American Dante Bibliography for 1956

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This bibliography is intended to include the Dante translations published in this country in 1956, and all Dante studies and reviews published in 1956 that are in any sense American. The latter criterion is now construed to include foreign reviews of Dante publications by Americans.

Translations


Contains a preface stating the translator’s intention of rendering the poem “in simple modern English”; a dedicatory sonnet “To My Life”; a short introduction outlining the broad design of the poem; the translation in terza rima, with a sonnet prefixed to each cantica—one to Dante by the translator himself, the latter’s translation of Michelangelo’s sonnet to Dante, and Rossetti’s version of Oltre la spera che più larga gira (Vita Nuova, XLI); and ‘The Arguments” (pp. 547-567) summarizing the narrative of each cantica.


A very faithful version, preserving the rhyme-scheme of the original, preceded by the Italian text and Rossetti’s version and by a critical interpretation and commentary, entitled “Green Thoughts in a Green Shade: Reflections on the Stony Sestina of Dante Alighieri.” (See below, under Studies.)

Studies


Notices a Pseudo-Dante Credo recently “rediscovered” in the University of Pennsylvania Library and assigns to it the following imprint: [Florence, Lorenzo Morgiani and Johannes Petri between 1495 and 1500].

Discusses general parallels in the celestial journeys of Dante and the Pakistan poet Mohammed Iqbal (1877-1938) and certain differences stemming from the different spiritual orientation of Christianity and Islam, with the conclusion that the spirits of Dante and Iqbal may nevertheless “exist in perfect harmony.” Iqbal’s philosophical poem is entitled Asrār-i Khudī (“The Secrets of the Self”).


 Publishes two letters by Pound to R. L. Binyon on translating the Purgatorio.

Erich Auerbach. Mimesis. Il Realismo nella letteratura occidentale. [Translated from the German by Alberto Romagnoli and Hans Hinterhauser.] Con un saggio introduttivo di Aurelio Roncaglia Turin, Einaudi: 1956.

 Italian translation of Professor Auerbach’s well-known work. (See above, pp. 41 and 56, and see below, under Reviews.)


 Points out in Browning’s poem “Cleon” (1855) a parallel with Dante’s butterfly-image in Purgatorio X: 124-129, which has been de-Christianized, however, to enhance the dramatic irony.


 Submits, on the basis of chronology and on the comparative evidence of particular instances of identical or near-identical rendering in their respective translations from Dante, that the youthful Stefan George was led to the Italian original of the Divine Comedy by the German version of August Komisch, which must have reechoed in George’s mind later while doing his own translations from Dante.


 Considers Eliot’s generalization that Dante’s similes and metaphors are few and simply designed solely to make us see more realistically what he saw on the poetic journey, is, though applicable to the Inferno, inadequate to one’s experience of the whole poem. From an examination of many examples, Dante’s imagination is found to operate on the particular level of each cantica developing the imagery in kind and depth with the pilgrim’s growth in understanding and vision. Thus, while the Inferno contains sharp, visual comparisons and contrast-stressing images, without further insight as to meaning, the Purgatorio increasingly employs more complex comparisons that look beyond things as things and involve greater depth of interpretive meaning; the Paradiso, in turn, tends to leave behind concrete, sensuous likenesses in favor of more abstract or conceptual imagery.

Contains a chapter on Dante (pp. 238-256), consisting of an introductory essay to establish the historical setting, followed by excerpts from the De Monarchia in the F. C. Church translation. In the “Bibliographical Notes,” there is a selected bibliography, with commentary, for this chapter.


Notes that in Heart of Darkness Conrad made extensive use of Dante’s Inferno.

Francis Fergusson. “‘Mito’ e scrupolo letterario.” Delta, N. S., 9 (1956): 7-16.

This is an Italian version (translated by Giulio Vallese) of the following item.


