



2022

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Recommended Citation

Ingallinella, Laura (2022) "Foul Tales, Public Knowledge: Bringing Dante's 'Divine Comedy' to Wikipedia," *Bibliotheca Dantesca: Journal of Dante Studies*: Vol. 5, Article 9.
Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/bibdant/vol5/iss1/9>

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***FOUL TALES, PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE:
BRINGING DANTE'S DIVINE COMEDY TO WIKIPEDIA***

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This contribution discusses WikiDante, a set of best practices for the implementation of content related to the *Divine Comedy* on Wikipedia, chiefly designed for (yet not limited to) the undergraduate classroom. Developed as a digital project involving undergraduate students in partnership with Wiki Education, WikiDante consisted of two iterations, the first of which created or revised entries on the women from Dante's recent history mentioned in the poem. For two decades, scholars have treated Wikipedia as the proverbial elephant in the room—shunned, ignored, or shamefully used only in lack of more anointed tools. This essay explores the benefits of using Wikipedia for digital scholarly activism in Dante Studies, outlining the challenges and educational outcomes of organizing editing campaigns on Wikipedia focusing on Dante and his work. After discussing the project's components, the essay indicates future venues for the applicability of this framework by scholars and educators interested in digital public scholarship and knowledge equity.

Keywords: *Divine Comedy*, Wikipedia, Women's history, Knowledge equity, Digital public scholarship

1. *Why Dante and Wikipedia?*

While walking through the ring of the Malebolge housing panderers, Dante and Virgil have a short encounter with Venèdico Caccianemico, a politician from thirteenth-century Bologna.¹ Despite his attempt to hide, Venèdico is recognized by the pilgrim and forced to confess the action that consigned him to eternal

¹ I wish to thank Helaine Blumenthal and Ian Ramjohn at Wiki Education; their support throughout the two iterations of WikiDante has been invaluable in bringing this project to fruition. The iterations of the project discussed in this article have taken place during two subsequent semesters, Spring and Fall 2021, at Wellesley College as part of my courses on Dante's *Divine Comedy* in English translation. I thank the students who participated in these two iterations; their work supplied the data discussed in this essay. All errors are my own. Unless otherwise noted, all links included were last accessed on June 29, 2022.

damnation: he handed his younger sister, Ghisolabella, to a local nobleman with whom he hoped to build an alliance, “no matter how the foul tale goes around” (come che suoni la sconcia novella, *Inf.* 18.57).² This exchange exemplifies much of the *Divine Comedy*'s approach to the politics of knowledge. With this soul's confession and throughout the poem, Dante seeks to establish a community sustained by shared knowledge and its pursuit. By its very nature, the poem invites searching commentary. Ghisolabella Caccianemico's story may have been well known to Dante's audience, and the sensation of such a scandalous tale would be easily remembered by those who stumbled upon Venèdico alongside the pilgrim; and yet, Dante also works to unsettle this familiarity, inviting readers to perform ethical discernment, forge unexpected connections, and search for deeper truths. Many digital projects on Dante and his works follow precisely the epistemic pathway set out within the *Divine Comedy* and aim to create or give access to ontological systems that allow readers to understand the complex network surrounding Dante and the poem's broad history of sources, commentary, interpretation, and reception.³

In this essay, I will describe WikiDante, an open set of guidelines and best practices for the implementation of content related to Dante and the *Divine Comedy* on Wikipedia. WikiDante was first developed as a collaborative digital project in a seminar-size undergraduate class dedicated to reading the *Divine Comedy* in English over a semester. The project, which was designed with public-facing engagement in mind as a primary goal, was carried out in partnership with Wiki Education, a non-profit organization that works with university instructors, cultural institutions, and groups of scholars based in North America to support them in sharing field-specific knowledge with the general

² On Ghisolabella, see Vincenzo Presta, “Caccianemico, Ghisolabella dei,” *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970), available online at https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ghisolabella-dei-caccianemico_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/. The entry largely relies on Guido Zaccagnini, “Personaggi danteschi in Bologna,” *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 64 (1914): 42-47.

³ Among such initiatives are digital projects which have long been—or are quickly becoming—cornerstones of Dante Studies. I will only cite a few of the most recent ones: Hypermedia Dante Network, dir. Michelangelo Zaccarello, <https://hdn.dantenetwork.it/>; on his lexicon, see Vocabolario Dantesco, dir. Paola Manni and Lino Leonardi, <http://www.vocabolariodantesco.it/>; Illuminated Dante Project, dir. Gennaro Ferrante, <https://www.dante.unina.it/>; Dante Today, dir. Arielle Saiber and Elizabeth Coggeshall, <https://research.bowdoin.edu/dante-today/>; and the bilingual Bibliografia Dantesca Internazionale / International Dante Bibliography, <https://bibliografia.dantesca.it/>, curated by the Società Dantesca Italiana and the Dante Society of America.

public on open digital collaboration projects such as Wikipedia and Wikidata.⁴ Two iterations of WikiDante took place over two subsequent semesters in 2021. While taking a course on the *Divine Comedy* in English translation, students were asked to engage in a set of training modules and activities culminating with the publication on Wikipedia of new or substantially revised entries dealing with Dante and his poem. In the first iteration of WikiDante, which served as a pilot project to test WikiDante's feasibility and outcomes, students were asked to choose between writing a new entry or revising an existing entry dealing with a woman from Dante's recent history that appeared or was mentioned in the poem; they were later asked to outline and assess their research process in a final essay. In the project's second iteration, students were not bound to a theme-specific editing campaign on the platform but were instead free to select a topic based on their interests; they developed their contributions to Wikipedia while writing a traditional research paper on their chosen research subject. The steps and guiding principles that inform WikiDante, which I will outline and discuss below, can be translated to a broader range of applications. Intended as an open toolkit, WikiDante could be employed by different groups who intend to devote time and resources, in and out of the classroom, to bring knowledge and research on the *Divine Comedy* and Dante's work at large onto a digital platform for the general public. The case studies and data discussed here will primarily focus on Wikipedia in English, with occasional forays into foreign languages for the sake of comparison; however, the principles and best practices developed in these case studies can be easily translated into any of the near-three hundred languages represented on the platform, most of which already have entries related to Dante and the *Divine Comedy*.

