

Hui 325 e1

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Symbolism of the dreams in Dante's works In *La Vita Nuova*, Dante dreams that he is led to Beatrice Portinari's deathbed, whom he had undying love for. While he stands looking over Beatrice, two figures in green hold a canopy over her. An angel in red holds Dante's hand and leans forward to kiss Beatrice. The dream symbolizes the transition between life and death. It shows that there are two worlds, one of the living and one of the dead. It symbolizes that angels are the links between the two worlds. When the angel holds Dante's hand, it signifies hope. It symbolizes that Beatrice is not gone forever, but rather, she would eventually be reunited with Dante. The angel kissing Beatrice symbolizes that she is safe, and she would be loved in the world in which she is headed.

In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante spends three nights in his ascent to Purgatory, and has a different dream each night. The dreams foreshadow events that are to take place during his journey. Dante's three unique dreams, all happen in the early morning hours. Each dream portrays specific happenings and connects events of Dante's journey. The dreams prepare Dante for events that he is to encounter, and prepare readers for his journey.

The first dream is the image of a golden eagle, which appears in Canto IX, just before dawn as Dante sleeps outside the gates of Purgatory. The eagle snatches him and soars upwards. This symbolizes the ascension that Dante and humans need to undergo in order to reach Paradise. The divine characteristics of the eagle are shown. Its fixed and determined flight path (lines 25-28). To Dante, the eagle's glory symbolizes the glory of the Roman Empire. The dream also prophesies Dante's ascension. When he awakens, he realizes that he has been physically moved by Divine Lucy to paradise.

Among the three dreams, it is the only one that gives a picture of Dante's physical appearance. The dream ends and immediately Lucy departs, symbolizing divine transportation that Divine Lucy offers Dante.

Dante's second dream takes place in Canto XIX in the early morning hours. In this dream, Dante encounters a siren. He sees a woman who at first he describes as ugly (lines 8-9). Dante's powerful gaze converts her into a powerful object of beauty (lines 10-15). The woman sings, captivating Dante's eyes and sending him into a trance. An angelic woman who alerts Virgil about the trance saves him. This symbolizes that without Virgil, Dante could not have made it through the journey of Purgatory. It also shows free will, depicted by the way Dante had to choose between the siren and the angelic woman. This dream also signifies the point at which love becomes excessive. The angelic woman embodied the spirit of Beatrice, which symbolizes that Dante had to overcome sins of love in excess for him to be reunited with Beatrice. His dream of the siren leaves him sad. He remembers times in his life when he succumbed to lust.

Dante's third dream, of Leah and Rachel occurs in Canto XXVII on the terrace of lustful, before dawn. The dream offers a transition between Dante's journey through the fire of the final cornet and Dante's entry into the earthly paradise. It gives a picture of what to expect in paradise. In the dream, Dante meets Leah, with her arrangements of flowers symbolizing active life. He also meets Rachel, who perpetually gazes into a mirror, symbolizing contemplative life. Dante notes that while active life is good, contemplative life is greater.

The three dreams occur at dawn, the time when God mostly speaks to

people. The timing shows divination. Dante highlights the timing of the dreams to emphasize on the prophecies he had on events of his journey. The dreams are important in Dante's progression through Purgatory as they guide him and foreshadow events in his ascent. Dante portrays dreams as ways through which God speaks to his people, guides them and offers counsel. Through dreams, God reveals the future and prepares his people for it.