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**Technique as Voyage of Discovery:  
A Study of the Techniques in  
Dante's *Paradiso***

**Raji Narasimhan**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The difficulty of literature is not to write, but to write what you mean; not to affect your reader, but to affect him precisely as you wish . . . The business of life is mainly carried on by means of this difficult art of literature, and according to a man's proficiency in that art shall be the freedom and the fulness of his intercourse with other men (Stevenson).

Life is communicated through literature and the means by which this communication is reached is through the use of techniques. The "proficiency" that Stevenson speaks of is the deft use of technique. Mark Schorer advocates for the importance of techniques in literature:

When we speak of technique, then we speak of nearly everything. For technique is the means by which the writer's experience which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally of evaluating it. (249-250)

Technique is not just an "embellishment" in art, or a device of secondary importance. It is only with the help of techniques that the subject matter taken from life can be presented in the form of art; without techniques the author will certainly not be able to bring out the effect that he wishes to deliver. Technique is:

. . . the uses to which language, as language is put to express the qualities of experience in question; and the uses of point of view not only as a mode of dramatic delimitation, but more particularly, of thematic definition. Technique is really what T.S.Eliot means by 'convention': any selection, structure, or distortion, any form or rhythm imposed upon the

world of action; by means of which it should be added, our apprehension of the world of action is enriched or renewed. (Schorer 252)

Art that lacks adequate techniques may take amoeboid forms of interpretation, far from what the author meant it to be. Schorer points out various novels where the use and neglect of techniques has made or marred the effect of the work respectively. This makes the subject of art depend closely on the manipulation of techniques for the success of the work of art. Schorer points out that:

. . . everything is technique which is not the lump of experience itself and one cannot properly say that a writer has no technique, or that he eschews technique, for, being a writer, he cannot do so. We can speak of good and bad technique, of adequate and inadequate, of technique that serves the novel's purpose or disserves. (251)

Some authors have frowned upon the importance of using techniques to tell a tale, while others have embraced the method. H. G. Wells's attitude toward using techniques was that "Literature is not jewellery" and perfection is not its aim but to present the subject of the work. He believes that by indulging in techniques, an author is "lead away from every natural interest towards a preposterous emptiness of technical effort, a monstrous egotism of artistry".

To Wells, by leaning towards techniques, the writer loses track of the subject matter and "nothing remains but the way it has been manipulated" (Schorer 254). Schorer argues that without the use of techniques, there remains no art but "only social history" (254). Technique, as Schorer claims, "objectifies the materials of art; hence technique evaluates those materials". It is with the use of techniques that many abstract thoughts have been communicated to readers in a tangible form art. It is through techniques that the readers discover art and the "amplification of meaning of which the subject matter is capable".

Dante's *Divine Comedy* is one such work where the ideas of the artist are brought out as the readers discover his conception, through the techniques he has used. If the work of the fourteenth century is still seen to have meaning and inspiration for a milieu far from its origin, the reason for its success lies in the manipulation of techniques by the author. It is through techniques that Dante brings out the "environment" of his time, which comprises the history, or the subject matter, as well as the "bewilderment" of the subjectivity of the author thereby increasing the "effect of each and reveals each in its full significance" as is expected of the true artist (Schorer 265).

Durante degli Alighieri (1265-1321) popularly known as Dante Alighieri was an Italian poet of the Middle ages. Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch were known as "the three fountains", or "the three crowns". Dante was also called "the Supreme Poet" and the "Father of the Italian Language" Dante was among the first writers to write in the vernacular, Tuscan dialect rather than the predominantly used Latin.

Dante's chief work of immense popularity is *The Divine Comedy* (1472). The others include the *Convivio* (1490) "The Banquet", a collection of his longest poems with an (unfinished) allegorical commentary, *Monarchia* (1522) which was condemned and burned after Dante's death by the Papal Diplomat and Cardinal Bertrando del Poggetto and which serves as a monumental political philosophy treatise describing a monarchical global political organization and its relationship to the Roman Catholic Church; *De vulgari eloquentia* (1529) "On the Eloquence of Vernacular", on vernacular literature and, *La Vita Nuova* (1757) "The New Life", the story of his love for Beatrice Portinari, who also served as the ultimate symbol of salvation in the Comedy. *The Vita Nuova* contains many of Dante's love poems in Tuscan. The vernacular had been regularly used for lyric works before and during the thirteenth century. However, Dante's commentary on his own work is also in the vernacular - both in *The Vita Nuova* and in the *Convivio* - instead of the Latin that was almost universally used.

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Dante was involved in the Guelph and Ghibelline conflict of Florence, and fought in the battle of Campaldino, and was involved in the politics of Florence. Shortly after the victory of the Guelphs, they divided into the White Guelphs and the Black Guelphs. Dante was a part of the White Guelphs who did not favour the Papal role in Florence and wanted freedom from Rome, while the Black Guelphs led by Corso Donati supported the Pope. Pope Boniface VIII sent a peacemaker, Charles De Valois, to Florence who was treated badly by the White Guelphs. Therefore the Pope ordered a Military occupation of Florence. A delegation was sent to Rome from Florence to ascertain the intentions of the Pope.

Dante was among the delegates. While he was in Rome, Charles De Valois along with the Black Guelphs destroyed the White Guelphs and their properties. Dante was condemned to exile for two years and levied a heavy fine, which he failed to pay due to the loss of his property. He was threatened to be burned at the stake if he returned without paying his fine. Thus he could not return to his hometown and the anguish it caused him, laid the foundation for his Divine Comedy. The sentence on Dante was not lifted until June 2008.

Dante's love interest, Beatrice Portinari, invoked in him the poetry at an early age of nine when he first met her. Although he exchanged greetings with her, he hardly knew the person he had fallen so strongly in love with. When Dante was twelve, he was promised in marriage to Gemma di Manetto Donati and the agreement was signed before a notary. This was a common practice of arranged marriage of his time and Dante did not get the opportunity of spending his life with his beloved Beatrice. Dante's works involve a number of sonnets to Beatrice but none to his wife. Dante's works reveal his interest in Franciscan and Dominican orders, theories of saint Thomas Aquinas, Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* and Cicero's *De amicitia*. His works show his knowledge of the Euclid's geometrics and Ptolemy's Astronomy.

*The Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri was written between 1308 and 1321. It is considered the foundation of Italian literature which follows the journey of Dante the protagonist through three kingdoms; *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, which signifies hell, purgatory and paradise respectively. Although the poem is not a comedy of any sort, it was named so since all works that ended on a happy note were considered comedies. The theme of the poem is in accordance with the catholic faith. *Paradiso* is the third part of Divine Comedy. It is divided into thirty three cantos, with the first being an invocation to Apollo. Beatrice, the love interest of Dante, guides the protagonist through the spheres of Paradiso.

*Paradiso* is a well-structured world, with nine spheres leading to the ultimate abode of God, 'The Empyrean' through which Dante travels with his guide. The first sphere is the sphere of the moon where Dante meets the spirits who have broken vows in their lifetime. Their vice is "Faithfulness marred by inconsistency". Dante meets Piccarda Donati and Empress Constance. The second sphere is the sphere of Mercury where Dante meets Justian. Spirits, whose ambition caused them to fall behind in service; "service marred by ambition", inhabits the second sphere.

The third heaven is the sphere of Venus, which consists of spirits who were lovers on earth and theirs was a "love marred by wantonness". Here Dante meets Cunizza, Folco and Charles Martel who was once the king of France. The fourth sphere is the sphere of the Sun, which is a symbol of wisdom and houses theologians. Dante meets Thomas of Aquinas and they discuss about the Franciscan orders. St. Bonaventure speaks to Dante about the Dominican order. They also meet Dionysius and King Solomon.

The fifth sphere is the sphere of Mars, which houses spirits who have fought for God's cause. They are courageous men and warriors. Here Dante meets his ancestor Cacciaguida who reveals a hard future for Dante so he can prepare himself for it. The next sphere is the sphere of Jupiter

where the 'Just' souls exist. The seventh sphere is the sphere of Saturn. Dante meets St. Peter Damian and St. Benedict who speak about the corruption of the church by the Popes and the greed of the clerics.

They rise to the Eighth heaven on the golden ladder, which is known as the sphere of the fixed stars. Here Dante has the rare opportunity of meeting Christ and Mary in their entire splendor. He then meets St. Peter, St. James and St. John who quiz Dante on Faith, Hope and Love respectively. Dante meets Adam and asks him four questions to which Adam gives the answers. The Ninth heaven or the Primum mobile is described as the fastest of all spheres and as the place where time began. The tenth sphere of Heaven is the Empyrean. Here Dante speaks of the Celestial Rose that he sees. St. Bernard replaces his guide as Beatrice returns to the Rose. Dante describes the brilliance around Mary in the Celestial Rose, calling it the oriflamme. The final canto reveals the sight of God to the readers as three circles of light, Dante's memory flickers against the brilliance of the mere memory and burns out, leaving the readers with suspense without the privilege of the final understanding of God. The work transcends language barriers. The elevated thought and poetry that originated in the author shines through even in its translation.

