

DOCTORAL BULLETIN BOARD

Recent doctorates awarded in Italian Studies by academic institutions in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

REBECCA BOWEN

Institution: University of Oxford

Supervisors: Prof. Elena Lombardi; Prof. Jaś Elsner

Thesis title: Figures of Love: Amor from Antiquity to the Italian Middle Ages (winner of the 2020 Society for Italian Studies Postgraduate Prize)

Short abstract: Love is a slippery subject; its effect can be physical—capturing, striking, controlling—but its physical form is not always clearly described. This ambiguity is exacerbated by the fact that the Latin word *amor*, the root of ‘love’ in romance languages, is both an abstract concept and the name of a series of famous figures, from the Cupid of Classical Antiquity to the courtly Lord of Love developed in medieval poetry, and even the Christian God. Tracing the tendrils of traditions that link these figures into one history of *amor*, this thesis examines visual as well as literary culture to arrive at an overview of the many looks of Love, from classical Rome to pre-Renaissance Italy. As well as canonical authors including Virgil, Ovid, and Dante, I explore the depiction of love in works of lesser-known late antique poets (Ausonius, Dracontius, Ennodius), various medieval sources (from the *Roman d’Enéas* to the *laude* of Jacopone da Todi), a number of Christian exegetical traditions, and a broad spread of examples from visual culture, from Roman Imperial wall-painting to late antique silverware and thirteenth-century manuscript illuminations. Rather than seeking to separate and divide the multitude of meanings that crowd around this single noun, this thesis focuses on the threads of continuity that bring the sacred and secular into touch, placing love on a spectrum of meanings—from the erotic to the divine—that often defy clear categorization. As well as a map to the survival of Cupid in the Middle Ages, this is a study of the enduring ambiguity of *amor*, the vast signifying power of love, and the slipperiness of the many figures that have been used to represent it.

Date of conferment: 22 June 2020

Internal examiner: Prof. Simon Gilson

External examiner: Prof. Ita MacCarthy (Durham University)

CLAUDIA DELLACASA

Institution: Durham University

Supervisors: Dr Katrin Wehling-Giorgi; Dr Fusako Innami

Thesis title: Italo Calvino in Japan, Japan in Italo Calvino: A Cross-Cultural Encounter

Short abstract: Italo Calvino (1923–1985) travelled to Japan in the autumn of 1976 and, throughout his career, got acquainted with Japanese literature and culture: this encounter is attested to by the ‘Japanese shelf’ of his Roman library and by several authorial reflections, but has been granted little attention so far. The aim of this research project is to highlight for the first time the semiotic relevance of Calvino’s contact with Japanese cultural alterity, as an epitome of the author’s gradual relativization of Eurocentrism, logocentrism, and anthropocentrism. In particular, this study addresses Japanese gardens in light of their role in Calvino’s reflections on the interdependency between the human and other-than-human. This deconstruction of a hierarchical humanism is discussed by interlacing trans-cultural and post-human coordinates, which illuminate the poetical and philosophical mature formulation of Calvino’s age-long ecological awareness. Moreover, if Buddhist meditation, as well as many poetic, artistic, and architectural expressions that capture Calvino’s attention in Japan can be understood as forms of *praxis*, they are here put in dialogue with the author’s development of dialectical materialism over time, especially in his last completed work, *Palomar* (1983). By investigating Calvino’s treatment of perspective changes, language, silence, void, time, and death in his works, this thesis brings to the fore the manifold contradictions, potentialities, and dialectical processes that inform these themes in Calvino’s oeuvre, which fruitfully interact with his exploration of Japanese (and in general non-Western) art, literature, and thought in the late 1970s.

Date of conferment: 2 July 2021

Internal examiner: Prof. Charles Burdett

External examiner: Prof. Martin McLaughlin (University of Oxford)

REBEKAH LOCKE

Institution: University of Bristol

Supervisors: Dr Rhiannon Daniels; Dr Tristan Kay

Thesis title: The Role of Dante’s *Purgatorio* in the Development and Representation of Purgatory from the Early Fourteenth Century to the Council of Trent in the Sixteenth Century

Short abstract: This thesis studies the development of the doctrine of Purgatory in the Italian peninsula during the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Specifically, it considers the responses to Dante’s *Purgatorio* in literary and visual texts, as this work is considered to be the first example of an independent and hopeful realm of Purgatory. My comparative and interdisciplinary analysis seeks to address the lack of critical attention given to literary and artistic representations of Purgatory in the period following Dante’s landmark poem.

The thesis is divided into four chapters which focus on Dante's reception in different literary and visual texts. The first chapter examines vernacular commentaries and manuscript illuminations of Dante's *Purgatorio*. The second and third chapters analyse visual depictions of Purgatory in the medieval and early modern periods, focusing on frescoes and altarpieces respectively. The final chapter examines the treatment of Purgatory in Federico Frezzi's *Il Quadriregio* (1394–1403). Each chapter considers the reception of both the geography and theology of Dante's *Purgatorio*, analysing the themes of landscape, transformation, punishment, and prayer.

My findings suggest that, despite its innovation and extensive transmission, *Purgatorio* has a limited influence upon subsequent literary and visual depictions of the realm. Indeed, in addition to Dantean influence, there is evidence that the medieval visionary tradition, the writings of theologians, and hagiography play a significant role in the developing representation of Purgatory. This research therefore challenges the critical conception of Dante's middle realm as an exceptional culmination of previous traditions that transformed the later portrayal of Purgatory. By analysing a range of different media, this thesis not only sheds new light on the reception of Dante's *Purgatorio* but also provides a more detailed account of how the doctrine of Purgatory was perceived, transmitted, and developed in the Italian peninsula at this time.

Date of conferment: pending (due to the COVID-19 pandemic)

Internal examiner: Dr Lucy E. G. Donkin

External examiner: Prof. Matthew Treherne (University of Leeds)