Discusses the difficulty of arriving at a general definition of “Myth,” because of the protean quality it has assumed at present; cites Malinowski’s basic classification of Myth—legends, folly or fairy tales, and religious myths; and gives examples of myths as brought to life poetically in the works of Valéry, Wagner, and Dante. The author finds that all the kinds of Myth and all the attitudes to Myth are handled masterfully by Dante and concludes that if we wish to consider the life of Myth in the poetry of our tradition, we must look to the vast and neglected lore in the Divine Comedy.


Gives a comprehensive interpretation of Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra, exploring the rich possibilities of association, antithesis, and paradox in the poem, and including a critical running commentary to his own translation of the poem which follows, accompanied by the original Italian text and Rossetti’s version (See above, under Translations.)


Directs attention to Dante’s probable impact upon the formation of the theocratic ideas of Vladimir Solov’ev (Russian idealistic philosopher, antic, and poet). Solov’ev was reading Dante when writing a “The Great Controversy” (in Rus’, 1883), and he made brief but very significant mention of Dante in La Russie et l’Eglise Universelle (Paris, 1889).

Contends, while admitting the enormous differences between *Major Barbara* and the *Divine Comedy*, that the Dantean perspective helps us to see a greater significance in Shaw’s play: *Major Barbara*, in ideological terms of the twentieth century, develops a pattern of sin, repentance, and salvation, is cosmic in scope, and has an inexorable internal logic.


On the model of his *Universal Author Repertoire of Italian Essay Literature* (New York, 1941), the author has indexed and classified by subject essays that appeared in Italian miscellaneous essay volumes between 1938 and 1952. A useful and considerable list of studies and essays is included under “Dante” (pp. 103-106). (For reviews, see below.)


Suggests, as was also hinted at by Momigliano, that the image intended by *un animal covert* is that of a caparissed horse—a familiar figure in medieval processions and in medieval art.


Gives a comprehensive history of the Dante Society of America, with details of its various activities from the earliest informal beginnings and its organization in 1881 to its official incorporation in 1954.


Contains a study of “Keats’s Debt to Dante” (pp. 54), demonstrating, from the unique markings in Keats’s copy of Dante, the English poet’s deep indebtedness to the *Inferno* in Cary’s version. Keats’s *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, in particular, reveal influences of the *Inferno* in terms of atmosphere, imagery, and ground-pattern; and some of his finest sonnets, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, and other works also show influence of the *Inferno*. In two Appendices A and B, the author reproduces “Keats’s Markings in his Copy of the *Inferno*” and “Poems or Passages of Keats’s Poetry Influenced by his Reading of the *Inferno*.”


A brief general introduction to Dante for the lay reader, with an annotated list of available English translations and three illustrations.

Contains some comparisons with Dante’s Hell and Purgatory, and concludes that “the evidence controverts the popular impression that later writers on the Afterworld borrowed their descriptions primarily from Dante”: they frequently drew, rather, on a common tradition of other-worldly lore.


Contains brief but significant reference to Dante in the text and notes, stressing his intimate, Aristotelian-Thomistic relation to humanism, understood according to the ideal of human life as including the presence of the Divine. (For a brief critical comment on this point, see [Rocco Montano] “Schede e Appunti,” in Delta, N.S., Nos. 11-12 [1957], 106-107.) The original English version of Professor Jaeger’s work was published as Humanism and Theology (“The Aquinas Lecture, 1943”), under the Auspices of the Aristotelian Society of Marquette University (Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 1943).


Includes notices of varying length of many American Dante studies.


Against Dante’s testimony in the De Vulgari Eloquentia, the author questions the suitability of the canzone of Dante’s time for a musical setting, because of its self-sufficient nature as a poetic form, its length and lofty tone, and especially the lack of any extant musical settings of the canzoni of the period. Of the two possible conclusions he proposes, viz., that the music for the canzone in Dante’s time was improvised, or that the canzone was no longer sung but recited to an improvised instrumental accompaniment, the author favors the latter.


A poem in the modern manner expressing in three short stanzas, each inspired by a cantica of the Divine Comedy, certain impressions and reactions of a contemporary wayfarer on Dante’s poetic journey.


