Gina Gerbasio

“Dante’s Journey to Find Balance within Duality in *The Divine Comedy*”

Abstract

Dante Alighieri’s, *The Divine Comedy,* is widely regarded as one of the most influential pieces of poetry in World Literature. Aside from introducing the poetic style of Terza Rima, the trilogy established the importance of changing and expanding language to fit evolving and more complex themes and character development. As the events of the trilogy play out, Dante finds himself facing more difficult challenges and decisions, and the way in which these events are introduced and dealt with define yet another unique feature of Dante’s work that shapes much of the future of writing itself.

Perhaps the most crucial manner of dealing with challenges in the trilogy is the way in which Alighieri chose to present them. He writes from the point of view of himself, the poet, describing a pilgrim who goes by the same name experiencing a journey indicative of the one he, himself, went through: the main difference being that, while Alighieri faced a metaphorical journey, Dante the pilgrim faces a literal journey from the depths of Hell to Purgatory to Paradise. This dual version of Dante, himself, is only the first of many dualities presented in the trilogy.

This paper explores the dualities of Dante’s existence, intellect and emotion, love and sin, and sin and sinner in connection to the way in which they make evident the importance of establishing and maintaining balance between both aspects of each duality to ensure an understanding of one’s identity as a flawed human with the capacity to grow and develop.

This paper concludes that this use of multiple dualities chronologically presents Dante’s metaphorical and literal journey as he rediscovers himself and his connection to God, as well as the overall importance of maintaining duality in all aspects of life.

Literature Cited

Alighieri, Dante. *Inferno.* Translated by Charles S. Singleton, Princeton University Press, 1977.

Alighieri, Dante. *Purgatorio.* Translated by Charles S. Singleton, Princeton University Press, 1973.

Barolini, Teodolinda. “‘Why Did Dante Write the Commedia?’ or the Vision Thing.” *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, no. 111, 1993, pp. 1-8.

Moevs, Christian. “God's Feet and Hands (‘Paradiso’ 4.40-48): Non-Duality and Non-False Errors.” *MLN*, vol. 114, no. 1, 1999, pp. 1–13.

Potter, Joy Hambuechen. “Beatrice, Dead or Alive: Love in the Vita Nuova.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1990, pp. 60–84.

Schildgen, Brenda Deen. “Civitas and Love: Looking Backward from Paradiso Viii.” *Vertical Readings in Dante's Comedy: Volume 1*, edited by George Corbett and Heather Webb, 1st ed., Open Book Publishers, Cambridge, UK, 2015, pp. 161–180.

Took, John. “'S'io M'intuassi, Come Tu T'inmii' (‘Par’., IX. 81): Patterns of Collective Being in Dante.” *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 101, no. 2, 2006, pp. 402–413.