American Dante Bibliography for 2003

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This bibliography is intended to included all publications on Dante (books, articles, translations, reviews) appearing in North America in 2003, as well as reviews from foreign sources of books published in the United States and Canada.

Translations


Books

Brittan, Simon. Poetry, Symbol, and Allegory. Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2003. Discusses Dante’s use of allegory and symbolism, making particular use of the Convivio and the canzone on the death of Beatrice, and explores how these techniques provide guidance for the reader seeking to understand his poetry. This dual allegorical and literal meaning was new to readers of poetry in Dante’s time, but, despite many of the poems being deeply wrapped up allegory, readers were and are still able to appreciate their lyricism.

Cestaro, Gary P. Dante and the Grammar of the Nursing Body. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003. Cestaro “investigat[es] the function of the nursing body in Dante,” drawing upon different forms of philosophical analysis, especially contemporary French, as well as psychoanalytical and feminist theory. Particular attention is paid to Julia Kristeva’s theory of semiotics in the wake of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The author is especially interested in the consequences for the interpretation of the notion of dependence on the female in Dante’s works, with its corollary that a male can never be considered such if he never loses his dependence to the female.

In the introduction to this collection of critical articles, some new and some reprinted, Bloom describes Dante’s standing in relation to other major poets. He also discusses how Dante’s place in the literary canon is affirmed by other poets, and how he is regarded in modern times as the Christian poet.


Collects a group of articles from the Dante2000 Conference held at Columbia University on April 7-9, 2000. In their introductory discussion (ix-xxiii), Barolini and Storey stress the need to explore new avenues of interpretation in Dante studies.


Employing Klein’s insights into infantile fantasy, the author focuses on Dante and three modern writers who, she argues, exemplify a Kleinian transformation of fantasies into literary texts. Particularly pertinent for a study of Dante are remarks showing how Klein’s model helps the reader interpret Dante’s fantasies of gratification and frustration through an examination of patterns of imagery.


Discusses connections with Jewish mysticism in Dante’s work (especially with the Zohar of Moses de Leon, whose ideas may have had some influence on Dante), and considers the possibility that Dante’s relationship with Beatrice was not simply erotic but sexual in nature.


Referring briefly to Dante’s conception of Beatrice as an earthly goddess, the author claims that the poet embraces a mystical rather than courtly concept of love, arguing that in the Vita Nuova and in Paradiso Beatrice incarnates and unites Amor and Caritas through her death.


Pearl crafts a fictional murder mystery involving a group of Harvard professors in Cambridge circa 1865 several of whom would later become founding members of the Dante Society of America. As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow works on his translation of the Divine Comedy for an American readership, the group is beset by a series of murders that appear to re-enact scenes from Inferno. Highly readable simply as a mystery, the book reveals a detailed and accurate understanding of Dante’s work, his cultural presence in nineteenth-century Boston society, and the origins of the Dante Society.

Articles

Discusses the use and effects of the stanza in the discourse of narrative poetry, referring to Dante’s text only for specific examples of the use of *terza rima*. Addison claims that the stanza creates a tension when used in epic works such as Dante’s, which provides for the possibility of “forward extension,” and argues that the specific effect of the use of Dante’s stanza is equivalent to that of Milton’s blank verse in *Paradise Lost*.


Considers how Dante originally promoted and circulated his works, while examining the physical attributes of the early manuscripts and how they were received at the time of their copying.

Baranski, Zygmunt G. “Scatology and Obscenity in Dante.” In *Dante for the New Millennium* (q.v.), 259-73.

Undertakes to recontextualize a sometimes misunderstood aspect of Dante’s work, specifically calling into question established readings of *Inferno* 18, arguing that Dante is much more willing to employ scatological references than sexual ones, an attitude based on the apparently greater tolerance for scatology than sexual reference in the text of the Bible.

Barolini, Teodolinda. “Beyond (Courtly) Dualism: Thinking about Gender in Dante’s Lyrics.” In *Dante for the New Millennium* (q.v.), 65-89.