On reading the *Paradiso*, one cannot but marvel at the heights of the author's imagination and the profound effect it has on the readers' mind. Thus if the readers can 'willingly suspend disbelief' and follow Dante in his adventure into the cosmos and remain with him for thirty three cantos of labyrinth fabrication, with nothing less than total rapture; then it is due to the ingenious manipulation of technique that brings about a tangible idea of the author's thoughts.

The following chapter entitled "Technique as Discovery" analyses the techniques used by Dante in *Paradiso* such as allegory, narrative view point, allusions, dialogues, question and answers, figurative language, flashbacks, imagery, use of light and music, use of science, use of telepathy,

songs and symbols with examples from the poem, to establish how these techniques serve to blur the line between where the abstract ends and the tangible begins, for the readers, in their discovery of *Paradiso*.

## CHAPTER II

### TECHNIQUE AS DISCOVERY

*The Divine Comedy* has been a piece of immortal literature from which scholars continue to take inspiration. The monumental success of the work lies not only in the imaginative genius of the author but also in the various techniques that he employs to assist in his story telling. Each of these techniques acts in different ways towards the same purpose of discovering an effective story as the reader travels through the poem.

Dante describes a sublime world, giving his brainchild specific rules with the guidance of theology and science, which its inhabitants adhere to. To describe the illusion such as this, Dante uses various techniques, acquiring the aid of mythological historical and biblical allusions, which are familiar to the readers. The techniques employed in *Paradiso* include allegory, figurative language, songs, use of light and music, use of telepathy, dialogues, narrative types, flashback, conversations, question and answers, monologues, use of science and symbols.



Allegory is a prominent technique in *Paradiso* through which Dante presents his dogmatic ideas. Although Dante traverses the heavens with Beatrice as his guide, *Paradiso* is more than a documentation of cosmic travelers. It is an allegory depicting the lives of men as they progress from ignorance to knowledge - a story of human redemption. Sinclair sees the motive behind the work as “a part of the medieval attempt to comprehend in one view the divine purpose in creation and in the actual course of world-events.” (Sinclair 115). The poem is more than a tale following the phantasmagorical journey of a man; it endeavors to capsule the incessant search for the meaning and the objective of life. Beatrice is the metaphorical representation of the conscience that guides man, in his journey of life. She is, according to Dante, the personification of love. The author chooses Beatrice as the protagonist’s guide in *Paradiso*, rather than Virgil who has lead him in the previous worlds of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Love is given great emphasis in *Paradiso*. As an allegory *Paradiso* shows the journey of man into a higher plateau of thought with the guidance of love. Sinclair sees the repeated reference to the increasing beauty of Beatrice as an allegorical device. This beauty of Beatrice is a representation of the ‘poets version of justification by faith’ (Sinclair 128).

Dialogues are frequently used throughout the poem. *Paradiso* may be considered a verbal drama. The events of the journey unfold as Beatrice and Dante converse with each other or with the residents of each of the sphere that they cross. The dialogues in the poem hints at the personality of each of the characters they meet. Most aspects of *Paradiso* are rationed out through dialogues rather than revealed all at once with a narrative. This gives the reader a sense of mystery and anticipation of what to expect at the end of *Paradiso*.

As Dante is new to the celestial kingdom, he is unable to wrap his brain around the magnitude of the mission. He still looks with the eyes of the mortal, unable to comprehend the ways of the divine. Beatrice Urges Dante to learn about paradise from the souls of each sphere. In Canto

III Beatrice tells Dante in a dialogue, to learn about the inhabitants in the sphere of the moon, from Language in India [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com)

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Piccarda: "Therefore speak with them, listen and believe; / For the true light, which giveth peace to them, / Permits them not to turn from it their feet." (HWL Canto III 31-33).

In Canto VIII Dante has a conversation with the Inhabitants of Venus: Cunnizza, Folco and Rahab. They speak of the greed of the Popes and the corruption of the church. It also reveals the opinions of the author who wishes to pour out the burden of his heart to the readers in his allegory. Dante meets Thomas of Aquinas in the sphere of the sun in canto XI where a lengthy dialogue begins. Aquinas, who is a Dominican himself, praises the Franciscan order saying that in praising one he praises them both. He refers to St. Dominic and St. Francis as the princes of the church who are chosen to help God.

Beatrice speaks to the spirits in the sphere of the Sun requesting them to reveal to Dante about the nature of light and the attire of light that is worn as clothing. In any instance where Dante fails to think of things that he may have doubts about later, Beatrice steps in to voice her request so that Dante may gather all the information he needs for his poem.

Cacciaguida, Dante's ancestor approaches him in the sphere of Mars, Although he can read Dante's thoughts, he wishes to hear him speak and Beatrice grants permission. Dante asks the spirit who he is and Cacciaguida reveals to Dante the prosperity of Florence a long time ago when it rivaled that of Rome. Cacciaguida gives his opinion on inter-racial mixing, extended boundaries of Florence, the corruption of the clergymen and so on. Dante's love for Florence is seen in the words of his characters. A whole canto is dedicated to the words of Cacciaguida. The author uses his creation to give vent to his feelings. This is clearly denoted when Cacciaguida is questioned about the protagonist's destiny and the exile of Dante and the loneliness he will face is revealed.

In canto XXVII St. Peter speaks to Dante and reveals his feelings about the corruption of Popes. St. Peter changes colour and begins to glow red as he says:

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He who usurps upon the earth my place,  
  
My place, my place, which vacant has become  
  
Before the presence of the Son of God,  
  
Has of my cemetery made a sewer  
  
Of blood and stench, whereby the Perverse One,  
  
Who fell from here, below there is appeased!"

(HWL Canto XXVII 22-27).

St. Peter acknowledges the good work of Popes such as Linus, Cletus, Sixtus, Pius, Urban, and Calixtus. He directs his words towards the corrupt Popes who try to usurp his place saying: "In garb of shepherds the rapacious wolves / Are seen from here above o'er all the pastures! / O wrath of God, why dost thou slumber still?"(HWL Canto XXVII 55-57). Peter goes on to give the responsibility of exposing the corrupt priests to Dante, through his poetry. Pope Boniface is referred to in the following lines uttered by St. Peter: "Our purpose was not, that on the right hand / Of our successors should in part be seated / The Christian folk, in part upon the other;" (HWL Canto XXVII 46-48).

Sinclair explains that "Pope Boniface kept the Guelfs 'on the right hand' and the Ghibellines 'on the left'"(Sinclair 396), thus the author's anguish in the words of St. Peter, is directed against the Popes who have not done justice to their office. E. G. Parodi remarks that in ". . . the unlooked-for vision of the infernal abyss where lie, head downwards and licked by the red flame, Boniface and Clement; but not one word of surviving hope escapes from the lips of the stern and disdainful

Poet” (Sinclair 443). So great is Dante’s contempt for these popes who were his contemporaries.

None of these popes are named in *Paradiso*.

Canto XXIX witnesses the views of Beatrice who until now has urged Dante to learn from the spirits in every sphere and stood silently by, except for the occasional interaction. Beatrice speaks of creation and the order of Angels. She also launches a diatribe against philosophers and preachers, who chase fame rather than knowledge and in doing so, sow great harm:

You below do not follow a single path in your philosophizing, so much does the love of show and the thought of it carry you away, and even this is borne with less anger up here than when the divine Scripture is neglected or perverted. There is no thought among you what blood it costs to sow the world with it or how acceptable he is who approaches it with humbleness. (Sinclair 421)

The canto clearly shows the contrast between the order and purity of Paradise against the hypocrisy and disorder of the protagonist’s world. Dante’s final words to Beatrice are packed with powerful emotions that elucidate the love he bore for her. In Canto XXXI as he gazes at his Beatrice, he says: “O Lady in whom my hope has its strength and who didst bear for my salvation to leave thy footprints in Hell . . . It is thou who hast drawn me from bondage into liberty . . .” (Sinclair 451). Sinclair asserts that Dante has fulfilled his promise to Beatrice: “I hope to say of her that which was never said of any woman” (Sinclair 458).

The narrative technique employed by Dante in the poem includes the first person, second person as well as the third person (Mathiapparanam *et al.*75). The voice of the protagonist is recognized in the first person, subjective narration and the presence of the author is felt in the third person, omniscient narration. The poem also has second person narration when the poet directly

addresses the readers. The protagonist sings of his privilege to tour the heavens, Dante the protagonist says:

O power divine, lend'st thou thyself to me  
So that the shadow of the blessed realm  
Stamped in my brain I can make manifest,  
Thou'lt see me come unto thy darling tree,  
And crown myself thereafter with those leaves  
Of which the theme and thou shall make me worthy.

(HWL Canto I 22-27)

Dante the author begins by invoking the blessings of Apollo to guide him in his last mission, which is the final book of *The Divine Comedy*. "O good Apollo, for this last emprise / Make of me such a vessel of thy power / As giving the beloved laurel asks!" (HWL Canto I 13-15). The very same lines also serve to act as the prayer of the protagonist who invokes the blessings of Apollo to strengthen his memory, so that he may reproduce as near as possible, the sights that meet him in heaven.

