

***Purgatorio, Cantos XXV–XXXIII***

**Cantos 25-27**, The Terrace of Lust (Those who burned with lust on earth now walk through fire to purge themselves of this sin.)

Shades and Shadows (25.85-108)

Italian *ombra* = both “shadow” (cast by a body) and “shade” (a soul in the afterlife). When the soul leaves the body, it “impresses” the body’s form on the surrounding air, and the resulting “shade” follows the spirit like a shadow. A basic premise of the *Divine Comedy*: individuals determine the state of their souls.

Guido Guinizzelli (26.91-135)

A poet of lyric romance from Bologna, Guido appears purging himself of lust.

Arnaut Daniel (26.115-20, 136-48)

Guido singles out another poet as a “better craftsman of the mother tongue,” meaning Arnaut Daniel, a Provençal poet (12th-13th century) praised for his love poetry. This is the only instance in the *Comedy* in which a non-Italian speaks in his “mother tongue.”

Examples of Chastity and Lust (25.127-32, 26.40-2)

Mary at the Annunciation; the goddess Diana; Helice (aka Callisto)

Sodom and Gomorrah; Pasiphaë

Dream of Rachel and Leah (27.94-108)

Dante’s third and final dream in Purgatory: Leah gathers flowers to make into a garland, and she tells how her sister Rachel never stops observing her reflection in a mirror. Leah and Rachel were conventionally viewed as symbols of the active and contemplative lives.

**Cantos 28-33**, The Earthly Paradise

Addio Virgilio (28-30)

Dante says farewell to Virgil by having him fade from view. The final two images of Virgil show him smiling (28.145-7) and amazed (29.55-7). When Dante next turns to see Virgil, he is gone (30.43-54). Dante echoes Virgil’s *Georgics* (Orpheus crying Eurydice’s name), with his own cry of “Virgilio! Virgilio! Virgilio” (30.49-51).

Matelda (28.31-108, 118-23)

Dante’s Matelda embodies the pure beauty and innocence of the Garden of Eden. She takes Dante to the rivers of Lethe (which makes souls forget sin) and Eunoe (“good memory” in Greek, which renews memories of good deeds). After he has tasted the waters of Lethe and Eunoe, Dante is “cleansed and ready to rise to the stars” (33.145).

Procession of Biblical Symbols and Figures (29)

A pageant of religious imagery: (1) seven tall, golden candles leave a rainbow,

representing the sevenfold spirit of God or the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord); (2) twenty-four mature men dressed in pure white and wearing crowns of lilies (books of the Old Testament); (3) four animals, each with six wings (full of eyes) and wearing a leafy-green crown (the Gospels); (4) a two-wheeled chariot pulled by a griffin (with Beatrice inside); (5) three dancing women—colored fire-red, emerald-green, and snow-white—at the right wheel of the chariot, and four dancing women (one with three eyes), in crimson-colored garments, at the left wheel (the theological and cardinal virtues); (6) seven more men, dressed in white and wearing crowns of roses: two old men, one with the bearing of a physician (Luke: Acts of the Apostles) and the other carrying a sword (Paul: Epistles), four men of humble appearance (James, Peter, John, Jude: the short epistles), and a single old man with sharp features even as he sleeps (John: Revelation).

Beatrice (30-33)

Beatrice, dressed in the colors of the three holy virtues (white veil for faith, green cape for hope, and red dress for love), reproaches Dante for his past transgressions.

The Chariot (an allegory of the history of Christianity) (32.109-60)

An eagle (Roman empire) strikes the chariot (Roman persecution of the early Church); a fox (heresies) leaps into the chariot and is chased away by Beatrice; the eagle again attacks the chariot, leaving behind feathers (the Donation of Constantine, or worldly contamination of the Church); a dragon (Islam, viewed as a schism within Christianity) rips through the bottom of the chariot and carries away a part of it; what's left of the chariot sprouts seven monstrous heads (like the beast of the apocalypse); then a prostitute (the corrupt papacy) appears in the chariot and embraces a giant next to her (the French monarchy); the giant beats the woman (Philip the Fair's hostile treatment of Pope Boniface VIII) and drags the chariot and woman into the forest (the Avignon papacy).

**So...**

Consider Virgil's sudden departure immediately upon the arrival of a very stern Beatrice. What does this "changing of the guide" say about Dante's relationship to Virgil? To Beatrice?

Although Dante's answers may not be our answers (at times, they assuredly are not!), issues raised in *Purgatorio* continue to be important today, like the responsibilities and rights of individuals, leaders, and society; the effects of misrule; church-state relations; love and sexuality; artistic expression and censorship. Can you think of a current event or issue that parallels or contrasts with Dante's way of thinking?