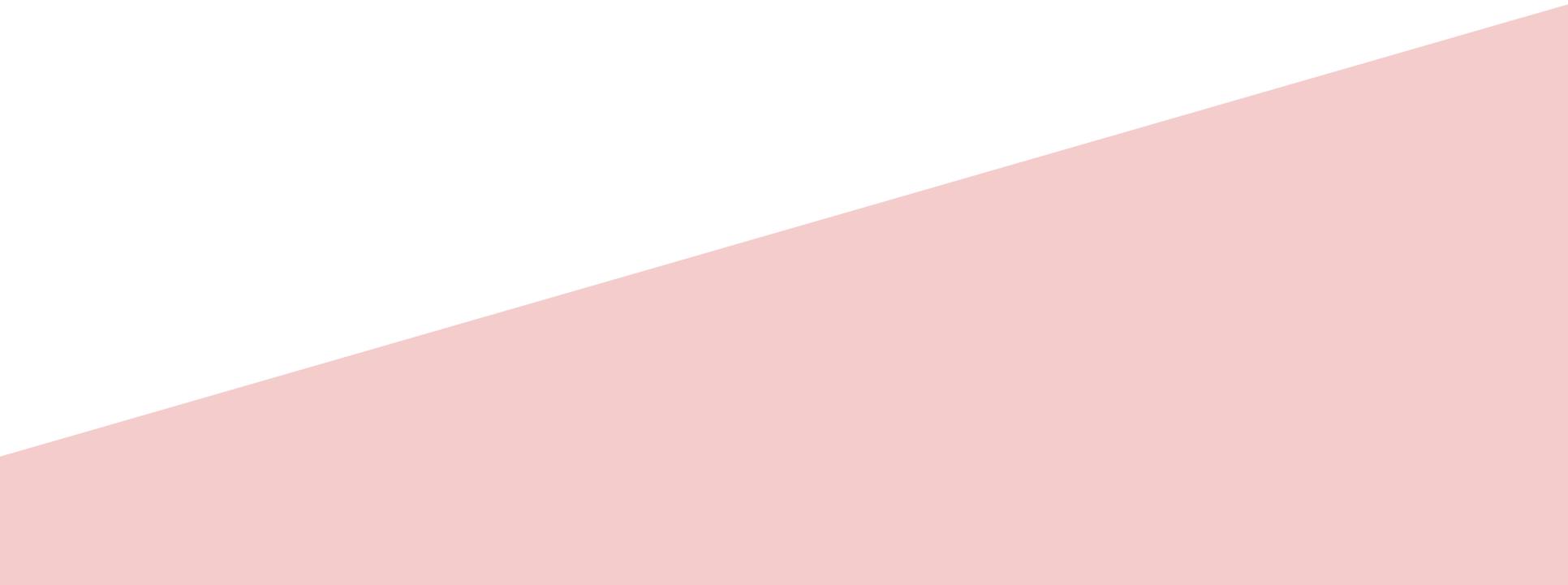


# Purgatory: Canto 19

Ella Stroot



# Summary

The Canto starts at dawn. Dante is is dreaming. “A stammering woman came into [his] dream” (19. 7). She appears unattractive but as Dante continues looking at her she becomes more attractive. She then reveals that she is a Siren. She lures sailors to her with her voice and references Odysseus. “A blessed lady” (19. 27) appears and Dante calls for Virgil. He rips “the curtains off that wench” (19. 31) and Dante awakes. He and Virgil get going to the next terrace, the terrace of avarice. An angel guides them to where they can get to the next terrace. Virgil asks for help with figuring out the way and gets an answer, as Dante looks upon souls “with their faces

to the ground” (19. 72). They make it to the terrace and come upon Adrian V. Dante asks him why they have to lie prostrate. He explains that here is where the sin of avarice is purged, and since these sinners were never concerned with God, just with earthly things, “here justice humbles them to touch the ground” (19. 120). Adrian explains that he was pope for a short period of time but was not focused on the things of God. Dante feels the need to fall on his knees to revere Adrian. Adrian tells him to stand because he is “a fellow servant of one power” (19. 135). He sends them on their way.

\*If while reading you struggle to understand I suggest Mandelbaum’s translation

# Main Characters and Themes of Canto 19

Dante- Dante is clearly still learning. He is still asking questions to Virgil and

The Siren- She is a striking character to Dante and clearly affects him and is thought-provoking.

Virgil- Virgil keeps Dante moving along as the Canto progresses.

Adrian V- He was not focused on good works but rather work that would gain him worldly power. He has learned from his time in Purgatory and knows he is a humble servant of the Lord.

Theme of Assistance and Help- I will ask you more about this in the study questions and when I sum up the ideas.

# Stylistic features of Canto 19

Simile (19. 10-15) - Dante staring at the Siren and her becoming more attractive and gaining her ability to talk is like the sun giving energy to man.

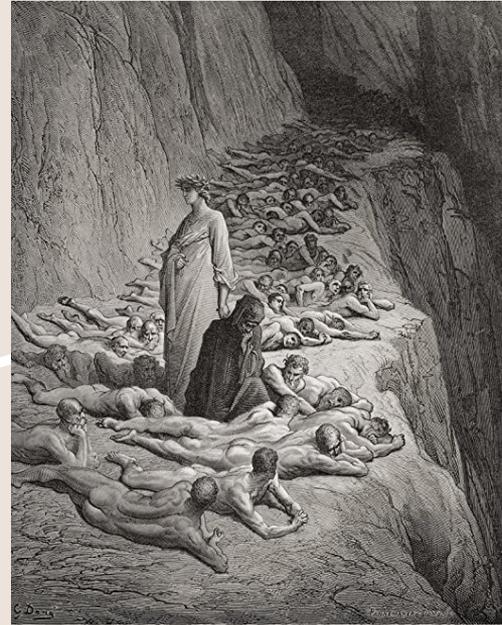
Allusion to Odysseus and the Odyssey- the Siren alludes to Odysseus and how she distracted him with her music. This helps with our understanding, it is familiar.

Allusion to the Bible- helps with our understanding as readers.

# Artwork from Canto 19



The Siren of the Dream by Salvador Dali (left)



Engraving by Gustave Dore (right)

# Study Questions

- 1) What significance does Dante's dream at the beginning of Canto 19 have? Any symbolism?
- 2) Why is Dante looking at the ground?
- 3) How does the theme of help or assistance come across through Canto 19? Why is this important?

Thanks for reading! I hope  
you enjoyed!