Considers the Dantesque elements in Cervantes’ Viaje del Parnaso to be more substantial than they at first appears and submits that the humorous tone of the Viaje, with its satire and parody of contemporary poetasters, gains significantly in effect from the contrasting allusions to the lofty and austere Divine Comedy.

Analyzes and compares in some detail the ideas on love in Plato’s *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* and in Dante’s *Convivio* and *Divina Commedia*. The similarities are striking, especially in the common pattern of a ladder of beauty as the means of ascension to the transcendent goal of Beauty, Goodness and Truth. For Plato, however, the poet and the lover, as also the philosopher and the prophets each take separate paths to the one goal, while for Dante, the poet, lover, and thinker are one. But where the Dantean pattern differs crucially from the Platonic is in the death, transformation and elevation of the lady and her retention to the very end of the process. Furthermore, whereas Plato’s *eros* provided only the movement from “here” up, the personal nature of Dante’s Christian God involved also the descent of His Love to the individual as grace, the key being the individualized beauty of the beloved as a reflection and lure of the Divine. Dante fused and synthesized elements of two traditions: the ladder of love and beauty to God of philosophical and theological speculation, and the image of the ennobling beloved of courtly love tradition.


Considers Dante’s discussions of allegory in the *Convivio* (II, i) and in the letter to Can Grande (7 and 8) in the light of medieval theories of allegory and modern Dante criticism (according to Nardi and Singleton) and finds, with Nardi, that Dante confused the allegory of poets and the allegory of theologians to claim prophetic inspiration and depth of vision and to assert the importance of poetry as giving truth on a par with philosophy. Dante recognized the value of metaphor as a means by which theology (and philosophy) and poetry can both express truths that would otherwise be inexpressible. Thus, the *Divine Comedy* (especially the Paradiso) translates a vision of spiritual or intellectual light into metaphorical terms of sensible light which provide a gradual accommodation of the wayfarer’s vision to the ultimate reality in God. For this blend of light-metaphysics, poetic theory, and theology Dante seems to be considerably indebted to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.


Discusses the symbol of the sun in the history of Western light-symbolism down to the light-metaphysics of Saint Augustine and other medieval thinkers, who adopted the Platonic metaphor of the Good as the sun of the intellect, and shows how Dante used the sun-symbol with full awareness of the complex significance it had acquired in the tradition.


Describes a copy of the Decuchermoy version (1530) of Andrea da Barberino’s *Guerino il Guerino il Meschino*, summarizes the story, and discusses briefly, with some notice of past opinion, the similarities between Guerino’s visions of Saint Patrick’s Purgatory and Dante’s visions in the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*. 

Focusing upon mystical poetry from a purely literary standpoint, the author discusses the paradox of expressing the ineffable with earth-bound works and outlines a general “rhetoric of the ineffable” abstracted from the means employed by certain poets, particularly Dante (“struggle with memory”) and Saint John of the (“suspension of sensation”), for communicating their mystical experiences.


Spanish translation of Patch’s well-known work, *The Other World According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), which contains ample reference to Dante’s visions of the Afterworld.


Submits, on examination of the evidence, that Baudelaire read only part of the *Divine Comedy* (probably no more than the *Inferno*) in the French version by Fiorentino, and that although he quoted fifty lines from this translation in the *Salon de 1846* and alluded to Dante briefly and unimportantly some half-dozen times in his works, the only significant instance of Baudelaire’s use of Dante lies in a passage of “Femmes damnées: Delphine et Hippolyte,” which is markedly influenced by *Inferno* V. Thus, the effort to see in Baudelaire a “modern Dante” seems to be misguided and misinformed.


With brief analyses.