The poem, as the narrative of the protagonist has only a limited view. Rather than discuss only the philosophical aspects of virtue, Dante takes the readers on a journey with events unfolding as he moves from sphere to sphere. The first person narrative adds to the realistic portrayal of the poem. The exposition is through the dialogues and thoughts of the protagonist. The author chooses 'in cluing' rather than 'info dumping' to acquaint his readers with the rules and regulations that exist in Paradise. As the protagonist discovers his surrounding, he reveals them to his readers; this is a constant reminder that it is through the eyes of the narrator that the reader witnesses heaven.

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The second Canto witnesses the second person narrative; the direct address of the poet to the readers:

O Ye, who in some pretty little boat,  
Eager to listen, have been following  
Behind my ship, that singing sails along,  
Turn back to look again upon your shores;  
Do not put out to sea, lest peradventure,  
In losing me, you might yourselves be lost.  
The sea I sail has never yet been passed;  
Minerva breathes, and pilots me Apollo,  
And Muses nine point out to me the Bears.  
Ye other few who have the neck uplifted  
Betimes to th' bread of Angels upon which  
One liveth here and grows not sated by it,  
Well may you launch upon the deep salt-sea  
Your vessel, keeping still my wake before you  
Upon the water that grows smooth again. (HWL Canto II 1-15).

An interesting feature of the narrative arises as the reader progresses into the poem. The protagonist shares the name of the author, Dante the 'author' blurs the fine line between reality and illusion as he presents the realistic narrative of Dante the 'protagonist', who has traversed the worlds where no man can go in his lifetime and has the rare opportunity of revealing his tale.

The name sharing of both the author and the narrator/protagonist does not allow the readers to clearly distinguish between the voice of the author and that of the protagonist. The similarities between author and Hero do not stop with the name but delve deeper to reveal to the reader that Dante has dared to make himself the protagonist of his phenomenal poem. This serves to bring reality into the realms of illusion. "With the exception of Milton no poet of stature in the history of western letters has had such firm and all but truculent faith in his own vision; and even Milton stopped short of making himself the hero of his epic."(Bergin 706-707).

The poem is predominantly in the form of conversation where history and philosophy are revealed with few instances of action that arise during the course of the narrative. The action is limited to the entrance and exit of characters, or a dance in praise of God. Sinclair maintains that the "Paradiso is largely dogmatic with a constant urge to become visionary and lyrical" But he finds a different approach in the rest of *The Divine Comedy*, noting that "The Inferno is realistic and dramatic and The Purgatorio human and Sacramental"(27). The didactic nature of the poem is realized in the following lines of Canto XI:

O Thou insensate care of mortal men,  
How inconclusive are the syllogisms  
That make thee beat thy wings in downward flight!  
One after laws and one to aphorisms  
Was going, and one following the priesthood,  
And one to reign by force or sophistry,  
And one in theft, and one in state affairs,  
One in the pleasures of the flesh involved

Wearied himself, one gave himself to ease;  
When I, from all these things emancipate,  
With Beatrice above there in the Heavens  
With such exceeding glory was received! (HWL Canto XI 1-12)

Sinclair points out the ideology of Dante as the above lines echo his thoughts from the *Convito* "He should not be called a true philosopher who is the friend of wisdom for gain, as are lawyers, physicians and almost all in the religious orders, who do not study for the sake of knowledge but for the gains of money and dignities." (Sinclair 171). This also helps to set the standard in paradise, thereby aiding in the order of hierarchy.

Some dialogues assume the form of a narrative as seen in Canto XI. The whole Canto consists of Thomas Aquinas's speech where he narrates the story of St. Francis of Assisi from birth until his death. Clearly Dante was influenced by Aquinas's teachings as Aquinas is portrayed as an authority on knowledge. Sinclair writes about the extent of Dante's interest in Aquinas: ". . . [Dante] would be eager to gather reminiscences of 'the Ox of Knowledge' who, in his books, was Dante's greatest teacher and had in Dante his greatest pupil." (Sinclair 173). Similarly St. Bonaventure speaks to Dante about the Dominican order. He was of the Franciscan order and speaks the praise of St. Dominic. Canto XVIII witnesses a direct attack on Pope John XXII telling him of his damnation for trying to twist the words of St. Peter and St. Paul.

In Canto XXXI St. Bernard replaces Beatrice and Dante narrates that incident to his readers with the same suspense that caught him. The first person narrative emerges as Dante recounts the incident:

And round I turned me with rekindled wish



My Lady to interrogate of things

Concerning which my mind was in suspense.

One thing I meant, another answered me;

I thought I should see Beatrice, and saw

An Old Man habited like the glorious people.

O'erflowing was he in his eyes and cheeks

With joy benign, in attitude of pity

As to a tender father is becoming.

And "She, where is she?" instantly I said;

Whence he: "To put an end to thy desire,

Beatrice hath sent from mine own place. (HWL Canto XXXI 55-66)

Sinclair calls the technique used by Dante to depict the parting of Beatrice as a "passage of singular imaginative conviction, an outstanding instance of restraint and dramatic intensity of which Dante is the master". (Sinclair 457) The poem ends with the protagonist narrating the final sight to the readers. Having obtained permission from Mary to view the ultimate source of light, Dante witnesses the sight of the "Eternal Light" and "Infinite Goodness". The poet says that all memory deserts him in the presence of the light that surpasses description. Dante confesses that he has no words to communicate the feelings that consumed him. This coming from a supreme poet who knows the power of words, leaves to the imagination of the readers what no imagination can attain.

The poet uses hierarchy as a technique to show the increasing intensity of grace and goodness as the poem progresses. The poem is well classified into spheres into which the travelers ascend. Each sphere is set higher than the other with the higher spheres being closer to God. The hierarchy is seen with the “angels and redeemed souls” being on the higher spheres while the lower spheres house the spirits who are yet to measure up to the expectations of Paradise.

Dante calls it the ‘heavenly rank’ that each of the inhabitants bear, and they bear it gladly. As Dante questions Piccarda Donati in Canto III “But tell me, ye who in this place are happy, / Are you desirous of a higher place, / To see more or to make yourselves more friends?” (HWLCanto III 64-66). Piccarda’s response to Dante reveals the hierarchical structure of Paradiso to the readers:

"Brother, our will is quieted by virtue  
Of charity, that makes us wish alone  
For what we have, nor gives us thirst for more.  
If to be more exalted we aspired,  
Discordant would our aspirations be  
Unto the will of Him who here secludes us;  
Which thou shalt see finds no place in these circles,  
If being in charity is needful here,  
And if thou lookest well into its nature;  
Nay, 'tis essential to this blest existence  
To keep itself within the will divine,  
Whereby our very wishes are made one;

So that, as we are station above station

Throughout this realm, to all the realm 'tis pleasing,

As to the King, who makes his will our will.

And his will is our peace; this is the sea

To which is moving onward whatsoever

It doth create, and all that nature makes." (HWL Canto III 70-87)

This rank is subject to virtue. The first sphere of the moon houses the spirits who failed in their vows; the inhabitants of the second sphere of Mars overvalued fame and sought too much praise in men; the third sphere, sphere of Venus is inhabited by spirits who indulged in love which was a kind of madness: each sphere is thus defined. This segregation of spirits into sphere allows the poet to address each soul with regard to their righteousness.

Although they appear to be sorted according to the intensity of their virtue, Dante reveals that all these spirits are always present in the sphere closest to God. Dante employs this kind of hierarchy not only to achieve a climbing effect but also to bring to the level of human understanding the divine ways of heaven. It is, according to the author, beyond human capabilities to understand that all spirits reside in the highest heaven even though they vary in their blessedness. Thus in order to explain this divine phenomenon Dante resorts to the use of hierarchy. The poem gradually mounts in intensity and the use of hierarchy gives the reader a sense of high expectation. Dante heightens the curiosity of the reader with every sphere as they follow him with bated breath.

Dante's use of allusions helps to bring a sense of reality to this concoction of genius. The use of these names that bear significance in history, theology, mythology, and science; allows Dante to build upon their position in Heaven and to include their philosophy as an authority to substantiate

his narrative. These characters also serve as mouthpieces to Dante in certain instances to air out his political, religious and ethical ideology. This is seen in his choice of characters, that he chooses to represent his thoughts. Canto XI introduces St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic.

Sinclair points out that Dante highlights the saint's decision to embrace poverty; above all of his other virtues like humility, chastity, patience, love and peace (Sinclair 173). Dante singles out and highlights this particular aspect of the saint to bring out the desired message of corruption in the church by contrasting it with St. Francis and St. Dominic's principles:

But for new pasturage his flock has grown  
So greedy, that it is impossible  
They be not scattered over fields diverse;  
And in proportion as his sheep remote  
And vagabond go farther off from him,  
More void of milk return they to the fold. (HWL Canto XI 124-129)

In Canto VIII, Folco identifies himself as a great lover who presently abides in the sphere of Venus. He claims to have rivalled famous lovers like Dido, Phyllis and Hercules. Another person whom Dante is introduced to is Rahab who has the highest rank in Venus. According to the book of Joshua, Rahab was a prostitute who helped the messengers of Joshua. References to Lucifer are often seen. In Canto VIII Folco speaks of Lucifer as the founder of Florence; and so this has turned the good priests into greedy men. Folco also states that the church no longer follows the word of God but follows its own rules.

