours of faces in Giovanni di Paolo's mid-fifteenth-century illustration of the imperial eagle in *Paradiso* XIX.[10] That is to say, like the lines in many of Flaxman's other *Commedia* illustrations, those that define the blessed column and Guido's guardian privilege aesthetic effects that not only depart from the more overt tones of the episodes in which they appear but, in some instances, even contradict those tones.

In thus favoring virtuoso displays of linear articulation over visceral expression of Dante's themes, Flaxman's work foreshadows the style of Blake's *Commedia* illustrations, which were executed between 1824 and 1827 in watercolor and/or pen and ink, often over pencil and black chalk. Some of Blake's subjects and compositions are rather close to those of Botticelli. For example, both artists depict multiple figures waiting at left amid a sparse stand of trees as Virgil meets Matilda in the sacred woods of *Purgatorio* XXVIII.[11] And some of Blake's other subjects and compositions directly recall those of the illuminators, for they are even closer to the miniatures than are Botticelli's subjects and compositions. For instance, Blake's *Inferno* V illustration of Minos as a white-bearded wise man, rather than a demon, echoes the manner in which that mythical figure is characterized in many fifteenth-century manuscripts.[12] And Blake's illustration of *Inferno* I, with the pilgrim running towards Virgil at left and away from the three beasts stacked on a hillside at right, closely parallels miniatures in Musée Condé MS 597, Bodleian MS Canoniciani italiani 109, British Library MS Additional 19587, and Tübingen MS Depot Breslau 6.[13] But, on many occasions, Blake departs from Botticelli and his pre-modern predecessors, as in giving us a posterior view of the divine messenger opening the gates of inner hell.[14] Moreover, even when Blake does echo his early forerunners, he often seems to do so for a different purpose than theirs, for the pursuit of extraordinarily expressive line and color. For example, in closely imitating the clear but rather awkward and simplistic pre-modern composition of the pilgrim's confrontation with the three beasts of *Inferno* I, Blake exploits an opportunity not only to play with expressive drapery as the pilgrim flees but also to respond to a sudden shift in the usual vector of the composition, for the figure of Dante signals retreat by emphatically reversing the left-to-right flow that predominates elsewhere in this illustration cycle.[15]

Yet, even as Blake evidently joins Flaxman in selecting models on the basis of their potential for linear expression, he differs from him by more closely approaching the narrative pace of the illuminators. Although Blake's elegant line and texture somewhat depart from the emotional range of his pre-modern predecessors, he shows not only many of the same subjects as do the illuminators but also many of the same moments in each episode. Like almost all of his pre-modern forerunners, he depicts the pilgrim passing

into hell and observing the damned cross Acheron in *Inferno* III, fainting as Francesca concludes her tale in *Inferno* V, feeding mud to Cerberus in *Inferno* VI, watching Virgil dunk Argenti in *Inferno* VIII, having his eyes hidden as the heavenly messenger opens the inner gates of hell in *Inferno* IX, talking to a tree in the wood of the suicides in *Inferno* XIII, and participating in the narrative climax of many other episodes.[16] Consequently, while Blake may not fully capture the miniaturists' emotional engagement with Dante's narrative, he does echo their dramatic timing and thereby differs from that of the next *Commedia* illustrator, Doré.

Although Doré's engravings of 1868 may convey even greater foreboding than do the *Commedia* miniatures, much less the illustrations of Blake and Flaxman, they do so through a different pace and greater suspense than that of their predecessors. Rather than depict the apex of action or shock in each episode, Doré dwells on the penultimate moment in each scene, on the anticipation of horrors yet to come. For example, whereas most of the miniaturists, such as that of the Yates Thompson *Inferno*, depict Virgil and the pilgrim amid the woods of the suicides in canto thirteen, Doré portrays the protagonists merely approaching that forest.[17] His Virgil and Dante do not yet seem aware of the many harpies that are nesting in the menacing, anthropomorphized trees, for the two advance without any signs of hesitancy. Indeed, they step with such boldness that they seem to have forgotten the pilgrim's preceding foray into a wooded setting. In canto one of Doré's *Inferno*, Dante finds himself in a forest as dark and almost as anthropomorphic as that of the suicides.[18] The tangled roots of the tree just above the pilgrim and the vines curling around his feet seem to be reaching for him, trying to ensnare him. And, judging from the sharp turn of the figure's head and the nervous expression on his face, he seems to suspect that danger is imminent. In fact, he may have just seen the leopard that, along with the lion and wolf, challenged him in canto one. Yet, even if that is the case, the scene is not so much one of confrontation as of foreboding, of threats only just sensed, for, rather than show the pilgrim retreating from the three beasts, as do Blake and most of the miniaturists, Doré merely implies that the worst is about to happen. That is to say, in this and most of his other *Commedia* illustrations, he chooses subjects that privilege setting a mood over advancing the plot.

Moreover, he often adapts his lighting and other stylistic means to those moods. Indeed, his images of the *Inferno* largely revolve around extreme tenebroso, around dramatic contrasts in light and dark. For example, as Virgil and the pilgrim travel aboard Geryon to the Malebolge at the end of canto seventeen, this normally uneventful episode is rendered ominous by the sublimity of tonal juxtapositions in the jagged landscape.[19] Sharp contrasts of light and dark define not only the dynamic curves of Dante's zoomorphic mount but also the craggy teeth of the rocky promontories around him. In fact, the lighting contributes to the suggestion

that we are peering out a pair of jaws closing on the figures. Yet, though the monochromism of Doré's medium encourages such extreme tonal juxtapositions, he departs from those contrasts in many of his images for Dante's third cantica. His illustration of the Crucifixion in *Paradiso* XIV, for instance, only approaches dark tones in the figure of Dante at lower right, for Christ and most of the angels supporting Him on a glowing crucifix are portrayed in a light, narrow range of tones that depart from convincing illusionism and resist the association of these figures with terrestrial tangibility.[20]

Moreover, even when Doré's images of heaven do employ sharp contrasts of light and dark, they often do so in a manner that reinforces the joyous line of their composition as a whole. The juxtaposition of bright souls against dark skies in *Paradiso* XII, for example, reinforces the ring formation of the figures, and the contrast between the shading on the blessed in the foreground of *Paradiso* XVIII and the brilliance of the sunlight reflecting off their colleagues in the distance underscores the figures' exuberant swirl, their echo of the dancing figures in many late fourteenth-century miniatures of this cantica.[21] Thus does Doré reinforce the mood of his subjects through the selective application of chiaroscuro within each image and within the illustration cycle as a whole.

