

CANTO TWENTY EIGHT

Lupe Garvey-April 7, 2020

SUMMARY

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Dante is now in Earthly Paradise or, The Garden of Eden. Dante gives a beautiful description of the forest which is a “divine forest rich and evergreen”(28.2). Dante wanders around the forest until a stream stops him in his path. Across the stream is a beautiful lady, Matelda who will be named in Canto 33. Matelda tells Dante that he is in the Garden of Eden and she talks about the “dissemination of the plant life from the garden” and she also describes the two rivers (musa trans p. 299). The first river is the Lethe, “the classical river of oblivion”which washes all sin away (Esolen notes p. 483). The second river is the Eunoe. This name was made up by Dante and its roots are from the greek and it means “good memory.” This river restores the memories of good works. The canto ends with Matelda telling Dante about how many poets sang of the beauty of this garden and sang “about the happy age of gold”(28.141).

CHARACTERS

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The only characters in this canto are Dante and Matela

Dante's character has changed and he has become more joyful. He is free of the burdens of the seven p's and he is close to paradise. His new happiness can be seen by the reader in the change in his writing. The overall tone of the canto is much happier than the cantos while he was still in Purgatory.

Matela is in the garden and she “sing[s] and cull[s] flowers in the grove”(28.41). Her character is like Eve before the fall. She is full of beauty, modesty, and joy. The readers were prepared for Matela through the character of Leah, and now, Matela's character prepares the readers for Beatrice. She is “a personification of Earthly Paradise” and “represents the highest joys that the human intellect can attain in this life”(Esolen Notes p 483).

THEMES

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Nature-This theme is very prominent now, at the end of the text when Dante is in Eden, about to enter Paradise. In this canto, the nature in the garden shows the perfect nature that was lost because of the fall.

Loss-This theme is seen when Dante describes the beauty of Eden. The reader is filled with amazement, but there is also a feeling of loss when looking at what the world could have been like. This theme is also visible when Dante alludes to the story of Proserpina whose mother lost her for a couple months of the year to the god Pluto.

STYLISTIC FEATURES

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Simile- “And as a lady in dance will turn/with soles held close together on the floor,/and hardly set one foot before the other,/Through all the little flowers of red and gold/she turned my way just as a girl would turn,/a maiden with her modest eyes held low”(28.52-57). -Dante
is describing how Matelda turns toward him from across the river

Allusion- “a rein upon the arrogance of a man’s heart,/Once suffered from Leander”(28.72-73).
-Dante alludes to the story of Leander who swam across a river every night to see his lover, to describe his longing to go to Matelda.

Imagery- On the first page of the canto especially, Dante uses remarkable imagery to describe the beauty and perfection of the Garden of Eden.

PICTURES



Dante, Stazio and Virgil at the edge of The Garden of Eden. Matelda can be seen In the background.



Matelda gathering flowers

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QUESTIONS

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1. Matelda describes the two rivers. One represents the memory of sin and the other represents the memory of good deeds. What is the purpose of these two rivers?
2. What is the purpose of Matelda's speech describing the garden and the corruption of man?
3. How does Matelda's character add to the themes of the text?

Thanks For Watching!