



# Purgatory: Canto 22

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# Summary:

In Canto 22, the travellers move onto the sixth turn of Purgatory and, though it is not explicitly mentioned, Statius is joining them in the journey. As the travellers walk together, Virgil can't help but ask Statius how he managed to be avaricious "amidst all of the wisdom [he] possessed in... the practice of [his] art" (22. 23-4). Statius revealed that he was not in fact avaricious, but was instead prodigal; revealing that the fifth terrace is the terrace of avarice and prodigality. He tells Virgil that because of *the Aeneid*, he was finally able to quit his spending and repent of all his other sins. Upon inquiring, Statius even answers that Virgil himself was the one who lead Statius to become a Christian and help many suffering Christians during the time of Domitian. Statius becomes curious about which other famous poets stay in Hell with Virgil, so Virgil recounts most all of those who dwell with him, including the familiar Antigone and Ismene. Finally, as the travellers are continuing on, they are met with an especially attractive looking apple tree and a stream of clear liquor. A voice cries out about those holy men who gave no mind to what they ate: the travellers are now in the ring of gluttony.



# Important Characters:

Dante - Though he is the speaker and author, he steps back in this canto to allow for Statius' character and the relationship of Statius and Virgil to develop.

Statius - An important character in this canto; we learn more about him on earth and how he found Christ in Virgil's pagan works. He emphasizes Virgil's excellence.

Virgil - He is a guide for Dante and Statius; God showed Himself through his works, even though he was a pagan. It is emphasized that he is a role model



# Important Themes:

Christianity vs. Paganism- Both of the poets represent both of the religions, yet one was lead to Christianity by the one who was not Christian. One of the religions can work through the other, showing its superiority over the other even though the person through whom it works is not necessarily superior to the one it touches.\*

Unnecessity of Greed- Virgil thinks strongly that greed and even prodigality are damaging to humanity. Statius is moved to holiness by his words on this matter.

\*For a better understanding of this, see the Digital Dante project by Columbia University



# Stylistic Features to Note:

Structural Chiasmus- As noted in Columbia University's *Digital Dante*, Dante the poet creates a structural chiasmus around the two axes of poetry and human greatness and belief and religious conviction.

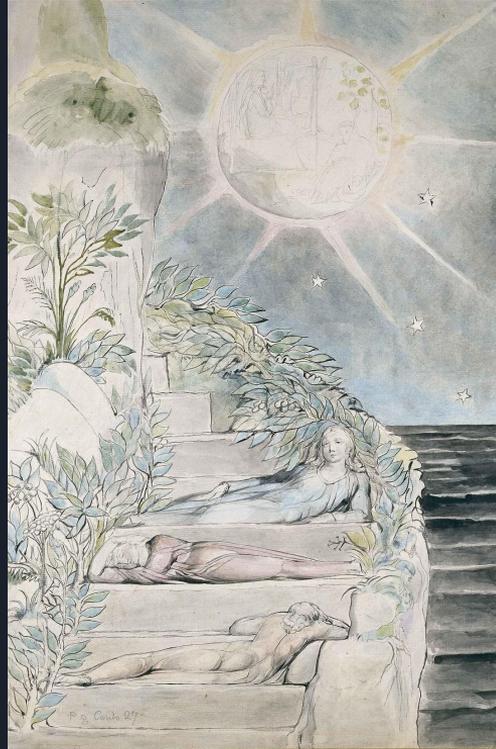
Allusion to Vergilian Texts: When Virgil wrote in the *Aeneid*: "Why do you, holy hunger after gold, not guide the appetites of mortal men?", Statius was moved to repent his sins, especially that of prodigality.

Also, Dante translates verses 5-7 of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue when he says: "From Heaven descends a newborn son..." (22. 70; pg. 467)

# Artwork Related to Canto 22:



An Interpretation of Virgil's Fourth  
Eclogue  
*Eclogue IV: Thy Very Cradle Quickens* -  
Samuel Palmer (1876)



*Dante and Statius Sleeping,  
Virgil Watching*  
-William Blake (1757-1827)



# Works Cited:

Alighieri, Dante. *Purgatory*. Translated and edited by Anthony Esolen. New York, Modern Library, 2004.

Barolini, Teodolinda. "Purgatorio 22: Pagan Texts As Agents of Salvation—and Aristotle, Again." *Commento Baroliniano*, Digital Dante. New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2014.  
<https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/purgatorio/purgatorio-22/>

Esolen, Anthony, translator and editor. *Purgatory*. By Dante Alighieri, New York, Modern Library, 2004.

Palmer, Samuel. *Eclogue IV: Thy Very Cradle Quickens*. 1876, Place Unknown. Uploaded by Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palmer-cradle-quickens-1876.jpg>

Blake, William. *Dante and Statius Sleeping, Virgil Watching*. 1825-27, Ashmolean Museum. Uploaded by the Ashmolean Museum. <https://wsimag.com/ashmolean-museum/artworks/52731>



# Questions:

1. Explore the theme of Christianity vs. Paganism. How are they shown through the text literally and what does it symbolize as a whole?
2. This canto emphasizes Virgil's excellence. How do we see that in the text and what effect does it have?
3. Where did Statius go before serving his time in the fifth terrace? Why and can his actions be justified?



Thank you for watching!

I hope you enjoyed :)