Yet, even as Doré conveys the character of each cantica by different means than those of the illuminators, he joins those predecessors in depicting the pilgrim's experiences with extraordinary narrative clarity and pictorial expressiveness. Although Doré's engravings are elaborately worked, particularly in relationship to those of Flaxman, their compositions are ultimately as efficient as are those of Flaxman or any other *Commedia* illustrator. For instance, as Doré's myriad carnal sinners trail into the distance of *Inferno* V and attest to the endemic nature of their sin, they form a dark, poignant backdrop to the brightly lit figures of Paolo and Francesca.[22] Moreover, in conjunction with the angle of the ground and the tilt of Virgil and the pilgrim, with the dynamic diagonal of the composition, they convey the motion to which these sinners are continually subject and against which Paolo and Francesca must fight in telling their tale. As these two lovers hover in the central foreground of the image, they convey their sin and their suffering by means of a nearly nude embrace that recalls those in many miniatures of this scene and contrasts with the failed attempts at union among all of Doré's other carnal sinners.[23] They distinguish themselves clearly and efficiently from their fellow sinners yet overtly and economically embody the sin for which they suffer.

In thus echoing the simplicity and foreboding of the miniatures, Doré substantially differs from most twentieth-century *Commedia* illustrators, particularly Guttuso, Lebrun, and Baskin. Working at various times from 1960 to 1970, all three of these artists join their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors in looking to pre-modern prototypes. But, rather than

draw primarily on the clarity and ominousness of the *Inferno* miniatures, Guttuso, Lebrun, and Baskin invoke the explicit horror and visceral immediacy of their pre-modern models. Like many illuminators, they too privilege the most gruesome moments of the pilgrim's underworld adventures and often skip *Inferno* episodes that do not describe or at least allow particularly brutal scenes. Moreover, they too portray their horrific subjects in an especially graphic manner. They frequently focus on wildly contorted figures, sometimes cover those figures in dark shadows or bloody shades of red, and usually deploy other extraordinarily expressive colors and dramatic lines to pictorially echo the victims' desperation. That is to say, they depart from the cynical detachment that characterizes much of modern art and turn towards a more pre-modern approach to the *Commedia*.

In fact, even in comparison with the subjects of Lebrun and Baskin, those in Guttuso's watercolors are extraordinarily graphic. For example, rather than join Lebrun in depicting the sowers of discord in *Inferno* XXVIII as symmetrically dismembered figures sculpturally rendered with great precision, with classical muscularity, with beautiful proportions, and with no evidence of blood, Guttuso displays their misshapen bodies literally torn to pieces.[24] Indeed, relative to Blake's depiction of this episode, Guttuso's is almost obscene, for, rather than center his image on an ideal nude, rather than gloss over the corporeal dismemberment of the sowers of discord, Guttuso literally and figuratively foregrounds the suffering of those who dismembered the body politic or religious.[25] As the amputated limbs of his Bertrand de Borne and other sowers gush with blood, the most frontal and central figure in the composition pulls apart his chest and shouts, "See how mangled is Mohammed!" (*Inf.*, 28.31 . With disturbing detail and no shortage of body fluids, the founder of Islam confronts us with the visceral horrors of hell. But this is not the only figure of him to do so, for this image of Mohammed spilling his entrails closely echoes those in Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale MS Palatini 313, Biblioteca Laurenziana MS Strozzi 152, British Library MS Additional 19587, Vatican MS latini 4776, Biblioteca Angelica MS 1102, Padua Seminario MS 1, Bibliotheque Nationale MS italien 74, Bibliothèque Nationale MS italien 2017, and British Library MS Yates Thompson 36.[26] In fact, Guttuso often seems to quote the miniatures, as in his depiction of the tyrants in *Inferno* XII.[27] Drowning in bright red blood and pierced with arrows, frequently in the eyes or other particularly tender locations, their bobbing heads and shoulders recall those of the tyrants in Vatican MS latini 4776, a late fourteenth-century manuscript from Florence.[28] Moreover, both images sharply tilt the bloody pond towards us and depict little outside of it. That is to say, they focus on it and leave little opportunity to ignore the torment of its occupants.

Indeed, in Guttuso's choice of subjects, he sometimes goes beyond the graphicness of the miniatures. For example, in seeking a theme for his illustration of the wrathful in *Purgatorio* XVI, he ignores all preceding images of that canto and concentrates on extreme manifestations of anger.[29] Where Doré and most of the illuminators show Marco Lombardo approaching the protagonists and announcing "I will follow you as far as is allowed me" (*Purg*. 16.34 , Guttuso completely omits that sinner, as well as Virgil and the pilgrim, and invokes miniatures of the violence among Lombardo's counterparts in hell, of the wrathful in *Inferno* VIII.[30] As Guttuso's mob races from a burning cross in the background towards a writhing figure in the foreground, whom they kick and beat, they echo the rage of Filippo Argenti biting his own forearm in the Yates Thompson *Inferno*, of other wrathful souls beating Argenti in British Library MS Egerton 943, and of the wrathful attacking each other in Budapest University Library MS italien 1, Bodleian MS Holkham Miscellanae 48, Morgan Library MS 676, Biblioteca Angelica MS 1102, and Imola Biblioteca Comunale MS 32.[31] Thus do Guttuso's sinners depart from the text and from miniatures of *Purgatorio* to invoke far more violent pre-modern images, to privilege a far more graphic subject.

Moreover, Guttuso underscores the violence of his subject by means of an extraordinarily expressive composition, for he crowds the illustration with layer upon layer of flailing figures. Indeed, there hardly seems sufficient room for the sheer volume of each body, much less the space required by their extreme range of motion. The woman in the yellow dress seems almost to spring from the brown figure behind her and to barge into the figure of the man to her left. The profile figure in the upper center of the image would have to be extraordinarily thin to fit between the brown figure who overlaps him and the black and brown figure whom he overlaps. And the small, dark-skinned figure at right is evidently about to be smashed between the large white man racing behind him or her and the green man bending over in front of him or her. Although there is, in fact, a somewhat measured recession into space, as depth is articulated by controlled diminishment of figural size and by careful layering of contrasting hues and tones, there is a seeming chaos to the composition, a disorder that suggests the irrationality of the wrathful.