In Canto X the author alludes to history and introduces Albert of Cologne, a student of St. Dominic; Gratian, the twelfth century lawyer from Bologna; Peter Lombard, a theologian. He also

introduces King Solomon who is famous for his songs in the Bible. Many other allusions are seen in the tenth Canto, which include Dionysius, Venerable the Bede, Boethius and others.

Beatrice introduces Dante to many other spirits who walk on the bars of the cross so that his poem, *The Divine Comedy*, may be enriched with famous personalities. Joshua, Maccabeus, Charlemagnand some other warriors are revealed to Dante. In the sphere of Jupiter, Dante meets King David, the author of Psalms; Trajan, Hezekiel and Ripheas, a Trojan warrior in the *Aeneid*. Through the people Dante meets in Jupiter he learns that man cannot understand the mysterious ways of god, so he should not waste time trying to do that. On entering the Empyrean, Dante meets all the spirits who appeared to him in the different spheres of heaven. Here Dante sees Mary, Adam and Eve, the angel Gabriel, Beatrice, Sarah, Rachel, Rebecca, Judith and many other personalities of the Bible. St. Bernard replaces Beatrice in the Empyrean. Sinclair documents close to a thousand references in *The Divine Comedy*.

Imagery is another one of Dante's techniques. Sinclair, In the preface to *Paradiso* writes about the imagery of Dante: "all the imagery of the poem has its value, not merely or chiefly in its ingenuity nor even in its incidental beauty but in its consistent and sustained relevancy to the spiritual interest concerned . . . [they] not only illustrate they confirm and clinch his meaning." (7). One of the greatest imagery in literature can be found in Canto XI where Thomas of Aquinas narrates the story of Francis of Assisi. Dante's words describe the incident by raising language to its zenith:

Then day by day more fervently he loved her.

She, reft of her first husband, scorned, obscure,

One thousand and one hundred years and more,

Waited without a suitor till he came.

Naught it availed to hear, that with Amyclas

Found her unmoved at sounding of his voice

He who struck terror into all the world;

Naught it availed being constant and undaunted,

So that, when Mary still remained below,

She mounted up with Christ upon the cross.

But that too darkly I may not proceed,

Francis and Poverty for these two lovers

Take thou henceforward in my speech diffuse. (HWL Canto XI 63-75)

Dante depicts St. Francis's wish to embrace poverty with a metaphor, which personifies poverty, as a widow whom St. Francis married. Dante extends the metaphor saying that the lady St. Francis chose was the wife of Christ. She was so loyal to him that when everyone else stood below, she alone climbed onto the cross to be with her lord. In the sphere of the sun the dance of the Franciscan and Dominican souls are describes as two waltzing circles each echoing the other. It also gives the appearance of two rainbows, which bring to mind the promise of God to Noah, as the ring of angels sing:

And in its gyre had not turned wholly round,

Before another in a ring enclosed it,

And motion joined to motion, song to song;

Song that as greatly doth transcend our Muses,

Our Sirens, in those dulcet clarions,

As primal splendour that which is reflected.

And as are spanned athwart a tender cloud

Two rainbows parallel and like in colour,

(HWL Canto XII 4-11)

When Dante lands on the Red planet, he sees two rays of light that form a cross on which the saints are seen to walk (Canto XVIII). As Dante nears Jupiter, the saints there are all artists and they form letter in the air with their radiant bodies. DILIGITE IUSTITIAM, QUI IUDICATIS TERRAM. This translates as: Love Justice You who judge the earth. Dante prays to remember these words. The saints soon form the shape of an eagle, which is the emblem of Rome and is symbolic of justice. As the ascent to the sphere of Saturn begins, Dante sees the reflection of the sphere in Beatrice's eyes. The picture of a golden ladder whose height Dante cannot see, shines through Beatrice's eyes and the spirits are seen to walk back and forth on the ladder.

As they enter the sphere of the Fixed Stars, Dante describes a burning sun that is Jesus and a meadow that grows in the warmth of this sun. This imagery used is symbolic of the saints who are present in the sphere in the presence of the Son of God. Mary is the Rose that blooms in the garden. She is also described as a living star. According to C. H. Grandgent "The old French *Roman de la Rose*, the great literary success of the 13<sup>th</sup> century made all western Europe familiar with the rose as a symbol of earthy love; Dante's white flower is the rose of heavenly love" (Sinclair 443). On entering the Empyrean, Dante sees a river of light flowing between two banks. Dante describes the sight to his readers:

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Technique as Voyage of Discovery: A Study of the Techniques in Dante's *Paradiso*

And light I saw in fashion of a river  
Fulvid with its effulgence, 'twixt two banks  
Depicted with an admirable Spring.  
Out of this river issued living sparks,  
And on all sides sank down into the flowers,  
Like unto rubies that are set in gold;  
And then, as if inebriate with the odours,  
They plunged again into the wondrous torrent  
And as one entered issued forth another. (HWL Canto XXX 61-69).

The imagery continues as Beatrice urges Dante to slake his thirst in the river of light and the river transforms around him and he is in the centre of the heavens. His next observation extends the imagery showing a Dome that reflects the images around him and Dante fixes his gaze at the single source of light. The imagery that captures this moment in literature is awesome and breathtaking as it elevates the imagination of the readers, transporting them to the sublime location:

Thus into greater pomp were changed for me  
The flowerets and the sparks, so that I saw  
Both of the Courts of Heaven made manifest.  
O splendour of God! by means of which I saw  
The lofty triumph of the realm veracious,



Give me the power to say how it I saw!

There is a light above, which visible

Makes the Creator unto every creature,

Who only in beholding Him has peace,

And it expands itself in circular form

To such extent, that its circumference

Would be too large a girdle for the sun. (HWL Canto XXX 94-105)

Sinclair makes a note on the imagery technique of Canto XXX saying “Approaching the end of his hard theme and entering the Empyrean, Dante is made conscious of the inevitable gradualness of revelation, and by the successive stages of his imagery he strives to set the ultimate realities of the spirit from all lesser experience.” (441) The rise to the Empyrean is described with the imagery of a sunrise “Surpassing with its light all the rest of the rim” (445). The gradual conquering of the darkness by the sun draws out Dante’s entrance into the highest heaven. The light that shines forth is compared to an oriflamme. The angels are seen to move back and forth without obscuring any light thus casting no shadows. Sinclair claims “Dante suggests by sensible imagery the condition of a super-sensible world” (455).

Light is a recurring device, which substantiates the purity and intense blessedness of the spheres. The emotions of the souls are rendered to Dante by their intensity of Light. Heaven has a single source of light, which is God. This single source of light is reflected in each of the spheres and by each of its inhabitants. When a soul wishes to speak to Dante, it is the intensity of its light that communicates to the protagonist. The light of each planet is described in a different way. Each

sphere reflects the single source of light in a unique manner. As Dante lands on the sphere of the moon, the light that greets him is compared to the reflection of pearl. The misty light that surrounds the moon as we see it from earth is beautifully described. Dante tells Piccarda that he was unable to recognise her owing to her brightness. Light plays an important role all through *Paradiso*, distinguishing one sphere from another or pointing out familiar souls to Dante.

As Dante ascends to Venus in Canto VIII he sees a group of dancing lights. These are the souls dancing in unison. Some of the sparks seem to break away and head towards him. They are souls who wish to speak with him. When Cunizza wishes to speak to Dante, she glows brightly and she speaks of the land referring to it as the place where a firebrand descended. She speaks of the powers that govern Venus as Thrones, which shine down on Venus. The planet, which houses lovers, is governed by light. By the time Dante enters the sphere of the sun, Dante seems to be illuminated by light. In Canto X, Thomas of Aquinas reveals to the readers that Dante shines with the light of God. Later in Canto XIII King Solomon speaks to Dante about how the brilliance of light is measured according to their love for God. For now they wear this robe of light but when they are reunited with their body on Judgment Day then their eyes will be made stronger to behold the brilliance of the light.

Dante as a mortal is able to view the light only because he has been given permission to enter into heaven. Any other mortal will be blinded by the intensity of their brilliance. As the travelers go higher up the spheres the intensity of light increases adding to the beauty of the sphere.

Dante describes Beatrice in every sphere, as her beauty seems to increase as they continue their climb. In Canto XXIII Dante describes the brilliance of his guide as she smiles at him and the difficult task he faces in having to express it to accuracy:

“Though all those tongues which Polyhymnia and her sisters have nourished with their sweetest milk should sound now to aid me, it would not come to a thousandth part of the truth, in singing the holy smile and how it lit up the holy aspect; and so, picturing Paradise, the sacred poem must take a leap like one that finds his path cut off. But he that considers the weighty theme and the mortal shoulders that is burdened with it will not blame it if it tremble beneath the load.” (Sinclair 333).