Discusses, with examples, the more commonly encountered troubadour melodic types, names for which are abstracted from Dante’s authoritative *De Vulgari Eloquentia*: (1) *oda continua* (through composed); (2) *pedes cum cauda*—a a b; (3) *frons cum versibus*—a b b; (4) *pedes cum versibus*—a a b b. The author emphasizes that the classification of melodic types must not utilize designations of poetic types, since the melodic pattern was not governed by the type of lyric to which it was joined, but the same melodic type might serve a variety of poetic types (*vers, canso, tenso, sirventes, rotruenge*, and so forth).

Reviews, with particular reference to Lapesa, Woodford, and Le Gentil, the controversy over Dante’s influence on Imperial; further argues his own previous contention that Imperial did not imitate Dante primarily, nor form a group of Dante imitators; and concluding, discerns a trend towards acceptance of this revised opinion.


Includes a chapter on “The Nature of Metaphysical Poetry” (pp. 69-88), containing a discussion of Dante’s *Commedia* as the most obvious illustration of the nature of metaphysical poetry, defined by the author as a fusion of thought and emotion, or “the emotional apprehension of thought.” This work was originally published in London in 1938 as *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*.


Refers to Dante in a short section on “Sicily, Italy, Beatrice, and Symbols” (pp. 177-180) and passim, in the context of his central thesis of “the inescapable conflict in the West between passion and marriage.” (First American edition: New York, 1940. Originality published in French as *L’Amour et l’Occident*, Paris, 1939.)


Contains Santayana’s famous essay on Dante (pp. 30-52) of Three Philosophical Poets, as well as essays on “Platonic Love in Some Italian Poets” (pp. 94-111) and “Tragic Philosophy” (pp. 266-277), which are also concerned to some extent with Dante. The editor’s introductory essay on “Santayana as a Literary Critic” includes a discussion of Santayana’s attitude toward Dante. (For reviews, see below.)


From a contextual investigation of their literary relationships, the author finds that, beyond direct translations from Dante used chiefly for the content, Chaucer’s principal borrowing from Dante consisted of images of verbal or dramatic force, and these mostly from the beginnings and ends of Dante’s three *cantiche*, especially the opening cantos of the *Inferno*.

Distinguishes in Italian literature three major epochs (or moods), epitomized in the following epithets: (1) “a journey to God” (Middle Ages), exemplified by Dante’s Comedy; (2) “nowhere to go” (Renaissance), exemplified by Boccaccio’s Decameron; and (3) “an outward journey to the infinite” (Romanticism), exemplified by Leopardi’s “L’infinito.” The discussion includes interesting interpretations of portions of the Divine Comedy.


Contends that in Inferno II, when Virgil addresses Beatrice in the words “O donna di virtà,” he recognizes her both literally as the Florentine woman sung by Dante in the Vita Nuova and the Rime and allegorically as the Lady Philosophy (or Contemplation or “created Sapientia”) of the Convivio in the ancient philosophical sense of the means of rising beyond the sub-lunar world of fortune, of change and impermanence, to the supra-lunar realm of changelessness and permanence. Virgil’s perspective is seen, moreover, to be limited by the pagan frame of thought, and thus, in the Purgatorio, at Beatrice’s appearance to Dante, including a still further, analogical, aspect from the Christian perspective, viz., that of “uncreated Sapientia” which is Christ, Virgil has already disappeared from the poem’s action.


Contains frequent reference, passim, to the Dantean element in Eliot’s works. Well indexed.


Contends that Guerrieri-Crocetti’s allegorical interpretation of the Detto goes too far and, offering a different one, refutes the parallels with the Divine Comedy also suggested by the latter.


Seeking to determine the specific value of the term dolce stil nuovo as used in Purgatorio XXIV, the author notes, from a strict theory standpoint, three zones in Dante’s works: (1) that of the Vita Nuova, where the poetic orientation is still doctrinal; (2) the theorizing of the De Vulgari Eloquentia; and (3) the fullness of Dante’s art in the Divine Comedy. He considers that the great lyric poetry of the youthful Dante and his contemporaries arose independently of the then doctrinal theory of poetry, and that the dolce stil nuovo concept, associating poetry with sentiment and moral perfection with perfect love, found conscious theoretic expression only later, in the Purgatorio.