The violence of that irrationality is reinforced by the coloring of the work, for, though the hues and tones may contribute to the three-dimensional ordering of the composition, they simultaneously participate in a two-dimensional accentuation of emotion. The red of the flaming crucifix is echoed by the blood on the victim in the foreground, and, together, they bracket and highlight the extraordinarily expressive woman in the center of the composition. The yellow dress on her twisted torso is balanced by the slightly browner pants on the kicking legs of the figure at lower left and, to a lesser degree, by the flesh-colored head of the round figure to her

right. But, as that dress departs from the patches of white and brown around her, as well as from the relatively subdued diagonal that extends from the blue figure at upper left to the muted green shirt at lower right, it imparts a discordant spirit to the heart of the composition. Hardly varying in tone or hue, it joins the other, largely unmoderated passages of color in rather flattening the image, in reducing its volume to a pattern of sharp contrasts that echo the jagged emotions of the subject.

Indeed, the shape of the color blocks contributes to an extreme dynamism that is fundamentally conveyed by the lines of the composition. The diagonal axis running from the outstretched arm of the figure at upper left through the blue shirt of the figure below it, through the arm of the woman in the yellow dress, and through the left leg of the figure in green is echoed by the right leg of the man in yellow pants and competes with the diagonal that begins in his lower left leg and runs up through the right leg of the figure to his left, through the yellow dress of the woman in the center of the composition, and through the shadowed arm to the upper right. The vertical axis running from the crucifix down through the yellow dress to the victim in the foreground is thereby destabilized, and the composition is energized to an extraordinary degree. That is to say, while the overt expressiveness of line in this image undermines the volumetric implications of the composition, the arrangement of that line echoes the dynamism embodied by the spatial compression and inconsistencies of the image.

Moreover, the control and dynamism embodied by those lines are often echoed by their media, for Guttuso deploys his ink and paint with great efficiency and subtle deliberation. The short, thin brush strokes that carefully define the flaming cross in the background contrast sharply with the large, overt strokes representing the immediate foreground, particularly the gray terrain at lower left, and with the lack of evident brushwork in the blocks of color among the mob. Furthermore, the thick, scalloped pen strokes on the right leg of the kicker effectively convey the telescoping of his pants as his leg completes its arc; the layered strokes on the pelvis of the figure in the green shirt capture the deep creases and muscular exertion of his downswing; and the thin, isolated strokes on the yellow dress and on the round head of the rotund figure at right refine their form without undermining the expressive power of their bold color. Thus, through width, denseness, and location, many of Guttuso's strokes carefully define shapes and promote a hierarchy of subjects among the somewhat crowded and seemingly chaotic field of the picture.

At the same time, through fluttering and at times a seeming randomness of direction, through qualities that seem to depart from calculation and control, Guttuso's pen strokes and brush work often convey texture, motion, and emotion. In contrast to the sure, steady lines that define the head of the figure at right and the yellow dress of the woman in the center of the

image, the wavy lines of the stomach on the obese man at left and the flickering lines on the back of the kicker's shirt may seem to depart from description. But, while those two groups of line do not define a body at rest or at one end of a range of motion, they do convey texture and action, for they suggest the rippling of fat and the billowing of cloth. Moreover, in capturing those motions, in representing the violence with which the obese man flails and the kicker lunges, they embody emotion. They suggest the depth of each man's wrath and the degree to which he has lost his self - control.

Indeed, Guttuso's strokes imply a loss of control twice over, for, in their waviness and almost arbitrary direction, they suggest that the illustrator, too, has lost his composure. Though Guttuso may in fact have executed the illustrations with cool deliberation, the flickering lines suggest a flickering hand, which, in turn, suggests a lack of mental control. That is to say, they convey a sense of agitation in Guttuso, of a rush to express fleeting thoughts and of little time or inclination to correct departures from optical realism. Moreover, they are reinforced by the arbitrary direction of some strokes in the work, for as such lines snake around the right thigh of the obese figure at left or vertically slash across the right thigh and buttock of the figure in green, they seem to privilege expression over description, to put the emotion of the artist ahead of optical realism. They thus stand in marked contrast to the extraordinarily smooth and controlled transitions in Guttuso's illustration of the "serene face of the sky" in *Purgatorio* I, and they suggest an attempt to convey the mindset of the Wrathful.[32]

In fact, Guttuso's most arbitrary strokes usually appear in conjunction with figures of anger. For example, while his lines in *Purgatorio* XIII do not deviate from describing the physical contours of the envious, who are more resentful than wrathful, some of Guttuso's strokes in *Inferno* V blatantly depart from merely defining the physical form of Minos.[33] As the former king of Crete and current guardian of the underworld whips his tail around his own body to denote which circle of hell is deserved by each sinner, a seemingly random stroke of ink bisects his upper arm and tail, while two other lines conspicuously veer across the broad white expanse of his protruding belly. Indeed, both of those lines could be perceived as actively resisting description, for the bottom one inverts the crease denoting lumpiness in the lower right contour of Minos's stomach, and the upper one literally and figuratively foregrounds the surface of the image. As that stroke crosses not only the belly of Minos but also two loops of his tail, it defies the illusionism suggested by the shading on the underside of those rings and highlights the fact that we are looking at ink on paper. It declares itself to be not a part of an underworld guardian but, rather, an artistic response to the notion of such a figure, to be Guttuso's reaction to the role, values, and mindset of Dante's Minos.

In thus departing from describing the physical form of that underworld guardian to suggest his emotional state, to echo the grotesque scowl of this notoriously harsh king and to recall the gnashing of teeth with which he performs his infernal duties, Guttuso's seemingly arbitrary lines contrast sharply with the unerringly descriptive strokes of his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors, such as Blake. In the latter's illustration of Minos, for example, line only departs from defining physical form insofar as it privileges compositional flow.[34] The strokes constituting Blake's seemingly sorrowful king continue the diagonal of the protagonists at lower left and parallel those of the sinners prostrate before this rather hoary yet heroic echo of Michelangelo's muscular Moses. Indeed, the grace of Blake's composition so completely undermines the mass of Minos that it drains him of the menace embodied by Guttuso's stern judge. As the latter figure lashes his tail in front of a fiery background and grimaces with a face creased by anger and protruding from a torso that represents the artist's response to his anger, he confronts us, as both imaginary participant and viewer, with the proximity and dangers of damnation. That is to say, though he may not have prostrate victims in front of him, as does Blake's Minos, he seems far more likely than does the latter to have us melting at his feet.