Traces the changes of Dante’s *persona* from courtly to public poet through an examination of his treatment of women. Progresses far beyond the presentation of women in traditional courtly poetry as inactive individuals, Dante develops an image of woman who is more integrated with the world and its culture.


Argues that a considerable tension between realism and allegory is present in the *Commedia*, a phenomenon that further contributes to the work’s power to draw the reader eye’s “upward.”


Outlines a relationship, in point of a shared concept of heroism, between Ahab, in Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, and Dante’s Ulysses.


Botterill, Steven. “Mysticism and Meaning in Dante’s Paradiso.” In Dante for the New Millennium (q.v.), 143-51.

Examines Dante’s frequent exclusion from the traditional canon of mystical authors. The enduring meaning of Paradiso, if not its every word, should be considered mystical in nature.

Carugati, Giuliana. “Quando amor fa sentir de la sua pace.” In Dante for the New Millennium (q.v.), 211-27.

Contends that Dante uses erotic and romantic language in Neoplatonic ways in order to present ideas that have long since been forgotten by the Church, concluding that when Dante thinks of God, he thinks of a woman.

Cestaro, Gary P. “Queering Nature, Queering Gender: Dante and Sodomy.” In Dante for the New Millennium (q.v.), 90-103.

Departing from a consideration of the scholarly treatment of sodomy in Inferno 15-16, Cestaro argues for a more theoretically-informed understanding of the subject within the modern context.

Cornish, Alison. “Vulgarizing Science: Vernacular Translation of Natural Philosophy.” In Dante for the New Millennium (q.v.), 169-82.

Analyzes Dante’s attempt to make the practice of natural science more readily accessible to the public by employing the vernacular to convey meteorological descriptions.


Discusses the important of the distinction between body and flesh with respect to Dante’s poetics in the Purgatorio, focusing primarily on the terrace of pride. The distinction is vital to an understanding of the representation of souls in Purgatorio as “virtual” bodies.


Adverting to previous studies by Hollander and Cassell that link Pier della Vigna to the figure of Judas, the author argues that the image of the “gran di spelta” expresses figurally the degeneration of the Eucharistic “pane,” just as the suicide represents “esattamente l’opposto del sacrificio di Cristo.”


Argues that philology constitutes an important science that should not be entrusted to “technicians,” but rather to those with an open mind unconstrained by any single critical approach.

Reassessing the longstanding question about the nature of the human soul after the death of the body, Gragnolati argues that Dante’s conception is not sufficiently resolved to admit of a definitive answer because he drew on multiple sources, including those of Aquinas and Bonaventure.

Hawkins, Peter S., and Rachel Jacoff. “Still Here: Dante after Modernism.” In Dante for the New Millennium (q.v.), 451-64.

The authors trace the influence of Dante on twentieth-century poets, focusing on the remarks of T.S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, Seamus Heaney, Charles Wright, and Gjertrud Schnackenberg, among others.


Argues that Dante depicts Francis of Assisi’s life in the Commedia because the saint served as a model for Dante’s himself, as an example of humility. In this light he conducts a reading of the saint’s pseudo-presence in the Heaven of the Sun (Par. 10) together with that of Solomon’s real presence.


Although as a “quintessentially medieval work” the Vita Nuova can appear somewhat unsettling to a modern temperament for its comparison of Beatrice with Christ, Dante’s concept of love nevertheless reflects the general elevation of religious love over secular love in the Middle Ages. At the same time, however, the author claims that Dante’s work is intensely modern in the way in which Dante represents self-consciousness and expounds a theory of literature.


Contends that the magnitude of the calamities atop the mountain of Purgatory serialized in Purgatorio 28-33 suggests Dante must have believed that the end of time was near.


Undertakes to debunk the commonly held interpretation of the “unwintering” of January mentioned in Paradiso by arguing that the apparently obscure aspect of the prophecy in fact relates to particular aspects of the Julian calendar and other astrological and astronomical signs.
According to Kay’s hypothesis, Dante understands that January would be a spring month based on the precession of the equinoxes, not on the tropical and solar year as described in the Julian calendar.