In Canto XVIII Dante’s destiny of exile is revealed to him, but when he looks at Beatrice the brilliance he sees in her eyes comforts him and he is awestruck at her radiance. Sinclair states the importance of light in *Paradiso* in the following words:

The divine created power operating through the angels and the stars is repeatedly spoken of, here [Canto XIII] and elsewhere as light. ‘Light, according to Dante’s conception, belongs intimately to divine things and is inherent in them; it is, so to speak, the outward nature of divinity itself; God is light. True light belongs to the blessedness of Paradise as the smile to the human happiness;’ (Sinclair 198-199)

In Jupiter Dante describes the eye of the eagle as rubies glowing with red light. The glowing saints form the eagle, which speaks to Dante with one voice. The voice of the eagle falls silent and changes into soft murmuring, which gradually builds into a crescendo and finally spills with a powerful thundering sound. Dante says he will always remember the sound. Jupiter is still brighter. The brightness that cannot be conjured by the human imagination is conveyed through Beatrice’s refusal to smile, since she reasons that Dante will be blinded by the brilliance of it. Dante’s human eyes cannot withstand the brilliance of the light in the sphere of Jupiter. The author works around the problem by having the protagonist look at the sphere through the reflection in Beatrice’s eyes. In the

sphere of the fixed stars, Dante is allowed a look at Christ and his brilliance. It is only after this that Beatrice dares to smile, knowing fully well that the radiance of her smile will not hurt her ward's eyes. Having glimpsed at the intense light of Christ, Dante's eyes have grown stronger and can bear the intensity of Beatrice's smile.

When Dante meets St. John, he strains to see his face through his light and this is when Dante has gone too far. He is not aware of his limitations and he is blinded. Dante narrates the incident to the readers:

Ah, how much in my mind was I disturbed,

When I turned round to look on Beatrice,

That her I could not see, although I was

Close at her side and in the Happy World!

(HWL Canto XXV 136-139)

St. John assures Dante that it is just a temporary state of blindness saying "Sight is in thee bewildered and not dead;"(HWL Canto XXVI 6) and that Beatrice can restore his sight. This instance remains the only dark spot to Dante throughout his journey through brightening light. Dante's blindness is eventually cured as he gives the correct answers to St. John and he can see clearer with his renewed sight. The author gives his readers the experience of increasing light by the reactions of the protagonist to his environment.

Entering the Empyrean, Dante is taken to a new level of light. The experiences that he enjoys cannot be contained in any language and even Dante is unable to wrap his mind around it. Sinclair compares Dante's language in Canto XXX to that of Psalms thirty-six: "Thou shalt make them drink of

the river of thy pleasure. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light”(441-442), where Dante drinks from the river of Light. In the Empyrean, one of the greatest poets of all time is at a loss for words to describe his vision. In Canto XXXIII Dante confides, “From that moment my vision was greater than our speech, which fails at such a sight, and memory too fails at such excess.”(Sinclair 481). Sinclair praises Dante’s use of light and music as a technique saying “Sound and light have been the main ingredients of his marvelous effects . . . he achieves what no other poet, before or since, has attempted with so much as a shadow of success: the presentation of a world beyond the perceptions of sense” (Sinclair 455).

Music is another technique used by Dante to establish the ambience of the heavens he creates. Music is featured all through Dante’s paradise. Dante mentions the music of the spheres as they begin their ascent. Each sphere has its music. In a dialogue with Dante, Justin confirms this by saying that he is happy to be among the “differing voices” that “render sweet harmony among these spheres”. The music increases in intensity with every sphere just as light. In the sphere of Saturn there is complete silence that provokes Dante to question a spirit about it. The answer he receives is that if Dante was exposed to the intensity of music in that sphere he will go deaf; so great is its strength of music. Dante uses even silence to portray the intensity of sound. When the spirits shout their agreement with Peter Damian in unison it is too much for Dante to take and he faints. Canto XXIV introduces St. Peter who enters singing and dancing and Dante is mesmerized. The singing continues with the entrance of St. James and St. John. The instance of Beatrice’s departure is expressed with silence rather than music, which is the regular cue for any spirit that takes leave of Dante. The author employs silence rather than music to show the surprise and bewilderment of the protagonist at the absence of his guide in Canto XXXI. In the words of Sinclair: “As much is told by silence as by speech” (457).

The technique of questions and answers is repeatedly used to reveal the nature of *Paradiso* and to move the plot of the poem. Dialogues often take place in the form of question and answers. The questions pose as signposts for the reader to take note of the information furnished as answers. The interrogations extend to all spheres except the final. These dialogues are used by Dante to reveal the nature of the new world. Beatrice regards some of Dante's questions as childish ones. "Marvel thou not," she said to me, "because / I smile at this thy puerile conceit, / Since on the truth it trusts not yet its foot"(HWL Canto III 25-27). Although Dante employs this technique, in the sphere of Saturn, a spirit who is eager to speak with Dante advises him to stop asking 'why?' since there are some things that the human mind cannot perceive but has to take on Faith. The metaphysical nature of the poem is revealed through the theological arguments by the poet. In canto IV a series of questions and answers between Dante and Beatrice brings out a captivating argument about the nature of vows. Dante's meeting with Piccarda Donati and her story about her broken vow to the order of St. Clare since she was forcibly taken away from the convent spurs the questions of Dante. Beatrice explains that free will is God's gift to man and when Piccarda entered the Convent she willingly gave up her free will. Thus she was bound by the rules of her convent. In breaking her vow, although she was forced to do it, she has sinned. The only way to correct this mistake is to change the rules by which the new bond has a value exceeding that of the original vow. In this way a soul may gain redemption from its sin of breaking a sacred vow.

When Dante meets Justian in the sphere of Mercury in Canto VI, he asks the soul who he is. The answer is not just the identity of the soul as Justian, but is accompanied with a brief history of Rome beginning from the death of Pallas, through the seven monarchs, Rome as a republic, about Caesar and his murder, right up to the time of the crucifixion of Christ, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and the restoration of Christianity in Rome. The readers are given a short lesson on the details concerning the history of Rome to better understand the anguish of Justian as he calls the

Ghibellines hypocrites. Dante, as a white Guelph opposed the rule of the Pope openly. Dante uses the answers of Justian to strengthen his argument against the Ghibellines. Justian throws light on the souls who reside in this sphere: they were motivated by fame. Justian mentions that such motivation is to love wrongly.

The question and answers not only reveal the methodical arrangement of the souls of Heaven, it is also a tool for Dante to express his views through his characters. Some of the greatest philosophy of Dante has been given in the form of questions and answers. In Canto VII Dante questions Beatrice about God's wrath against the Jews for crucifying his son. Dante's doubt lies in the argument that if God ordained it to be that way, why would he be angry with the men who followed his will. The author uses the esteemed voice of Beatrice to reveal his beliefs and ideals: that the nature of Christ as half human and half God, therein pure yet with the human form, which is the embodiment of original sin. Thus she justifies that God was glad that man found a way to redeem himself, yet he was enraged at the joy of the Jews who reveled in the death of Christ. Dante has not exhausted his questions yet. He still wonders why the nature of Man's redemption had to be exactly that way. Beatrice's reply is of the nature of Adam sin - Pride, and the only way to redemption was through the mercy of God through his Son. Beatrice also adds that the human mind does not have the capacity to understand the mysterious ways of God. The questions put forth by Dante are those that baffle the mediocre mind. By this technique the author is able to voice out the doubts of his readers through the human form of the protagonist while the divine form of Beatrice supplies the answers.

Dante questions Charles Martel in Canto VIII about why good fathers bear bad sons. This is a repeatedly raised question in literature. Shakespeare raises the same question in 'The Tempest': "good wombs have borne bad sons"(Shakespeare 1.2.120). Charles says that God acts through

providence and it is providence that keeps the universe from chaos. In Canto XIII Dante's doubts are

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voices by St. Thomas of Aquinas about the matchless wisdom of king Solomon. Thomas of Aquinas answers saying that when God told Solomon in a dream that he would answer any question he asked, Solomon asked for ability to tell right from wrong. This accounts for the matchless wisdom of King Solomon. St. Thomas adds that hasty judgement leads to grave consequences. He cites examples like Parmenides and Melissus, the Greek philosophers.

The technique is best put to use in Canto XXIV where Peter questions Dante on Faith. Dante answers by quoting St. Paul "Faith is the substance of the things we hope for / and is the evidence of things not seen." (64-65). The question is still extended to the meaning of substance and evidence. Canto XXV sees St. James questioning Dante on hope and St. John questioning him on love. The question and answer sessions in this sphere are to test Dante. St. James's question to Dante is about hope: "Say what it is, and how is flowering with it / Thy mind, and say from whence it came to thee." / Thus did the second light again continue" (47-48). To which Dante answers to him: "Hope," said I, "is the certain expectation / Of future glory, which is the effect / Of grace divine and merit precedent." (67-69). St. John's first words to Dante are " "Why dost thou daze thyself / To see a thing which here hath no existence? . . ." (122-123) with regard to Dante's efforts to see through the dazzling light that surrounds the saint. He is advised not to try to understand that which is above human understanding.