Less confrontational but perhaps no less intimidating are the lines and figures of Rico Lebrun's early 1960s drawings of the *Commedia*. While Guttuso paints one diviner from *Inferno* XX striding directly at us from the middle of a crowd and another staring almost directly towards us from the foreground, Lebrun depicts these sinners in profile.[35] Indeed, though the two diviners on the left side of his image sit on each other's lap, they do not even confront each other, for, in accord with Dante's punishment of them for daring to see into the future, for rendering God's judgment passive, they have their head on backwards. Moreover, Lebrun has made substantial efforts to graphically distinguish them. The figure on the right side of the pair is echoed in two faint drawings to the right of him, in two studies of his form by itself. And, even in his partnership with the other figure, his form is distinguished to an extraordinary degree from that of his companion. The man at right is silhouetted with an exceptionally confident, series of thick strokes that almost merge into one sweeping line from the toes on his left foot, around his heel, up his calf, across his hamstring, around his posterior, and up his curved spine to the base of his skull. There, the strokes meet a finely articulated bald head with light, highly defined features that turn away from the figure's rather robust chest and from a muscular left arm that clings to the other man. That embrace is returned by a less defined arm springing from the carefully shaded torso at left, from a body with hatching so closely controlled and so subtle that the variance of proximity and tonal effect of its strokes effectively articulate the intercostal muscles and distinguish them from the armpit just above them and the oblique muscle just below them. The legs of the figure at left are not as

clearly or boldly articulated as are those of the figure at right, but they thereby establish a pointed contrast to the heavily defined torso and head of the figure at left, and, as they fade into the distance, they foreground the legs of the man at right. That is to say, they too contribute to the distinction of these figures from each other, to the graphic borders that resist the efforts of the figures to defy their separation and to intertwine their bodies.[36]

They thus depart completely from the function of the lines constituting Lebrun's figures of Count Ugolino and Archbishop Ruggieri, two traitors to their homeland or party who are compositionally and graphically united more than either might wish.[37] While Doré devotes his illustration of *Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII to the pilgrim stepping among the almost completely submerged traitors to their kin as he crosses the frozen river Cocytus, and while Blake relegates Ugolino and Ruggieri to the side of an image that concentrates on the pilgrim pulling the hair of Bocca degli Abati, Lebrun devotes his entire image of *Inferno* XXXIII to the bishop and count.[38] To the right of a faint, frontal figure of Ruggieri, another, bolder figure of him appears in a three-quarters pose with a figure of Ugolino draped over his back and gnawing on his skull. The illustrator has taken literally the narrator's claim that he saw "two frozen in one hole so close that the head of the one was a hood for the other" (*Inf* 32.125-26 , and, in departing from tendencies by Blake and other late predecessors to distinguish the count from the bishop, he has returned to the conflation of them in Biblioteca Riccardiana MS 1005 and other fourteenth-century manuscripts.[39] That is to say, while Blake distinguishes Ugolino from Ruggieri by coloring and contour, Lebrun joins the miniaturists in folding one sinner closely over the other.

Moreover, he has commingled their form. Although this image contains contours as bold as those in his illustration of the diviners, the subject to which those lines refer is not always clear. For example, while we may identify the arc beneath Ruggieri's navel as the lower end of his belly, the thick layered strokes that cascade down from there seem to represent three or even four legs, rather than the two we might reasonably expect. And, though Ruggieri's left arm is defined from shoulder to wrist by dark, confident strokes and subtle shading, his face merges with Ugolino's hands to become an almost abstract pattern of distorted horizontals: a flat, featureless design that recalls more the visor of a helmet than the face of a human. Moreover, much of the image is rendered in light, spidery strokes that either depart from defining any subject or seem to represent earlier interpretations of the sinners' forms. The many thin lines trailing down at lower right, for example, seem to record possible positions for Ugolino's left leg, which was ultimately depicted bent at a right angle and compressed against Ruggieri's torso, while the curving, wispy lines just inside the left contour of Ruggieri seem to reflect a more erect stance slightly to the left of his current position.

One effect of preserving these alternative poses is to suggest movement.[40] Contrary to the traitors in the text, who are supposedly buried in ice up to their heads, Lebrun's archbishop and count seem to be in rather violent motion. They seem to be rapidly shifting position, particularly in the upper portion of the image, and thereby to suggest that the top of the ice may be represented by the arcs partially encircling Ruggieri's shins. Yet that impression may be illusory , for those arcs must compete with a strong horizontal line that obeys the text and cuts across Ruggieri's head, his left arm, and both of Ugolino's arms. In that stroke is the implication that all linear ambiguity further down the sheet of paper, all apparent shifting of pose, may in fact be merely a mirage, an illusory repetition created as light refracts through ice. We are thus confronted with an obfuscation of verisimilitude, an ambiguity compounding that which is inherent in the multiplicity of line.

Moreover, the few passages of anatomy that are clearly defined create tension in their juxtaposition with the more amorphous portions of the image. For example, Ruggieri's left bicep and tricep invite us to follow their contours down to the figure's left hand, but there the bold strokes taper into wispy lines that rarely intersect each other and that must compete with a layer of nearly horizontal, seemingly arbitrary cross strokes. Furthermore, the bold articulation of the bishop's navel and lower belly leave little doubt regarding that which they represent but must still compete with an only slightly lighter indentation above them and with a visual cacophony of other contours that cross the bishop's torso. Thus does clarity repeatedly intersect ambiguity in this image and bring that obfuscation to the fore. It invites us to work for the discernment of form and, in so doing, underscores the narrative and historical treachery of this episode. Although Ugolino may have saved Pisa from invasion by ceding several towns to Florence and Lucca in 1284, his enemies treated the act as perfidious and later returned the favor.[41] Under Ruggieri's leadership, they lured the count from exile with promises of amnesty, then reneged on their agreement and sealed him in a tower with four of his younger relatives.[42] Ugolino may then have compounded the theme of this episode by betraying his own flesh and blood, by cannibalizing his fellow prisoners.[43] But the reader cannot be sure from the account he gives in *Inferno* XXXIII, for he does not explicitly state whether or not he ate them.[44] Indeed, he overlooks so many opportunities to declare his guilt or innocence on this issue and strives so hard to deflect pity for the other prisoners onto himself that he has been accused of trying to betray his audience.[45] Yet, ironically, he may fail to dissociate himself from cannibalism precisely because he ignores countless opportunities to confirm or deny his guilt, because his lacunae become conspicuous and draw attention to the issue. Moreover, through myriad references to food, mouths, mastication, and speech, Dante as author links Ugolino to eating, and, by mentioning a rumor that the concession of

towns was ultimately a betrayal, Dante as narrator suggests that the count is indeed deceitful.[46] Treachery is thus piled upon treachery, and substance is buried beneath obfuscation.

