

ANDREW GRATTAN & THE WEBSITE andrewgrattan.org

Dante, *The Divine Comedy*; Shakespeare, *First Folio*; Grattan, *The Christ Colloquy*

The design of my website is based on the concrete reality of ‘Shakespeare’s Staircase’, the ‘DNA helix’ spiral stairway, at the core of The British Institute of Florence, and ‘Shakespeare’s DNA Canto’, from *The Christ Colloquy* Book II *Letteratura*, features at the centre of my website. The literary critic, Harold Bloom, in *The Western Canon* (1994) presents Shakespeare as the first centre of The Western Canon, and Dante as the second centre of the Canon. When I was 35, I fell in courtly love with the librarian at The British Institute of Florence, April Child, who has the face of Our Lady, as it was embroidered on the Marian vestment that a Benedictine monk, Fr. Wilfrid Sollom OSB, wore on Saturdays and Marian Feast Days, when I was a novice monk at Adonai Abbey, in Berkshire, England. The words ‘April Child’ link ‘the April Easter’ of Dante with ‘the child of April’, Shakespeare. I have placed April above Dante’s Beatrice, creating a paradigm shift in The Western Canon, lifting me into the company of Dante and Shakespeare, and confirming me, as a new and third canon centre. T. S. Eliot’s famous quotation that “Dante and Shakespeare divide the modern world between them; there is no third” also features prominently on my website. The poem is in seven books for both Shakespeare’s ‘Seven Ages of Man’, and the Seven Deadly Sins.

- *The Divine Comedy* is the preeminent work of Italian Literature and a masterpiece of World Literature. A second experience of courtly love in Florence, and the unique ability to place April above Beatrice, automatically lift me into the company of Dante and Shakespeare. The words April Child, at their most profound level, also refer to the Paschal Mystery, as described in the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church, graciously facilitating a straightforward elevation into the company of the two poets. Authoring *The Christ Colloquy*, is a privileged opportunity to create a new masterpiece of World Literature.
- As Dante and Shakespeare are linked via the two words, April and Child, similarly, the Logos, Jesus, is linked with the new poet, the literary logos, Andrew, via the two words, More and John, which refer to Thomas More, author of *Utopia* and St. John, author of the sublime canonical gospel.
- I was discovered for my work, by Professor Robin Kirkpatrick of Robinson College, Cambridge who has read my new *Commedia* of 2013, and said that it is “strange and strong”, the criteria required by the Yale literary critic, Harold Bloom, for a new literary work to be ‘canonical’ and form part of The Western Canon.
- Harold Bloom saw literature as a competition, and the poem has necessarily been designed for a highly educated readership, as primarily, a set-piece ‘DNA theory’ of the Literature of The Western Canon, based on my “discovery” of ‘Shakespeare’s Staircase’ in Florence.
- The poem should permit the new poet to achieve ‘national writer’ status, in line with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford and Dante’s House and Museum in Florence.
- I have accessed the idea of the triumvirate of the three great Renaissance artists, Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo, being paralleled by the three great global writers, “Dante, Will & Eliot’s third”.
- I have accessed the concept of the Italian ‘*tre corone*’, of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio being paralleled by the new global ‘*tre corone*’ of “Dante, Will & Eliot’s third”.
- Harold Bloom once described the late poet, Sir Geoffrey Hill, as “the strongest British poet now active”, and Hill was knighted for his services to literature in 2012. I am both an ex-Joycean and an ex-Miltonist, and I suffered from Bloom’s ‘anxiety of influence’ as an undergraduate at King’s College, London, finally rejecting them both. This form of literary

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paranoia has enabled me to write as a strange and strong new poet, justifiably assuming the new literary identity of ‘the greyhound’.

- Dante’s tomb is in Ravenna, and the principal statue of him is at Santa Croce in Florence. There is also the *Centro Dantesco dei Frati Minori* in Ravenna, with a *Museo Dantesco* inside. Mass is celebrated on his anniversary each year in Ravenna. It is Dante’s 700th Anniversary in 2021, which will be celebrated world-wide, but especially in Florence, Ravenna and Rome, and at *The Dante Society of America*.
- The Papacy see Dante as ‘a prophet’ and he is known as ‘the poet of popes’. I have treated these two aspects of the poet, engaging with two papal documents, *Altissimi Cantus* (1965), and *In Praeclara Summorum*, (1921). Benedict XV in 1921, explicitly referred to “the intimate union of Dante with this Chair of Peter”, and I have also addressed this union in the poem.
- Crucially, I have approached Dante on the strictly academic terms of *The Dante Society of America* and Professor Albert Ascoli’s text, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (CUP, 2008), which examines the notions *auctor* and *auctoritas*, in order to compete with Dante as ‘the greatest of poets’, by engaging with elite, contemporary secular scholarship. *The DSA* publish the academic journal, *Dante Studies*, annually (John Hopkins University Press).
- The poem, in also designed to help “save” the intellectual integrity of the Humanities, currently in crisis, based on my “discovery” of ‘Shakespeare’s Staircase’, at the core of The British Institute, confirming the Institute as a new tourist destination, it having hosted a second experience of courtly love in Florence, vitally, when the new poet was 35, the age of Dante’s ‘pilgrim’. Andrew & April, ‘the greyhound & Child’, eclipse Dante & Beatrice.
- The new literary protagonist of Andrew ‘of the wood’ is both ‘the eternal pilgrim’ at 40, and ‘the greyhound’ in the poem, based on true life experience described on the website. The greyhound “saves” the Church of today, from the abuse crisis and scandals, with a silver “A”, a new literary “gospel”. Benedict XV referred to *The Divine Comedy*, as the “fifth gospel”, and the new literary figures of Mary and Jesus recognize *The Christ Colloquy* as the “sixth gospel”. Christ and Our Lady also acknowledge Andrew to be Dante’s ‘Greyhound’.
- I have made reference to the factions and parties of Dante’s day, and the Ghibellines, and the black and white Guelphs, who are echoed by the ‘white’ ‘Petrine’ Pope Benedict XVI, and the ‘black’ ‘Jesuit’ Pope, Francis, mediated by the ‘grey’ of the Greyhound evangelist. I used to help Fr. Wilfrid Sollom OSB, who was devoted to Our Lady, with his crossword in evening calefactory at Adonai Abbey, and this ties in with the black and white floor tiles at *Il British*, The British Institute of Florence, and April’s black cardigan and white shirt.
- *The Pontifical Council for Culture* in Rome has a Dante Centenary-Scientific Committee (Dante 1321-2021), and *The Christ Colloquy* is also a ‘sacred’ and a ‘holy’ work. The greyhound must necessarily “save” the Church of today, out of duty, with a new literary “gospel”. The poem is uncontroversial and features truthful outspokenness, regarding negative aspects of the modern Church, as the greyhound lives for “truth and virtue”. The poem is also influenced by Newman, author of *The Dream of Gerontius*, a poem inspired by *The Divine Comedy*, and who is considered to rank next to Dante, for the Roman Catholic penetration of eternity.
- In the poem, Andrew ‘of the wood’ forms the ‘order of the Vine’, a new religious order for men, to actively begin “saving” the Church of today in practical terms, thereby rejecting the current intellectual and spiritual mediocrity of the Church, lack of great men, and corruption and cronyism.
- The artistic success of *The Christ Colloquy* depends on its recognition as a new modern masterpiece, becoming a triumvirate with *The Divine Comedy* and the *First Folio*.