Dante has the opportunity to meet Adam in Canto XXVI, described as " the first soul / That ever the first virtue did create." (83-84), and is allowed to question him. Dante wishes to ask four questions which are conceived and revealed by Adam to the readers :

Thou fain wouldst hear how long ago God placed me

Within the lofty garden, where this Lady



Unto so long a stairway thee disposed.

And how long to mine eyes it was a pleasure,

And of the great disdain the proper cause,

And the language that I used and that I made. (HWL Canto XXVI 109-114)

Adam gives the answers without hesitation first giving the cause of his exile from Eden, "Now, son of mine, the tasting of the tree / Not in itself was cause of so great exile, / But solely the o'erstepping of the bounds." Dante's questions about how long Adam stayed in Eden and Adam answers how long ago it had been. J. D. Sinclair documents the chronology according to Dante as :

The creation of Adam - 5198 B.C.

Adam's death and descent into Limbo (*Inferno. Iv*) - 4268 B.C.

Christ's death and descent into Hell and deliverance of the Old Testament  
saints - 34A.D.

(Sinclair 380)

Dante is informed about the language spoken at the time of Adam. He also gives the details about his duration of stay in Eden in the following words:

Ere I descended to the infernal anguish,

'El' was on earth the name of the Chief Good,

From whom comes all the joy that wraps me round

'Eli' he then was called, and that is proper,

Because the use of men is like a leaf  
On bough, which goeth and another cometh.  
Upon the mount that highest o'er the wave  
Rises was I, in life or pure or sinful,  
From the first hour to that which is the second,  
As the sun changes quadrant, to the sixth." ( HWL Canto XXVI 133-142)

Sinclair gives the time as "6 a.m. to 1p.m." he adds that "The length of Adam's stay in Eden was variously estimated by medieval theologians." (Sinclair 380). This technique is a very effective tool, as it does not merely furnish information. It first instigates the curiosity of the reader and having acquired his full attention to the doubt, the answer is supplied, this leaves a reader satisfied with the answers.

Songs are another technique that help to bring out the mystical nature of Paradise Most songs in the poem occur when a character or a group of people take leave of Dante. The songs are both in Italian or other heavenly languages, which cannot be recognized by our protagonist. Dante names the familiar songs and describes the sound of the others. The first song in the poem is 'Ave Maria', which is sung by Piccarda Donati and Empress Constance of Sicily. They sing the song as they take leave of Dante and it adds to the magical quality of the setting. The second hymn in Latin appears in Canto VI where Justian takes his leave of Dante. As Dante and Beatrice rise to the third sphere, the sphere of Venus they hear the angelic voices singing the song 'Hosanna'. This signals the arrival of the next sphere:

*"Osanna sanctus Deus Sabaath,*

*Superillustrans claritate tua*

*Felices ignes horum malahoth!"* (HWL Canto VII 1-3)

When Dante reaches the Sphere of the sun in the Canto X, he can hear the angelic voices singing as they dance in praise of God. Their song is compared to the "matins" sent to Christ at dawn. The singing continues when Beatrice requests them to enlighten Dante. They sing about the Trinity:

Then, as a horologe that calleth us

What time the Bride of God is rising up

With matins to her Spouse that he may love her,

Wherein one part the other draws and urges,

Ting! ting! resounding with so sweet a note,

That swells with love the spirit well disposed,

Thus I beheld the glorious wheel move round,

And render voice to voice, in modulation

And sweetness that can not be comprehended,

Excepting there where joy is made eternal. (HWL Canto X 141-148)

Dante mentions the song in the sphere of Mars, which he does not understand. He adds that he may sound too ambitious to try to describe the song, which cannot be understood by the mortals. In the sphere of the fixed stars, the spirits that surround Mary sing "*Regina coeli*" ("Queen of heaven") in

praise of Mary as they leave for the highest heaven. Canto XXIII ends with Dante raising his voice in praise of Peter, the gatekeeper of Heaven. Dante sings a song of praise in Canto XXIV "*Te Deum laudamus*" ("We Praise You, O God"). Peter sings and dances for joy at the end of the canto. In Canto XXVII the three saints Peter, James and John, along with the others break in to a song "*Gloria*" in praise of the Trinity. The song begins as "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!"(1-2). Dante explains the feeling evoked by the song as "the sweet song held me rapt; what I saw seemed to me a smile of the universe, so that my rapture entered both my hearing and my sight." (Sinclair 378).

The use of telepathy is a unique technique in *Paradiso*. Every time a question arises in Dante's mind, Beatrice immediately conceives of this. Beatrice herself supplies the logic behind this telepathic vision. She says that all thought is reflected from God, and in heaven this reflection is free to all its residents. Thus there is no need for verbal communication in heaven. But since Dante is a mortal traversing the skies, the phenomenon is not extended to him. Dante cannot read Beatrice's thoughts. It is a one-way process.

As the duo rise into the first sphere of heaven, the music of the spheres baffles Dante. Even as the question arises in his mind, his guide is aware of his doubt and answers him. The pale faces on the moon are mistake to be reflections by Dante, and he turns to look at the source of the reflection. Beatrice immediately responds to Dante's doubt about the nature of the light in the first and lowest sphere. In Mercury, after a conversation with Justian, Dante still has lingering questions after Justian leaves them. Beatrice, conceiving this, first paraphrases this question for the readers and then goes onto answer it. The sphere of the sun has Thomas Aquinas waiting for Dante. Dante's thoughts are read by Aquinas, and he explains his view of the Franciscan order.

In Saturn where Dante meets St. John, he squints to see through the brilliant light surrounding him. John reads the intentions of Dante's mind and knows that he wants to see his face. John explains to Dante about body and spirit and the union of the two on the judgement day. This also reveals to the readers about the spirits in heaven who are clothed in light rather than their bodies. St. John says:

Earth in the earth my body is, and shall be

With all the others there, until our number

With the eternal proposition tallies.

With the two garments in the blessed cloister

Are the two lights alone that have ascended:

And this shalt thou take back into your world."

(HWL Canto XXV 124-129)

The "two lights alone" is a reference to Jesus and Mary who are the only spirits to wear their body and soul in heaven. All other spirits will be united with their body on judgment day. In the last Canto Dante and St. Bernard appeal to Mary to give them consent to look into the highest heaven, at the abode of God. This is done through a prayer. Mary gives her consent not in words or song. It is her eyes that speak for her. She simply looks at them and her gaze turns to the source of light and the poet understands Mary. The use of symbols is seen in *Paradiso*. The eagle in the sphere of Jupiter is a symbol of Rome and of Justice. The white rose in the Canto XXXI is the symbol of heavenly love. Light is a symbol of purity and goodness and music is the symbol of happiness and joy. The celestial star symbolises Mary and so does the "multifoliate" Rose also called the "Oriflamme".

Figurative language is often used and it is a technique that adds beauty and intensity to the effect the poem has on its readers. Dante resorts to this technique to explain the unexplainable. When Dante is unable to find the words in human language to equate the heavenly sights, it is the similes and metaphors that come to his aid in explaining the exotic and foreign experiences. David Gibbons states “[The] principle of rendering non-literal concepts in physical, concrete language is one of the main reasons for the greater density of metaphor in the *Paradiso*, a feature often noted by critics.” (Gibbons 693). Dante uses figurative language as a technique to explain certain divine phenomenon that has no equation in human term. Sometimes he employs the technique to simply elevate the level of his language. For instance in the first Canto he does not merely describe the sun but calls it the “Lamp of the world”, this enhances the flavour of the poem. Dante addresses his readers calling them his followers on “ a little bark ”. Dante asserts that his poem is a recollection from memory of the wondrous sights that met his eyes during his short tour of paradise. The metaphor of ships and boats refers to the physical body on which the spirit rides the seas of heaven, where the ship is Dante (or his poem) and the boats are the readers. This comparison alone magnifies the original effect felt by the poet against that which is felt by the readers: “ O Ye, who in some pretty little boat, / Eager to listen, have been following / Behind my ship, that singing sails along,” (HWL Canto II 1-3). The words of Beatrice show us how metaphors serve to pull up the level of language to meet the standards of such high thought:

Somewhat she smiled; and then, "If the opinion

Of mortals be erroneous," she said,

"Where'er the key of sense doth not unlock,

Certes, the shafts of wonder should not pierce thee

Now, forasmuch as, following the senses,

Thou seest that the reason has short wings.( HWL Canto II 52-57)

Simply saying that reason and sense cannot comprehend divine wonder does not bring out the elevated effect that Beatrice's language does. The use of these poetical devices does not only give added emphasis to the words but also serves to mesmerize the reader as it informs and entertains. Dante describes the beauty of Beatrice with the help of similes and metaphors. The brilliance of Beatrice is compared to the sun, and having her beside him is compared to having two suns at the same time: "And suddenly it seemed that day to day / Was added, as if He who has the power / Had with another sun the heaven adorned." (HWL Canto I 61-63). Beatrice's eagerness to show Dante the foreign realms is described with the comparison to a bird that longs to feed its brood:

Even as a bird, 'mid the beloved leaves,

Quiet upon the nest of her sweet brood

Throughout the night, that hideth all things from us,

Who, that she may behold their longed-for looks

And find the food wherewith to nourish them,

In which, to her, grave labours grateful are,

Anticipates the time on open spray

And with an ardent longing waits the sun,

Gazing intent as soon as breaks the dawn:

Even thus my Lady standing was, erect

And vigilant, turned round towards the zone

Underneath which the sun displays less haste;

(HWL Canto XXIII 1-12)

The entrance and exits of souls in each sphere are described with the help of similes. Dante places great emphasis on the nature of the entrances in each sphere. They are unique and vary in degrees of light, music and speed. The exits of the characters are usually accompanied with glorious music. Their own entrance into the sphere of the moon is described with comparison. The moon is described "like a diamond that is smitten by the sun; the eternal pearl received us into itself, as water receives a light of ray" (Sinclair 35). In the sphere of the moon, Dante describes the entrance of Piccarda:

Such as through polished and transparent glass,

Or waters crystalline and undisturbed,

But not so deep as that their bed be lost,

Come back again the outlines of our faces

So feeble, that a pearl on forehead white

Comes not less speedily unto our eyes; (HWL Canto III 10-15)

Dante mistakes the appearance of the spirits to be reflections and turns to see the true image when he stands corrected by Beatrice:

As soon as I became aware of them,

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Esteeming them as mirrored semblances,

To see of whom they were, mine eyes I turned,

And nothing saw, and once more turned them forward

Direct into the light of my sweet Guide,

Who smiling kindled in her holy eyes. (HWL Canto III 19-24)

In Canto XVIII Dante unleashes another of his breathtaking similes when he compares the corruption in the churches to the smoke that dims the brilliant rays of God :

“O sweet star, how many and how bright were the gems that made it plain to me that our justice is the effect of our heaven thou dost gem! I pray, therefore, the Mind in which thy motion and thy power begin that it look on the place whence comes the smoke that dims thy beam, so that once again it may be wroth at the buying and selling in the temple whose were built with miracles and martyrdom.” (Sinclair 263).

The unimaginable speed is brought to the understanding of the reader through the magic of comparisons: “And as an arrow that upon the mark / Strikes ere the bowstring quiet hath become, / So did we speed into the second realm.” (HWL Canto V 91-93). The speed is not merely compared to a speeding arrow but the essence is amplified by the ability of the arrow to hit the mark even before the bowstring has stopped vibrating. The comparison tests the limits of the imagination of the reader, and elevates the level of language.

Similes and metaphors are found all over the poem. The flight towards Empyrean is compared to reverse snowflakes “As with its frozen vapours downward falls, / In flakes. . . Upward in

such array saw I the ether / Become, and flaked with the triumphant vapours," (HWL Canto XXVII 67-68, 70-71). The greeting between St. Peter and St. James is compared to two doves embracing each other: "In the same way as, when a dove alights / Near his companion, both of them pour forth, / Circling about and murmuring, their affection"(HWL Canto XXV 19-21). Thus the master of metaphors weaves his magic throughout the poem, captivating his readers with the beauty of his comparisons.

In Canto XI Aquinas uses the metaphor of sheep and straying flocks to show the corruption in the Dominican order:

But for new pasturage his flock has grown

So greedy, that it is impossible

They be not scattered over fields diverse;

And in proportion as his sheep remote

And vagabond go farther off from him,

More void of milk return they to the fold. (HWL Canto XI 124-129).

It is with the use of similes and metaphors that Dante brings the emotional colouring to his power packed words. Dante captures his original bliss on witnessing the sights of heaven with similes such as:

Like as a lark that in the air expatiates,

First singing and then silent with content

Of the last sweetness that doth satisfy her,

Such seemed to me the image of the imprint

Of the eternal pleasure, by whose will

Doth everything become the thing it is. (HWL Canto XX 73-78)

The final canto shows a Dante who searches for words to express the immensity of the sights that confront him. He is bereft of speech and memory and translates the aftertaste of the event as: "Like him that sees in a dream and after the dream the passion wrought by it remains and the rest returns not to his mind, such am I; for my vision almost wholly fades, and still there drops within my heart sweetness that was born of it." (Sinclair 481). Beyond this point his words are insufficient for expression and he succumbs to his limitations as a mortal: "Now my speech will come more short even of what I remember than an infant who yet bathes his tongue at the breast." (Sinclair 483). He asserts again "O how scant is speech and how feeble to my conception! And this to what I saw, is such that it is not enough to call it light. O Light Eternal . . ." (Sinclair 485).

Having seen the ultimate sight of God - the three circles which are of the same size and the same colour of the background, fit into each other. This is impossible by the standards of the human conception. As Dante tries to understand it, he describes himself with the simile, " Like the geometer who sets all his mind to the squaring of the circle and for all his thinking does not discover the principle he needs, such was I at the strange sight . . .but my own wings were not sufficient for that" (Sinclair 485). The dream vision of Dante seems to slip and the poet is left trying to recall the final sight: "Here power failed the high phantasy;" (Sinclair 485). Sinclair points out that *Convito* defines phantasy as "the power by which the intellect represents what it sees" (486).

Dante resorts to science to build the structure of *Paradiso*. Although it is a concoction of the poet's imagination, a large part of his creation is shaped by the rules of science. The structure of

Paradiso follows Ptolemy's structure of the geocentric universe with the earth at its centre and the planets, sun and other heavenly bodies revolving around it.

Victor Castellani argues, ". . . although Dante certainly believed in the geocentric physical system of Ptolemy, he embodied in his poem a spiritual sun - centered system of his own."(Castellani) thereby suggesting that Dante's poem hints at a heliocentric universe. If this is considered a characteristic feature of science fiction, then Dante's *Paradiso* could very well be considered to be a forerunner to the genre of science fiction in Literature.

Science is seen to rear its head throughout the poem and acts as a substantiating foundation for Dante's imaginative genius. The increasing speed of every sphere through which the cosmic travellers pass is mentioned time and again. As the pair of characters rise from one sphere to the next, they increase their speed to match that of the destination planet. In Canto II when the travellers proceed towards the sphere of the moon, which is the first sphere, Dante describes the speed with which they move "as a bolt strikes and flies and loses from the catch" (Sinclair 33). Following that, the entrance into the sphere is described as "the eternal pearl received us into itself as water receives a ray of light and remains unbroken . . . and here we cannot conceive of how bulk admitted another . . . as body enters into body" (Sinclair 35). Dante is puzzled at the entrance he makes into the sphere. They accelerate to match the speed of each sphere. This brings to the reader's mind, the theory of relativity, which was pronounced by Albert Einstein centuries after Dante's time.

Dante's question to Beatrice is a scientific question concerning mass, its density and rarity, and its capacity to reflect light. Beatrice answers him with an elaborate experiment using three mirrors that covers most parts of Canto II. Sinclair comments on this use of experiment as:

“It is notably characteristic of Dante that more than a third of the Canto is occupied with the discussion of a purely scientific question in purely and prosaically, scientific terms . . . This is the first among many illustrations in the *Paradiso* of the doctrine - which Dante owed to Aquinas and Aristotle - that knowledge based on sensible experience and reached by strictly rational process from that must logically precede all greatness of conception . . .” (46)

Even as the poem begins, Dante refers to the rising sun as “The lamp of the world rises on mortals by different entrances;”(Sinclair 21), this is a reference to the shape of the earth’s orbit, which determines the entrance point of the sun on earth. Further, Dante questions his guide about his ability to rise above substances lighter than him in heaven saying “ but now I wonder I should be rising above these light substances.” Beatrice supplies the solution with the help of theology saying “that which makes it to be a universe its likeness to God its realization of God’s thought.” (Sinclair 25).

Although Dante uses facts from the philosophy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle his allegiance lies with his spirituality. Sinclair declares “He [Dante] makes use as a poet of the Platonic theory which he attacks as a Christian . . . That which is set down as a fact is in Dante a symbolic appearance”(Sinclair 70). Thus science and religion, which are often considered to be antagonistic, are roped in with finesse to bring about unparalleled art that stands the test of time.

Dante employs the flashback technique in bringing out the life history of his characters as in the case of Piccarda Donati. The story within a story technique is also used as Cacciaguida recounts the history of Florence. *Paradiso* embodies a wide range of techniques that work together to bring out the elevated thought and imagination of Dante. As Dr. Mangaiarkarasi describes the techniques in *Purgatorio*: “. . . can be considered as one of the fore runners of modern literary techniques.”

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(Mathiapparanam *et al.*75), the same can be said of *Paradiso*. Thus it is with the deft use of technique that Dante lends his wings of imagination, so the readers can soar above the limitations of reality into his genius of illusion.

The third chapter, which is the synthesis recapitulates the findings of the earlier chapters and proves that Dante's work is of universal value and is relevant to our times.