Nevertheless, that substance is not completely lost from sight in Lebrun's image, for one of his clearest passages, one of the graphic juxtapositions underscoring the general sketchiness of his illustration, literally foregrounds the issue at the core of the obfuscation — cannibalism. Amid the light, hasty lines representing the shadows on Ugolino's face and the hair on the back of Ruggieri's head, thick, crisp strokes boldly define the count's upper teeth. They distinguish those instruments of mastication from an otherwise amorphous portion of the image and highlight not only Ugolino's eternal punishment but also one possible reason for it. Indeed, in relationship to the faintly defined teeth slightly higher on the page, those below seem to be descending on Ruggieri's head, to be in the very act central to the count's historical and narrative treachery. And, as they contrast with the sketchy portions of the image around them, particularly to the rest of Ugolino's otherwise featureless face, they foreground the bestial nature of his act. They suggest that he has been so consumed by hatred that, like the dog to which Dante compares him, he has forsaken every shred of dignity, of that which makes him human.

The count's passion, moreover, is underscored by that of Lebrun, for, in the faint echoes of Ugolino's teeth and in the other sketchy portions of the image, the artist blatantly reveals his own response to the subject at hand.[47] Like the quick, heavily layered, and sometimes arbitrary strokes of Guttuso, those of Lebrun suggest an agitated mind. The long wispy lines spilling down Ruggieri's legs, the short flicks ignoring the borders of his right thigh, and the many other strokes accreting near Ugolino's left knee depart from merely defining the physical form of the figures to suggest overtly the artist's feelings.[48] They seem to represent a loss of manual control and dexterity, a decline that, in turn, implies a loss of mental composure.[49] And, as they thus privilege emotional expression over physical description, they foreground and reinforce Ugolino's passion.[50] They not only graphically but also psychologically link him to the bishop and to the crimes associated with that relationship.

Such an interpretation is to some degree reinforced by the inversion of those graphic principles in Lebrun's image of *Inferno* XXIV.[51] Rather than obscure or abstract the transmogrification of the thieves into serpents and back again, Lebrun describes the process with clarity and detail that are extraordinary for this illustration cycle. From the torso of a thick, two-legged figure set against a circular black background, a rather crisply defined serpent uncoils towards us. Its body wraps around the torso and displaces the left arm, but the transition is not complete, for the figure still has legs, its right arm has only begun to acquire a surface as fractured as that of the serpent's scales, and the bulging muscles of that arm, as it grips a coil of

the serpent, suggest the thief is still resisting his transformation. We are evidently privy to a process whose horror lies less in its ends than in its unfolding, in an apparently painful transition that is ironically portrayed with the greatest clarity to be found in Lebrun's cycle, with each contour sharply defined, highly illusionistic anatomy, and shading consistently deployed to create volume, to define the bones of the serpent's head, for example, or to articulate its protrusion past the torso of the figure. Some lines may depart from strict description, as in the looping stroke that skirts the serpent's neck at upper right, but the departures are far less conspicuous than those in the other illustrations of the cycle and are often suggestive of the serpent's form or its transformation. Thus, the transmogrification is depicted with clarity that, in both describing it and conspicuously contrasting with the ambiguity inherent to it, reinforces it twice over .

The contrast of that clarity with the ambiguity in Lebrun's other illustrations suggests it was deliberate, as does its echo of the time and attention pre-modern artists lavished on Dante's unusually detailed description of the episode.[52] For example, in the third of three Musée Condé illustrations of the thieves, every spot and scale on the serpentine portions of these sinners is carefully articulated.[53] And even that extraordinary attention to detail is surpassed in the smoke passing from the navel of one thief in this illustration to the mouth of another, for the illuminators have articulated not only each ripple in that smoke but also each shadow that would be cast on and within it by a light source above it. Through careful gradations of ink that darken towards the bottom of the billowing smoke, they convey a sense of volume that is rare for their work and that overtly departs from the subject to which it is applied. That is to say, they devote more attention to illusionism, to conveying a sense of substance here, with the most ephemeral of subjects and the most transient of moments, than perhaps anywhere else in their illustration cycle.[54] Like Lebrun, therefore, they underscore the transmogrification of the thieves by describing it in great detail and by pointedly contrasting its nature to the form in which it is depicted. Rather than deploy quick strokes and other explicit traces of their personal response to the subject, they join Lebrun in enhancing the graphicness and immediacy of the thieves' suffering, in juxtaposing a precise rendering of it with the ambiguity of its subject and of neighboring illustrations.[55]

Lebrun may not be the only modern artist to be influenced by the miniatures of this episode, for, in a series of *Commedia* illustrations from 1970, Lebrun's publisher, Leonard Baskin, echoes both the composition and the clarity of pre-modern images for *Inferno* XXIV and XXV. As his rather iguana-like creature clings in profile to the front of a bound figure, bites its face, and penetrates its groin with a tail that emerges from between the figure's buttocks, he recalls the beasts assaulting the four thieves in an illustration of canto twenty-four from Biblioteca Estense MS R.4.8 in

Modena, the three lizards at left in the Modena illustration of canto twenty-five, the serpent attacking the thief in the second Musée Condé image of canto twenty-five, the beast at far right in the first illustration of that canto from Laurenziana MS Strozzi 152, and the creature on the second thief from the right in the British Museum MS Additional 19587 image of canto twenty-five.[56] Yet it is the clarity with which we can identify those parallels that may most overtly embody the influence of the miniatures on Baskin, for, relative to his other illustrations, this image is extraordinarily clear and economical. Baskin has a penchant for dark backgrounds, as in his image of the pilgrim "at the end of all desiring" in *Paradiso* XXXIII and in his illustration of the pilot from the opening of *Purgatorio*.[57] Moreover, Baskin often just hints at the form and action of a figure, as in omitting the setting of that pilot, in leaving the winged figure with nothing other than an oar and a horizon line to suggest his role, and in defining his body through merely an outline and a few interior contours.[58] But, in the illustration of canto twenty-five, Baskin describes the thief by means of a bold, confident outline and an unusually great degree of shading. The face and groin of the human figure, his most violent intersections with the serpent, are blackened with heavy, thick, repeated strokes that foreground these portions of the image, and his ribs are implied by short, rather horizontal curves beneath a smudge of shading. Moreover, that figure's anatomy is rendered with what is, for Baskin, extraordinary descriptiveness. The buttocks, for example, are distinguished from the hamstring by a light line that continues their curve; the lower head of his right tricep is distinguished from the elbow by a notch and a short line extending up from the elbow; the upper, exterior head on the right tricep, which is distorted by the sinner's hands being bound behind his back, is efficiently articulated by slight lines extending it into the region normally occupied by the anterior deltoid; and the right oblique is defined by a line that arcs up from the outline of the lower back and by another line that arcs down from the haunch of the serpent as it presses down on the hip of the human figure. Thus, with merely a few short strokes, Baskin conveys the shape and, to some degree, the volume of the figure. He describes its transmogrification of form with a clarity no less striking than that of Lebrun or the Musée Condé miniaturists. And, like them, he thereby both directly and indirectly reinforces the theme of this episode, both eliminates any chance we will misidentify the subject and provides a pointed juxtaposition to the nature of that theme.

