


<b>Institution: University of St Andrews</b> 
<b>Unit of Assessment: 28 – Modern Languages and Linguistics</b>
<b>Title of case study: <i>Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana</i>: The St Andrews series of public lectures on Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i> and related events</b>
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> <p>The impact of the <i>Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana</i> (LDA) on a wide and varied public is primarily cultural and social. The lecture series in St Andrews presents the newest academic research on Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i> directly, significantly increasing public understanding and appreciation of this key part of Western cultural heritage. Video recordings of the lectures on the website extend the geographical reach of the impact globally. Complementary events invited the public to reflect on and engage with aspects of contemporary society in the light of Dante's ideas about good and evil. Collaborations used research on Dante to inform artistic reflection.</p>
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> <p>The research underpinning the LDA can be seen in <b>two phases</b>. <b>First</b>, the research activity of the organisers (the key researchers) prior to the setting up of the LDA series; <b>second</b>, the lectures (and complementary events), which <b>continuously and simultaneously</b> underpin the impact of the project at every meeting, and subsequently in the published volumes (with the University of Notre Dame Press) which will follow.</p> <p>The <b>key researchers</b> responsible for the LDA are <b>Dr Robert Wilson</b> and <b>Dr Claudia Rossignoli</b>, lecturers in the Italian Department of the School of Modern Languages since 1995 and 2004, respectively. Both have been researching and publishing on Dante and Dante reception over a number of years (detailed in section 3), leading to the LDA project. The analysis of patterns of prophecy and diachronic vs synchronic readings in Dante's <i>Commedia</i> (RW) touches on key issues at the heart of the <i>Lectura Dantis</i> tradition as a critical approach. Research on the Dante commentary tradition (CR) is crucial to the production of new readings, the substance of the LDA. The key researchers have delivered seven of the fifty-two lectures in the LDA series up to July 2013 (almost the half-way point). The <i>lectura</i> on <i>Inferno</i> Canto 11 (RW) discussing the moral basis of Dante's organisation of hell fed directly into the public discussion events in Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery.</p> <p>The <i>Lectura Dantis</i> as a research activity is a traditional format with a 700 year old history, which is well established and recognised in the field of Dante Studies, and in Italian culture more generally. However, it does not fit more traditional models for research in which the normal trajectory is publication, dissemination/engagement, then impact. The modern format is a series of individual public lectures on all 100 cantos of Dante's <i>Divina Commedia</i>, which are subsequently collected and published. Thus the area of research is very precisely circumscribed – the individual canto of the <i>Commedia</i> – and takes place within a very clearly defined tradition of study: Dante Studies in general and previous <i>Lecturae</i> of the same canto in particular. It is in the nature of the <i>Lectura</i> that directly related research is followed immediately by public engagement and impact in the lectures themselves, followed afterwards by further dissemination/public engagement through publication. <b>The impact will be more fully described in section 4, but has to be mentioned here precisely because research and impact are inseparable in this tradition.</b></p> <p>Within the period to the end of July 2013, the LDA has brought directly to the public thirty-eight speakers from twenty-five different institutions in the USA, Australia, Italy, the UK and Ireland, from some of the most established scholars as well as some of the newest researchers on Dante. In each lecture the public are presented with established ideas alongside new insights and interpretations as varied as the speakers. The series is thus characterised by diversity and a combination of tradition and innovation. The particular format of the LDA adds a new dimension to the research. The <i>lecturae</i> are presented in a series of day-long meetings, normally with four different speakers, concluding with a round table discussion open to the public. There is thus an in-built facilitation of the discussion and shaping of research not just through interaction with other experts but with the general public too.</p>

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

**Relevant Publications** (research on Dante):

Both organisers have been researching and publishing on Dante both prior to and during the current census period, these are the most relevant peer-reviewed publications:

- 1) R. Wilson, "Quandoque bonus dormitat Dantes?": the treatment of Dante's errors in the "Trecento" commentaries' Wilson, *Rassegna Europea di Letteratura Italiana*, 29-30 (2007), pp. 141-155.
- 2) C. Rossignoli, "Dar materia di ragionamento": Strategie interpretative della *Sposizione*', in *Lodovico Castelvetro: Filologia e asceti*. Gigliucci, R. (Ed.). (Bulzoni Editore, 2007), pp. 91-113.
- 3) R. Wilson, *Prophecies and Prophecy in Dante's Commedia* (Olschki, 2008) Monograph.
- 4) C. Rossignoli, 'Castelvetro on Dante: Tradition, Innovation and Mockery in the *Sposizione*', in P. Nasti, C. Rossignoli (Eds), *Interpreting Dante: Essays on the Traditions of Dante Commentary*, (Notre Dame University Press, 2013), pp. 359-388.
- 5) R. Wilson, 'Allegory as avoidance in Dante's early commentators: "bella menzogna" to "roza cortecchia"', in P. Nasti, C. Rossignoli (Eds), *Interpreting Dante: Essays on the Traditions of Dante Commentary*, (Notre Dame University Press, 2013), pp. 33-62.