On the conviction that the otherworldly setting, characters, and events of the *Divine Comedy* represented an actual and continuing reality in Dante’s consciousness, the author imagines, in the form of a fantasy in verse, Virgil’s return to Limbus, his account to the noble spirits of his journey with Dante to the Earthly Paradise, punctuated by their reactions and eager questioning, and an estimate by Virgil of Dante’s greatness.


Contains (Chapter VI) a brief interpretative commentary on Dante’s *Vita Nuova* and *Divina Commedia* in the context of the mediaeval consummation and in terms of “The Way of Affirmation of Images” as against “The Way of the Rejection of Images.” Focusing on “the effort in Christendom of the polarizing of sex-relationships towards God,” the author considers the Dante-Beatrice relationship according to the principle that each faithful soul constitutes a theophany. The work was originally published without Auden’s introduction, as *The Descent of the Dove: A Short History of the Holy Spirit in the Church*, by Longmans, Green and Company in 1939; the first American edition, by Pellegrini and Cudahy, appeared in 1950.

**Reviews**

**Dante Alighieri.** *The Inferno.* Translated by John Ciardi (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954). Reviewed by:


- **W. K. Ferguson,** *Speculum,* XXXI (1956): 344-346;
- **M. P. Gilmore,** *American Historical Review,* LXI (1956): 622-624;
- **Dayton Phillips,** *Italica,* XXXIII (1956): 79-82;
- **Aldo Scaglione,** *Romance Philology,* X (1956): 129-137;
- **Charles Trinkaus,** *Journal of the History of Ideas,* XVII (1956): 426-432;
- **Nino Valeri,** *Newberry Library Bulletin,* IV (1956): 88-92;


**C. M. Bowra.** “Dante and Arnaut Daniel” and “Dante and Sordello.” *Speculum,* XXVII (1952): 459-474, and *Comparative Literature,* V (1953): 1-15; respectively. Reviewed by:


**C. M. Bowra.** *Inspiration and Poetry* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1955). Reviewed by:

- **Bernard Giovate,** *Comparative Literature,* VIII (1956): 168-170;


Francis Fergusson. Dante’s Drama of the Mind (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). Reviewed by:


Mary Gaither, Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, V (1956): 65-66;

S. O. Palleske, Comparative Literature, VIII (1956): 355-357;


J. G. Fucilla. Saggistica letteraria italiana (Florence: Sansoni Antiquariato, 1956). Reviewed by:


Ewart Lewis. Medieval Political Ideas (New York: Knopf, 1954). Reviewed by:


**George Santayana.** *Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York, Scribner’s Sons: 1956). Reviewed by:


[Anon.], *Yale Review*, XLV (1956): xviii-xxii;

**W. M. Miller**, *Italica*, XXXIII (1956): 83;


**V. de Sola Pinto**, *Italian Studies*, XI (1956): 134-136;


**Gianfranco Contini**, *Romance Philology*, IX (1956): 463-467;


**Leo Spitzer.** “The Addresses to the Reader in the Commedia.” *Italica*, XXXII (1955): 143-165. Reviewed by:

Leo Spitzer. “The ‘Ideal Typology’ in Dante’s De Vulgari Eloquentia.” Italica, XXXII (1955): 75-94. Reviewed by:


W. B. Stanford. The Ulysses Theme (New York: Macmillan, 1955). Reviewed by:

Thomas Cutt, Classical Journal, LII (1956): 143-144;


William Blackburn, South Atlantic Quarterly, LV (1956): 392-393;

Harry Levin, Modern Philology, LIV (1956): 53-55;


W. L. Grant, The Phoenix, X (1956): 89-91;


Erich Auerbach, *Romanische Forschungen*, LXVII (1956): 387-397;


Umberto Bosco, *Romance Philology*, IX (1956): 461-463;


J. E. Shaw, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXV (1956): 511;