Yet that is not to say Baskin abandons overt expressionism. Like Lebrun, he deploys a sketchiness that implies alteration. His bold contours, as in the right leg of the thief, are sometimes accompanied by a light echo to one side, by a thin line that implies another, slightly different pose. And even the boldest of his outlines are often constituted not from a single, confident stroke but from a series of short, quivering lines. The heads of the figures, for example, are composed of layer upon layer of strokes that are distinguish-

ed in their repetition and darkness from the light lines that stray far outside of those contours. Thus does Baskin reveal the act of creation, the movement of his hand as he articulated his interpretation of the text, and thus does he advertise that the image is at least in part a record of his emotional response to the subject, of a reaction that superseded his control of line, hand, and feeling.[59]

That expressionist style complements Baskin's often purely personal subject matter, as in his response to *Inferno* XIV.[60] A substantial portion of the text for that canto is devoted to a detailed description of the Old Man of Crete, the source for the rivers of hell:

> his head is fashioned of fine gold, his arms and breast are pure silver, then down to the fork he is of brass, and down from there is all of choice iron, except that the right foot is baked clay, and he rests more on this than on the other. Every part except the gold is cleft by a fissure that drips with tears which, collected, force a passage through the cavern there.
>
> (*Inf* 14.106-14

And, indeed, most modern and pre-modern artists adhere closely to that description in their illustrations of this canto. In Budapest University MS italien 1, Musée Condé MS 597, Biblioteca Marciana MS italien IX.276, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal MS 8530, and the Codex Altonensis, the figure towers above others in the image, exudes liquid from a crack in its body or base, and has its head, arms, upper chest, lower torso, legs, and right foot carefully distinguished from each other by texture and often by color or gilding.[61] These images thus differ substantially from the subject and form of Baskin's illustration, for he substitutes nature for the God attacked by the sinners in the text, and he devotes his smoky image to the menace of those sinners, to the spirit of that which he calls "The Violent Against Nature."[62] From the shadows of an almost solid black background, a large face with jagged edges, an open mouth, upturned nose, and hollow eyes stares at us as it reaches towards us with bright, white talons. Yet that creature may not be the most menacing figure in the image, for, from its forehead, emerges a smaller, rather bat-like head with large ears, a short snout, and sharp teeth. A gaping cavity between the eyes of the larger figure suggests that the smaller figure may have been feasting on its neighbor, but, whether or not that is true, the eruption of the chiropteric beast from the skull of the larger creature embodies not only a specific act of violence against a representative of nature but also an unnatural union of beings, and perhaps unnatural procreation. That is to say, the image depicts a violation not only of one manifestation of nature, the larger creature, but also of nature itself. Violence against God, blasphemy, is translated into a physical relationship that is characterized by means of a minimalist composition, a few physical characteristics, and an almost obfuscatingly dark medium.

Although Baskin thereby departs from the subjects for pre-modern illustrations of *Inferno* XIV, he joins the miniaturists in viscerally suggesting the suffering and danger of that cantica. Like Guttuso and Lebrun, he looks back to the spirit of the fourteenth century, to an era in which the *Commedia* was treated like Scripture. As I have discussed elsewhere in detail, Trecento commentators describe Dante as "divine," compare him to the Prophets, and sometimes insist he was in fact "touched by the Holy Spirit."[63] And illuminators of that period often manipulate their composition, particularly the gate of hell, to slip us into the pilgrim's shoes or to otherwise suggest that the narrative has relevance to our lives outside of our reading experience.[64] That is to say, they render the afterlife with a graphicness and immediacy that presage more the illustrations of Baskin, Guttuso, and Lebrun than those of Flaxman, Blake, and Doré.

As we have seen, the latter three illustrators resist traditional interpretations of art history, particularly the characterization of their era as one of extraordinarily personal and emotional response, to favor design over drama, to privilege style and aesthetics over passion and intensity. Indeed, in some ways, they may come closer than do Baskin, Guttuso, and Lebrun to the detachment that characterizes modern art, for the latter three artists almost anachronistically choose episodes facilitating emotional response, privilege the most climactic moments of those episodes, and depict them with the most dramatic of means, with bold colors, extreme contrasts in tone, shocking proximity, and selective obfuscation. Departing from the secularism often ascribed to the modern age, they bring home the suffering and joy of those who have reached Dante's other world and invite us to empathize with those figures, to prepare for a fate that we, too, may someday face.

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NOTES

[1] A shorter version of this paper was presented October 19, 2001 at the Sixteenth International Conference on Medievalism, where it benefited from comments by Gwendolyn Morgan and other members of the audience.

[2] Barbara J. Watts, "Sandro Botticelli's Illustrations for *Inferno* VIII and IX: Narrative Revision and the Role of Manuscript Tradition," *Word & Image*, XI (April-June 1995 " 149-73.

[3] Watts, esp. 159-60.

[4] For Botticelli's engraving, see Watts, fig. 13; for Botticelli's drawing, see Watts, fig. 18; for the Yates Thompson miniature, see Watts, fig. 10.