## CHAPTER III

### SYNTHESIS

Although *The Divine Comedy* dates back to the thirteenth century, its appeal and significance has only increased through the centuries rendering itself to newer interpretations and inspiration. The previous chapters are a testimony to the importance and the deft use of techniques like narrative viewpoint, allegory, allusions, dialogues, question and answers, figurative language, symbols, flashbacks, songs, imagery, use of light and music, use of science, and use of telepathy in *Paradiso*.

Criticism and research on Dante's works and life began shortly after his death by his student Giovanni Boccaccio, who was also Dante's first biographer. The biography of Dante was finished in 1351; this was a great feat considering Dante's reputation in Florence. Boccaccio's fascination for Dante moved him to gather information, which was hard to get due to Dante's exile and the attitude of the Florentines towards him. Boccaccio was given the opportunity to give the first public lecture on Dante, but he died before that. (Reynolds 414).

Gardner states that "It is such works as *Paradiso* that enable us to realize what were the noblest thoughts and aspirations of those ages whose exceeding light has so dazzled weak modern eyesight that they have sometimes been called dark;"(4). Dante's presence is felt throughout literature irrespective of language, culture, religion or milieu. He is past comparison with any other literary figure with the exception of Shakespeare. There are many references to Dante in literature that substantiate that he still plays a prominent role in inspiring creativity. Olaf Stapledon, a science fiction novelist acknowledges that Dante is a great source of inspiration for his writing. Patrick McCarthy compares *Star Maker*, a science fiction of Stapledon, to *The Divine Comedy* saying that it was greatly influenced by Dante's Comedy. "That quest and ultimate vision derived from the novel,

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might usefully be compared with Dante's *Divine Comedy*, A work that Stapledon knew well. He studied Dante's works in school and continued to read them in later years, both in translation and Italian; vacationing with his mother in Florence . . . he wrote in his diary, " I read Dante all the time." . . . Stapledon develops an elaborate analogy with the comedy . . ."(Stapledon xxviii). Dante's significance in the twentieth first century is profound, with some of the greatest poets of the twentieth century still relying on his poetry. T.S.Eliot's words bring out the prominence of Dante's presence in literature "Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them; there is no third." Eliot has referred to Dante's ideas as seen in the poem *Hollowmen*. The three kingdoms that Eliot's poem describes closely resemble Dante's *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. The "Multifoliate rose" is a description that depicts the white Rose that symbolizes Mary in *Paradiso*. He expresses his love for Dante in his essay *What Dante means to Me*. "The kind of debt that I owe to Dante is the kind that goes on accumulating; the kind that is not a debt of one's period or another of one's life."(Eliot 126). Thomas Carlyle praises Dante in his famous lecture *Hero as Poet* saying "Dante burns as a pure star, fixed there in the firmament, at which the great and the high of all ages kindle themselves: he is the possession of all the chosen of the world for uncounted time (90) . . . cannons and Cossacks will all have rusted into nonentity, while that Dante's voice is still audible."(102). Shelley speaks of *Paradiso* in his *Defence of Poetry* saying, "it is a perpetual hymn of everlasting love, and "the most glorious imagination of modern poetry" (Gardner 6).

Scholars have gone to the extent of calling the *Comedy* a supplementary to the Bible, which is high praise for Dante: Bergin states that "in connection with the overt comparison in *Inferno* 1 of his journey with those of Aeneas and of Paul, justifies the suspicion that the poet conceived of his great work as a kind of supplement to Holy Writ itself; he saw himself as a kind of prophet, a "scriba dei" . . . If such a pretension seems to verge on effrontery if not blasphemy, it is nonetheless quite in keeping with Dante's self-assurance and sense of mission.", he continues to assert that " surveying



the history of the Comedy over six hundred years we must concede that in one respect at least it is eminently and uniquely comparable to Scripture: it has an enduring attraction for commentators who, generation after generation, are drawn to it as bears are attracted to honey.” (Bergin706-707).

*Paradiso* shows language that is similar to that of the Bible indicating the debt that Dante owed to the scripture. The author targets an audience that is familiar with the Bible, alluding to biblical characters, beliefs and language. Kleinhenz claims “Dante the Poet is in many ways a mediator of other texts - a scribe, a translator, an editor, an interpreter - but more than this he is also a poet and a prophet, drawing inspiration from these other texts and developing and refining his own distinctive poetic voice.”(76). The Bible is a key source of inspiration for Dante. Kleinhenz also states that Dante invokes authority by the use of biblical language to deliver a ‘personal yet universal message’ in his poem, calling it ‘Poetics of Authority’ (75). Psaki comments on Dante’s language “Dante uses poetic language . . .he makes razor-sharp use of its polysemous qualities. No other language could serve Dante like poetry . . . imagistic language rather than analytical language.”(125). *Paradiso* shows great influence of the classics on Dante. Picone says “Even more than the *Aeneid*, in fact the *Metamorphoses* is the privileged classical intertext with which the *Commedia* finds itself continuously in dialogue” (54). The scientist in Dante cannot be overlooked as *Paradiso* has the logic of science. Reynolds compares Dante and Pierre Tielhard de Chardin the French geologist: “It is remarkable that a poet and a scientist, separated over 600 years and approaching the subject from what would seem to be totally opposed points of view should both use the sphere as the image of the universe and the “point beyond” as the image of God or Omega.”(30).

The structure of *Paradiso* is influenced by great philosophers of his time. “The general arrangement of Dante’s *Paradiso* is based upon the Ptolemaic system of astronomy . . . the theories of the supposed Dionysius the Areopagite (followed by Aquinas) and of St. Bernard concerning the

angelic Hierarchies.”(Gardner13). Although Dante’s model of the geocentric universe has been proved wrong, the appeal of the poem remains undiminished owing to its supreme poetic value; the expression of an abstract thought in terms of tangible ideas with the help of certain techniques as the objective correlative. The poem portrays a strong autobiographical element. The fictitious poem presents characters from Dante’s life. The poem was conceived from a tremendous predicament that plagued the life of the poet, and is filled with the pain of exile from Florence and it appears as if the poet takes comfort in confiding his agony to the readers. The poem is filled with emotions that hold the interest of the readers for the whole length of the poem. Dante seems to play god in many instances of the poem, when he holds the decision of who appears in hell and who resides in Heaven. *Paradiso* brings out the love that nurtured the poet and the poem. The significance of Beatrice as a choice for his guide has seen many interpretations. Some consider her to represent “sacred theology or Divine science; for others . . . a symbol of Revelation, for others of co-operating Grace or even of Contemplation” (Gardner 10). Despite all these allegorical symbols, Beatrice portrays the supreme platonic love that the poet held for her, thus exalting her as by far the most eminent literary women figures. Beneath the prominent message of human deliverance, *Paradiso* also nurtures the unrequited love song of Dante, where Dante uses his poem to attain his unfulfilled wish of receiving the love of Beatrice Portinari.

The use of number is an interesting feature in *The Divine Comedy*. The use of number three is a repeated feature - the poem is divided into three parts: *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*; each of the poems have thirty three cantos, save the *Inferno*, which has thirty four, with the first canto being considered a prologue. The rhyme scheme invented by Dante for the Comedy is ‘Terza Rima’ which is a three line stanza with a rhyme scheme aba bcb cdc . . . yzy, zaz and so on. Further, studies of the Italian text show that “The 33 syllables of a *terzina* are mirrored in the 33 *canti* of a *cantica* and the three *cantiche* thus represent a kind of cosmic tercet, an encyclopedic representation of the number

three.” (Freccero 262). This could be interpreted as a symbol depicting the holy trinity. The poem is considered to be a novel as well as an epic and yet seen to transcend these labels with its techniques and theme. “Epic and novel exist side by side, linearity with circularity, in this poetic synthesis which has been considered a genre apart” thus Dante bridged the “gap between the middle ages and the modern world” when he wrote the “last epic and the first novel”(Freccero 138).

Of all the works of Dante, *The Divine Comedy* is the most popular. *Inferno* is the most sought after novel of the trilogy with its captivating imagery; *Purgatorio* is Dante’s personal design; but it is in *Paradiso* that Dante’s unparalleled imagination and skill are revealed to the reader. Dante’s *Comedy* which has a great deal of scientific ideology was a great success in the medieval period which was greatly influenced by the Papal rule and considered the dark ages for a long period of time. This stands partly as a testimonial that the medieval period had scientific inclination. *The Divine Comedy* continues to captivate readers of the twenty first century, (a contrasting milieu to the origin of the work), where science seems to be the religion ranging from atheism to agnosticism and extending to skepticism. The magnetism of the poem lies in its aesthetic value and the technique of making illusion seem real. Dante continues to reign supreme as *The Divine Comedy* has a profound effect on readers belonging to a different milieu, various cultures, geographical location and religious beliefs. This effect is woven with the techniques that Dante conjures that make the abstract tangible. The reader follows Dante to discover the depths of hell and the heights of heaven regardless of the logic of science or the dogma of theology, but bound by his magic of illusion, brought out through techniques, to the final prestige of the Empyrean where he leaves them baffled and in a sense of bliss.

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