The LDA has been financially supported within the University by the School of Modern Languages and by the Saint Andrews Institute of Mediaeval Studies, and received external grants:

- 1/10/09 → 31/10/09 XGLI02, £500, Italian Institute of Culture
- 1/01/10 → 31/12/10 XCHI06, £300, Society for Italian Studies
- 1/03/10 → 31/12/10 XEGI04, £500, Italian Institute of Culture
- 1/10/10 → 31/12/10 XCHI09, £500, Italian Institute of Culture
- 15/02/11 → 31/07/11 XGLI05, £500, Italian Institute of Culture

Stanza 2012 (the International Poetry Festival) received funding from Culture Ireland for one of the LDA 'My Dante' poetry reading event speakers.

**4. Details of the impact**

**The *Lectura Dantis Andreapolitana* series:**

Although the *Lectura Dantis* as a tradition is well-known in Italy, the LDA will be the **first complete series presented in the UK**. Its impact in terms of **reach** is therefore not just to bring Dante research out of the academic world to a wider public, but also to introduce to a British public a cultural practice well-established in Italy but almost unknown in the UK.

(The LDA began in 2009, dates of the individual meetings to July 2013 are: 9.10.2009; 12.3.2010; 30.4.2010; 8.10.2010; 11.3.2011; 6.5.2011; 7.10.2011; 25.11.2011; 9.3.2012; 4.5.2012, 16.11.2012; 15.3.2013; 12.4.2013.)

In terms of **significance** the impact of the LDA has been to increase awareness and understanding of Dante, and change attitudes towards his text and ideas related to it. Questionnaires [corroborating source - CS6] for the purpose of gauging impact were only introduced in the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the LDA (25.11.11). These directly asked those in attendance if the lectures had made them think differently about the significance of Dante. Responses to this question varied across meetings but generally between 60% and 80% of those who replied had had their ideas about Dante changed in some way. Individual responses testify to the significant contribution of the series to enriching the cultural life of St Andrews. A member of the public who has regularly attended provided an individual statement about his experience [CS1] in which he states '*Now thanks to the Lectura I have been able to widen and deepen my understanding of this extraordinary poem*'. Another indicative comment left on the LDA facebook page [CS10] states: '*The riches we take home each time from these meetings cannot be underestimated. ... The big surprise is how contemporary with ourselves Dante feels.*'

**The Website:**

An important feature of the *lectura* tradition is its locality, reflected in the name of each *lectura* – *romana*, *turicensis* etc. However, since St Andrews is small, and not easily accessible, so that the

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audience at the lectures is mainly local (although people have also travelled from, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Leeds, Dublin and Belfast) the website is important to widen access. We decided early on to video record all lectures as a strategy to widen access to the series. Thus video recordings of the lectures are subsequently made available on the LDA website in order to reach a worldwide audience. From September 2011 (when the site began) until the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2013 it has been visited by people from 707 different cities and towns in 68 different countries worldwide (on all 5 continents) [CS9]. Since there is no general feedback section on the website, this is primarily evidence of geographical reach.

The LDA has developed the traditional *Lectura Dantis* model to include complementary events alongside the lecture series, bringing research on different aspects of Dante's work to bear on contemporary issues and creative activity. The main activities in the census period have been:

**'The Dante Debate 1 & 2'** (22.4.2012 and 29.4.2012). These public discussions on topics of perennial interest used Dante's text as a starting point for consideration of two questions from a variety of perspectives. The first discussion was on the nature of sin and evil; the second on punishment, forgiveness, and redemption. The format of the discussion was a presentation first by one of the LDA organisers (RW) of Dante's view on sin and evil / punishment and redemption – specifically on the moral structures of his imagining of hell and of Purgatory, directly informed by the speaker's current research on this within the LDA. Against this backdrop invited speakers gave a short reflection on this from their perspective, a philosopher, CEO of Sacro (a Community Justice Voluntary Organisation) / a lawyer working with The Howard League for Penal Reform Scotland (a Penal Reform charity) / the press officer for Victim Support Scotland / the Project Manager of Circle (charity working with families of offenders). The discussion was then opened up to the public in a question time format.