[5] For Flaxman's engraving of Lucifer, see Charles H. Taylor and Patricia Finley, *Images of the Journey in Dante's "Divine Comedy"* (New Haven and London: Yale U P, 1997 , fig. 105. For similar three- faced, pre-modern images of the devil, see Peter Brieger, Millard Meiss, and Charles Singleton, *Illuminated Manuscripts of the "Divine Comedy,"* 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1969 , II, pls. 317a, 318a, 318b, 320, 321a,

321b, 322a, 322b, 323b, 325a, and 325c. For Flaxman's image of the blessed, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 189. For examples of the Egerton miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 432, 458a, 464a, 468a, 475a, 484a, and 493a. For examples of the Arsenal miniatures, see Brieger et al., II, pls. 504a and 514b. See also Morgan Library MS 676, as illustrated in Brieger, et. al., II, pl. 493c.

[6] For Flaxman's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 78. For pre-modern images of this episode, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 244b, 245d, 247a, 250b, 251a, and 251b.

[7] For Flaxman's illustration of Guido, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 86. For miniatures of Guido engulfed in flames, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 268a, 268b, 270a, 271a, 272b, 272c, 273a, 274a, 274b, and 275c.

[8] For Flaxman's illustrations, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 197 and 228, respectively.

[9] For Bartolomeo's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 85. All quotes of the *Commedia* are from Charles Singleton's three-volume translation (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1970-75 .

[10] For Flaxman's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 214. For Giovanni's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 215.

[11] For Botticelli's drawing, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 170. For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 171.

[12] For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 19. For fifteenth-century miniatures of Minos, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 87b, 88a, 89a, and 90b.

[13] For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 6. For the miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 39, 8c, 42a, and 43c, respectively.

[14] For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 35. For Botticelli's drawing of the scene, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 33. For Botticelli's engraving of the scene, see Watts, fig. 13. For typical lateral views in miniatures of the scene, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 126c, 127b, 128b, 129b, 130c, 132a, 133b, 134b, and 135c. For a late fourteenth-century miniature in Vatican MS latini 4776 that shows the portal frontally and the heavenly messenger from behind at a three-quarters angle, see Brieger, et. al., II, pl. 131b.

[15] For a discussion of the manner in which reading text from left to right conditions many Western pictorial narratives, particularly those from the pre-modern era and those heavily influenced by pre-modern art, see Meyer Schapiro's "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs," *Semiotica*, I (1969 , 223-42.

[16] For Blake's illustrations of the episodes described, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 11, 13, 22, 25, 31, 35, and 46, respectively.

[17] For the Yates Thompson miniature, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 44. For Doré's engraving, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 47.

[18] For Doré's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 1.

[19] For Doré's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 60.

[20] For Doré's engraving, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 209.

[21] For Doré's illustrations, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 204 and 213, respectively. For a late fourteenth-century miniature of dancing figures, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 203.

[22] For Doré's engraving, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 23.

[23] For miniatures of Paolo and Francesca embracing, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 83b, 88b, 89c, and 91b.

[24] For Lebrun's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 87. For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 90.

[25] For Blake's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 88.

[26] For these miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 278a, 279a, 279b, 280a, 280b, 281b, 282, 283a, and 283b, respectively.

[27] For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 41.

[28] For the Vatican miniature, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 42.

[29] For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 151.

[30] For Doré's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 150. For miniatures showing Lombardo approaching the protagonists, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 377a, 377b, 378a, and 379b.

[31] For these miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 125b, 117 c, 117a, 118b, 119b, 122a, and 124a, respectively.

[32] For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 113.

[33] For Guttuso's illustrations, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 146 and 20, respectively.

[34] For Blake's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 19.

[35] For Guttuso's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 70. For Lebrun's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 68.

[36] That such issues are at the heart of Lebrun's art is suggested by his stated aim of having ". . . analysis and synthesis succeed each other as two beasts of the same function...," as quoted in Henry J. Seldis's introductory essay "Beyond Virtuosity" for the exhibition *Rico Lebrun (1900-1964* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, December 5,1967 to January 14,1968 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967 , 21.

[37] For Lebrun's drawing, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 101.

[38] For Doré's image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 98. For Blake's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 99.

[39] For the Riccardiana illustration, see Brieger, et. al., II, pl. 314b.

[40] Note that Lebrun claimed "Aware as I am of the alive and elusive quality of line itself, of its changeable existence, I feel that when this quality is present in drawing the image seems to become more valid as a commentary on the human dilemma. This is a difficult and at the same time a rich procedure. It involves being able to state and contradict, to withdraw and advance, using a line full of such assertive errors and intuitive vacillations that the total design results in a live basket of questions woven into a single yes," as quoted in his introduction to the *Inferno* illustrations for *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961*, the catalogue for an exhibition held at the University of Southern California in April 1961 (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1961 , 14.

[41] The circumstances leading up to and surrounding Ugolino's demise have been widely discussed and, in the case of his possible cannibalism, heatedly debated. For short yet detailed modern accounts of those circumstances, see Pietro Boitani, "*Inferno* XXXIII," in *Cambridge Readings in Dante's "Comedy,"* ed. Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1981 , 76-77; and S. Saffiotti Bernardi's entry for Ugolino in the *Enciclopedia dantesca*, ed. Umberto Bosco, 6 vols. (Rome: Istituto dell Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970-78 , V, 795-97.

[42] For a good overview of possible reasons for which Ugolino was exiled and of the circumstances under which he returned to Pisa, see Boitani.

[43] Some chronicles of the time, such as the anonymous *Cronica Fiorentina compilata nel sec. XIII*, ed. Pasqua Villari, in *I primi due secoli della Storia di Firenza*, 2 vols. (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1898 , claim Ugolino did indeed eat his fellow prisoners. But, other than Jacopo della Lana, who declares outright that Ugolino was a cannibal (*"Comedia" di Dante degli Allagherii col commento di Jacopo della Lana Bolognese*, ed. Luciano Scarabelli, 3 vols. [Bologna: Tipografia Regia, 1866-67], I, 501 , the commentators generally ignore the issue or refuse to take sides on it. For a discussion of the degree to which the events surrounding Ugolino's demise were known in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, see Saffiotti Bernardi, 795; and Corinna Salvadori Lonergan, "The Context of *Inferno* XXXIII: Bocca, Ugolino, Fra Alberigo," in *Dante Commentaries*: *Eight Studies of the "Divine Comedy,"* ed. David Nolan (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield; Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1977 , 63-84.

[44] Note, for example, the ambiguity of his famous last line, "Then fasting did more than grief had done" (*Inf* 33.75 , which does not reveal whether he died at that time from hunger or postponed it as hunger overcame lament and led to cannibalism.