Contends that the Empyrean is in fact an image of God’s Eye. To establish this comparison Dante needed to subscribe to and make use of the extramission theory of vision that bases sight on rays coming out of rather than into the eye, because God’s Eye was not otherwise available to him as an iconic image.


Relates Dante’s desire for narrative to be understood both horizontally and vertically to his study of visual representations, specifically those of mosaics of the Florentine Baptistery.


Concentrates on a celebrated aspect of Ovid’s influence on Dante’s work, the episode of Marsyas in the sixth book of Ovid’s Metamorphoses, finding that Dante presents a re-imagining of Ovid’s scene in the first canto of Paradiso.


Martinez, Ronald L. “Dante’s Jeremiads: The Fall of Jerusalem and the Burden of the New Pharisees, the Capetians, and Florence.” In Dante for the New Millennium (q.v.), 301-19.

Compares Florence with Jerusalem as cities destined for a kind of divine destruction, providing an analysis of a number of cantos that reinforce this idea, in particular Inferno 19 and 23, and Purgatorio 20 and 23.

Mazzotta, Giuseppe. “The Heaven of the Sun: Dante between Aquinas and Bonaventure.” In Dante for the New Millennium (q.v.), 152-68.

Addresses Dante’s focus on doctrinal controversies in the Sphere of the Sun, tracing Dante’s treatment of philosophical and theological concepts in this area to Saints Bonaventure and Aquinas, the two figures to whom he most substantially owes his understanding of Christian spirituality and doctrine.


Assesses the newly discovered information regarding the social and biographical background to Dante’s exchange of sonnets with his friend Forese Donati, arguing that the sonnets need to be re-contextualized.


Answering his own question, the author argues that what is punished in Hell and purged in Purgatory bears no resemblance to the love experienced in Heaven, which extends beyond time and space.


Traces the influence of Ovid on Dante’s texts, focusing in particular on the topic of exile in the later works of Ovid.


Describes Dante’s “reconciliation of human sexual love and divine love” as a program organizing yet other kinds of reconciliations that take place in Paradiso, and then assesses the tendency shared by both medieval and modern cultures to “stage important debates in imagistic rather than analytical language.”


Provides a biographical description of Dante’s life and times.


Provides an appraisal of Jean and Robert Hollander’s recent translation of the Purgatorio.


Critiques the established readings of the Old Man of Crete (Inferno 14) for excessive reliance on sources external to Dante’s own work, arguing in particular the importance the four rivers of Hell play in coordinating its meaning.


Examines how the work of professional scribes and manuscript copyists resulted in modifications of the original text for an number of different reasons, including the need to
accommodate the desires or needs of a commissioning patron, a specific readership audience, or even the copyist himself.


**Wallace, David.** “Dante in England.” In *Dante for the New Millennium* (q.v.), 422-34. Describes the positive reception that Dante’s work has received in England, stemming in part from perceptions of his religious affiliation during the Reformation.


**Reviews**


**Barański, Zygmunt G.** *Dante e i segni: Saggi per una storia intellettuale di Dante Alighieri; “Chiosar con altro testo”: Leggere Dante nel Trecento*. Reviewed by:

*Albert Russell Ascoli,* *Speculum* 78, No. 4 (2003): 1241-44.


**Boyde, Patrick.** *Human Vices and Human Worth in Dante’s “Comedy.”* Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Reviewed by:

*Steven Botterill,* *Speculum*, 78 (2003), 147-49.


*Dennis Looney,* *Speculum* 78, no. 3 (Jul., 2003): 934-36.

- Fabian Alfie, *Speculum*, 78 (2003), 177-79.


Sparks and Seeds: *Medieval Literature and Its Afterlife: Essays in Honor of John Freccero*. Edited by Alison Cornish and Dana E. Stewart. Reviewed by:

Smith, Graham. *The Stone of Dante and Later Florentine Celebrations of the Poet.* Reviewed by: 