The impact of these events was to demonstrate how a 14<sup>th</sup> century Italian text dealt with issues which still confront us today, bringing together a range of speakers and members of the public, with the research questions on Dante's moral structuring of Hell as the central starting point of discussion and reflection. This offered all participants, speakers and the audience drawn from the public, either an entirely new perspective on these issues, or advanced their awareness and understanding of the issues. Held in Glasgow's largest Art Gallery on two Sunday afternoons [CS3b] these events reached a wide public audience as shown in the video recordings of both sessions now on the LDA website [CS9], and questionnaire returns [CS7]. In questionnaires 66% of respondents at the first meeting indicated that the sessions had made them re-think their views on the issues. One respondent commented *'You can talk back, it was a live debate'*. One of the speakers, the CEO of SACRO (formerly Deputy Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police) [CS2] commented both on the personal benefit of participating, *'All of this experience enabled me to personally reflect on my life experience and the role I undertake in civic society, with much benefit gained by informing and reinforcing the value base from which I begin'*, and on the contribution the event made to public awareness, *'There was clearly much reflection and indeed some repositioning of attitudes among the sizable audience who attended. One woman approached me at the conclusion and praised the event for bringing a measured and reasoned discussion to a topic that is so often dramatically polarised in the popular media, increasing public anxiety over evil and its place in our society.'* In addition the *Glasgow Life* organisation was a direct beneficiary of this collaboration in which the LDA organised and provided the event. The Learning and Access Curator [CS3] noted that the events met *Glasgow Life's* social and cultural objectives, and commented in particular *'We at Kelvingrove were delighted by the quality of the Lectura Dantis events and were impressed by the number of visitors who attended. Our visitors engaged in a high level with the debates and the debates attracted adults of all ages.'*

**'My Dante'**. In collaboration with Stanza 2012 (Scotland's International Poetry Festival), the LDA organised a session on 16.3.2012 in St Andrews in which invited speakers and members of the public read and commented on their preferred passages from Dante. This collaboration benefitted the audience in increasing knowledge and appreciation of Dante *'Thank you for "introducing" me to Dante'* was one questionnaire comment [CS8]. The festival director noted the success of the event and in particular of the expertise of the LDA organisers, commenting [CS4]: *'It is extremely helpful and valuable to us that Dr Robert Wilson and Dr Claudia Rossignoli, lecturers in the Italian Department, were able to supply us with quality content for the Festival event in terms of helping*

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*us to maintain a wide historical and cultural breadth to our programme, and making the often difficult area of classic poetry in Italian and easily accessible to our audiences’.*

**Collaborations with the Steven Campbell Trust:**

**‘The eyes have it’.** An exhibition of drawings by Tom Chambers 3<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> of March 2012 in iota - the gallery of UNLIMITED STUDIOS, 25 Hyndland St Glasgow. The drawings, based on the portrait, explore images inspired by Dante’s influence on European literature. The exhibition is linked with the LDA through the Stephen Campbell Trust and the collaboration has influenced the artist’s understanding of and ideas about Dante in relation to his own work. The LDA contributed a short introduction to Dante given by Robert Wilson at a private viewing to open the exhibition on 2.3.2012.

**‘London Print Studio Art workshop’** (20-21.7.12) run by the Steven Campbell Trust and the London Print Studio with the artist Faisal Abdu’Allah. Taking parts of Dante’s text chosen and presented by the organisers of the LDA (Rossignoli & Wilson) as a possible starting point, the young artists attending the workshop produced work using different photographic techniques.

**‘Writing into Art workshop’** (19.6.13) run by the Steven Campbell Trust in Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow, in conjunction with a two day conference on Ekphrasis at the University of Strathclyde. At the workshop Robert Wilson gave a presentation to the young artists attending the workshop on parts of Dante’s text related to the themes of the session.

The impact of the on-going collaboration with the Steven Campbell trust and Tom Chambers [CS5] in particular, is in bringing Dante’s text into a discussion and reflection on artistic representation, and to wider questions on the relationship between literature and art. The reach therefore is not just in terms of the groups involved, from academic literary research to working artist, but also in taking an understanding of a literary text into a different artistic medium.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Individuals testimonies to the intellectual and cultural benefits to the public:

[CS1] Member of the public who has attended almost all LDA *lecturae* and events

[CS2] Chief Executive of SACRO, (Scottish Community Justice organisation which works with offenders)

[CS3] Learning and Access Curator, Glasgow Life: Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum

[CS4] Festival Director, Stanza International Poetry Festival, 2012

[CS5] Artist and Member of the Board of the Steven Campbell Trust

Other sources:

[CS6] Questionnaires returned by attendees at the lectures. These corroborate the significance of the impact of the LDA core lecture series for members of the general public.

[CS7] Questionnaires returned by members of the public at the Dante Debates in Kelvingrove, These corroborate the significance and reach of the impact of the Dante debate events for members of the general public.

[CS8] Questionnaires returned by the audience at the Stanza My Dante event. These corroborate the significance and reach of the impact of the My Dante for members of a wider public as the collaboration with the Stanza 2012 brought more people from further afield to St Andrews.

[CS9] LDA website <http://lecturadantisandreapolitana.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/> - and statistics from Google Analytics. The website provides corroboration in a number of ways. Video recordings of the core lecture series and of the Dante Debates, show audience attendance and response, thus illustrating impact. The Dante Debates recordings show contributions made on the day by members of the public. Google analytics information demonstrates reach in geographical terms, illustrating that our strategy for taking a localised event to a wider audience has been successful

[CS10] Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lectura-Dantis-Andreapolitana/285620091464188> Corroborates the significance and reach of the impact though comments left and likes by people from a variety of locations.