[45] For further discussion of Ugolino's narrative treachery, particularly in the context of evading associations with cannibalism, see Donna Yowell, "Ugolino's 'bestial segno': The *De vulgari eloquentia* in *Inferno* XXXII-XXXIII," *Dante Studies* CIV (1986 , 121-44; and Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, "L 'Orazione del conte Ugolino," *Lettere italiane* XXIII (1971 ,3-28. Also important, albeit more tangential to the issues at hand, are John Freccero's article "Bestial Sign and Bread of Angels (*Inferno* 32-33 ," *Yale Italian Studies* I (1977 , 53-66; and Robert Hollander's "*Inferno* XXL"(37-74: Ugolino's Importunity," *Speculum* LIX (1984 , 549-55.

[46] For a thorough discussion of the references to food, mouths, mastication, and speech, see Yowell. For the narrator's reference to the rumor, see *Inferno* 33.85-86.

[47] Note that in the introduction (14 to the *Inferno* illustrations in *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961*, Lebrun remarks, "Since (Dante's images are agonic and compounded in metamorphosis, shaped by the climate of hell, to try to illustrate Dante without a contributing share of personal 'hell' seems impossible."

[48] Of course, this is not to suggest that, particularly within the mind of the artist, the perceived object or the perception itself is any less real than that which is being perceived. As Lebrun himself said during what Seldis (33 describes as the artist's "early maturity," he "must start with the tangible object, the concrete. My aim is to fashion its equivalent concreteness in paint and line. To point up this quality of existence necessitates elimination, invention and abstraction. Abstraction is the concrete revealed."

[49] Note that John Ciardi, a poet and famed twentieth-century translator of the *Commedia*, summed up Lebrun's passion by claiming that "the more contemplative and detached artist can create well enough in a relatively relaxed and philosophical way. But the splendid ones always burn. The true passion is for the impossible. The work of the true artist is a creative violence, an attempt on the unattainable, and violent with the blazing of its own intensity . The artist must rush to the encounter with form because time is forever running out. Rico Lebrun was such a compulsive creator," as quoted in Seldis, 35.

[50] In reference to the use of a line "full of such assertive errors and intuitive vacillations that the total design results in a live basket of questions woven into a single yes," Lebrun claims in his introduction to the *Inferno* illustrations for *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961* that "Dante's imaginings — his constant stress on how vulnerable and driven by changes the shades of his protagonists appear — and the stamp of exalted fever he brings to the summoning of these shades, call for such drawing" (14 .

[51] For Lebrun's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 80.

[52] Note that in introducing the *Inferno* illustrations for *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961*, Lebrun (15 remarked that "the staggering penalties Dante devises are medieval in blood and gloom" but "can be readily translated into their less theatrical but still dreaded equivalents in our more peaceful midsts."

[53] For the clearest reproduction of the Musée Condé image, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 79.

[54] For most of the other Musée Condé miniatures, see Brieger, et. al.

[55] Note that in the introduction to the catalogue for *Rico Lebrun: Paintings and Drawings: 1946-1961*, Peter Selz (5 remarked on the proximity of Lebrun's mid-1950s drawings of concentration camps to the *Triumph of Death* in the Campo Santo of Pisa, a fresco almost certainly by the master of the Musée Condé miniatures.

[56] For Baskin's illustration, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 81. For the miniatures of the thieves, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 255b, 265c, 261b, 262a, and 262b, respectively.

[57] For Baskin's illustrations, see Taylor and Finley, figs. 255 and 118, respectively.

[58] Baskin himself described the goal of art as "penetration beneath surfaces to the true meanings of things in their relation to life," as quoted in Irma B. Jaffe's *The Sculpture of Leonard Baskin* (New York: Scholars Press, 1980 , 34.

[59] In a tribute to Baskin, his friend, the well-known poet Ted Hughes, claimed Baskin's graphic line is "an image in itself — his fundamental image," as quoted in "The Hanged Man and the Dragonfly," the introduction to Alan Fern and Judith O'Sullivan's *The Complete Prints of Leonard Baskin* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1984 , 18.

[60] For Baskin's illustration of this canto, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 51.

[61] For the Altonensis miniature, see Taylor and Finley, fig. 50. For the other miniatures, see Brieger, et. al., II, pls. 173b, 173d, 178b, and 176a, respectively.

[62] As noted in Taylor and Finley, 60. Hughes (12 claims, "for Baskin, a work of art must have a 'real content.' As he makes clear in his various writings, by 'real content' he means the 'physical presence of our common reality—the common experience of our common humanity.' And in the case of his own work he means, more specifically, the physical presence of 'our common suffering.'"

[63] For Trecento references to Dante as divinely inspired, see Benvenuto da Imola, *Benvenuto Rambaldi da lmola illustrato nella vita e nelle opere, e di lui Commento Latino sulla "Divina Commedia " di Dante Allighieri*, ed. Giovanni Tamburini, 3 vols. (Imola: Galeati, 1855-56 , I, 14; and Francesco da Buti, *Commento di Francesco Buti sopra la "Divina Comedia,"* ed. Crescentino Giannini, 3 vols. (Pisa: Fratelli Nistri, 1858-62 , I, 10. For comparisons of Dante to the Prophets, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, ed. Luigi Sasso (Milan: Garzanti, 1995 , paras. 149-50; Bruno Sandkühler's discussion of an unpublished version of Graziolo Bambaglioli's *proemio*, 137; and Benvenuto da Imola, 1, 9-10, 20, and 22. And for claims that Dante "was touched by the Holy Spirit," see Filippo Villani's, *Il Comento al primo canto dell "Inferno" di Filippo Villani*, ed. Giuseppe Cugnoni, Collezion e di opuscoli danteschi indediti o rari, XXXI (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1896 , 28-29; Boccaccio's *Trattatello*, para. 19; his *Esposizioni sopra la "Comedia,"* ed. Giorgio Padoan (1965; repr. Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1994 , paras. 61-63; and Falso Boccaccio's *Chiose sopra Dante*, ed. G.G. Warren, Lord Vernon (Florence: Piatti, 1846 , 44. For further discussion of these examples, see my article "Historicizing the *Divine Comedy*: Renaissance Responses to a 'Medieval' Text," *The Year's Work in Medievalism* (Bozeman: Studies in Medievalism, 2000 , 83-106. These translations of the commentators are mine.

[64] See my article "Historicizing the *Divine Comedy*...."*The Year's Work in Medievalism* (Bozeman: Studies in Medievalism, 2000 , 83-106.