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Canto Illustration Rationale

In my illustration, I represented Canto XXV in the literal sense with the figures Dante (left) and Virgil (right) looking over a pit with the scene of two of the Five Noble Thieves of Florence, Agnello, and Cianfa merging into a reptile monster. In my illustration, the lamp that Virgil holds symbolizes God, which is why Virgil is the one to use it to lead Dante to the ultimate goal, the “True Way.” This is similar to the concept of Divine Illumination introduced in Canto I, where the sun’s lighting fills Dante with hope. To connect to the bigger allegory of Dante’s *Inferno*, the drawing shows his ideas on the punishment of thieves. The light is the path to a righteous life, and Agnello and Cianfa are trying hard to reach out for it, but not able to because, just like the things they have stolen, anything good in their future is unreachable. Dante illustrates contrapasso when he describes how “Their former likenesses mottled and sank to something that was both of them and neither...” (XXV, 73-74). The sinners in the *Inferno*, like the two thieves in my drawing, do not own anything themselves in this allegory (not even their body) because they took others’ things and transformed them into their own.

I made the decision to paint this using a digital application because it offers an endless choice of colors and tools to work with; I used a program called Krita. Dante describes the busy scene with the simile, “As lizards at high noon of a hot day dart out from hedge to hedge, from shade to shade, and flash like lightning when they cross the way” (XXV.76-78). This quote is shown in my drawing through the silhouettes of reptiles dashing in and out of the light source.

Dante also describes something happening in the background, “So towards the bowels of the other two, shot a small monster; livid, furious, and black as a pepper corn” (XXV.79-81). From this, I chose the overall mood of the painting—something dark and brownish-red to symbolize what I see as a violent color, and an angry atmosphere. The blue colored light is the opposite of this to symbolize the extreme contrast between God and the sinners. Virgil is depicted as a larger figure because he has more power in Hell, and they both stand above the pit and look down at the sinners to set the two apart. Those that are accepted by God are higher up (like in Heaven) and the sinners are lower in Dante’s Circles of Hell. I chose this Canto because the descriptions of the lizard creature stuck in my head, specifically, Canto XXV line 58, “fused like hot wax” and the next lines where detailed imagery is given for the punishment.

WORK CITED

Alighieri, Dante. *The Inferno*. Translated by John Ciardi, Signet Classic, 2001.