Wikipedia's merits and structural problems as a knowledge repository are well known to anyone who may have conducted an online search related to almost any realm of knowledge.⁵ The

⁴ "Mission and Vision," *Wiki Education*, <https://wikiedu.org/>. A call for instructors or institutions interested in teaming up with Wiki Education is issued each semester and can be found at the Wiki Education Dashboard, <https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/>, alongside a library of training modules and information on previous and current courses taught in partnership with this non-profit organization. Many of the training tools used for WikiDante and mentioned in this essay are available on this platform and were developed by Wiki Education thanks to the feedback from previous instructors; for the sake of conciseness, I refer to the Wiki Education Dashboard for further information on these tools.

⁵ On the platform's history, see Joseph Reagle, *Good Faith Collaboration: The Culture of Wikipedia* (Boston: MIT Press, 2012); Andrew Lih, *The Wikipedia*

platform's reputation among scholarly communities and in higher education changed substantially over the years. An open repository based on a community-based infrastructure, Wikipedia is deliberately devoid of the components that typically validate reference works or digital projects in scholarly communities (such as editorial boards, project directors, and systems of peer review prior to acceptance). On the contrary, the community that animates the platform takes pride in the fact that anyone can contribute to the platform. Since its inception in 2001, one of Wikipedia's founding principles is that anyone can edit the platform as long as they respect the set of core content policies developed by the community: "Verifiability" (V), "Neutral-Point-of-View" (NPOV), and "No Original Research" (NOR).⁶ Editing Wikipedia does not even require setting up a dedicated account; unregistered users, solely identified by their IP address, can contribute as much as the most active editors.

In higher education and among scholars in all fields, the dominant discussion about Wikipedia often stops at whether one should use it—with several institutions, for example, implementing policies prohibiting students from citing Wikipedia entries in their written assignments.⁷ Wikipedia itself officially discourages users from citing its entries instead of reliable scholarly sources and advocates for a different, more nuanced approach to the platform—namely, as an open repository in which entries direct towards secondary sources such as peer-reviewed publications.⁸ Several reasons inform this cautionary warning. Given the open, ever-evolving, and community-based nature of the platform, a problematic statement may dwell in a Wikipedia entry for hours, days, or years until it is recognized as such and flagged by a user with enough expertise in a given field. Even more time may pass

Revolution: How a Bunch of Nobodies Created the World's Greatest Encyclopedia (New York: Hyperion, 2009); and the contributions to *Wikipedia @ 20: Stories of an Incomplete Revolution*, ed. Joseph Reagle and Jakie Koerner (Boston: MIT Press, 2020), available online at <https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/>.

⁶ Wikipedia, s.v. "Wikipedia: Core Content Policies," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Core_content_policies. The three policies are interrelated; for guidelines on how to implement them in the course of a project such as WikiDante, see below.

⁷ The situation is, however, much more complicated than what mandatory policies such as these may entail. For example, citations from Wikipedia in peer-reviewed publications have increased dramatically in recent years: see Robert Tomaszewski and Karen I. MacDonald, "A Study of Citations to Wikipedia in Scholarly Publications," *Science & Technology Libraries* 35 (2016): 246–61.

⁸ Wikipedia, s.v. "Wikipedia:Citing Wikipedia," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citing_Wikipedia.

until that statement is revised and the issue is solved. A statement could be in want of revision or improvement for many reasons: it may need a reference to a reliable secondary source; it may be outdated because it relies, implicitly or explicitly, on secondary sources whose claims and theoretical frameworks have since been rectified or updated; it may simply be representing incompletely the state of the art pertaining to a given topic; or, even worse, it may not address issues of equitability and fairness in representing different communities and identities.

Unsurprisingly, the Wikipedia entries—or lack thereof—related to Dante and his poem are affected by the same problems. I opened this essay by using Dante's reference to Ghisolabella Caccianemico as an entry point for the poet's interest in sharing stories that mattered, no matter how sordid, with a vast community of readers. Ghisolabella did not even have an entry on the English version of Wikipedia before a WikiDante contributor filled this gap during the project's first iteration.⁹ Among the fifteen women appearing or mentioned in the poem who were selected as a sample for WikiDante's pilot project, nine (Alagia Fieschi, Beatrice d'Este, Cianghella della Tosa, Gaia da Camino, Giovanna da Montefeltro, Ghisolabella, Matelda, Nella Donati, Sapia Salvani) did not have a Wikipedia entry before WikiDante; one (Joanna of Gallura, daughter of Nino Visconti and Beatrice d'Este) had one "stub," that is, a severely underdeveloped article in need of expansion; one (Constance of Sicily) had a short biographical entry that outlined her political and dynastic relevance but made no mention of Dante; four (Cunizza da Romano, Gualdrada Berti, Pia de' Tolomei, Piccarda Donati) had entries that, while widely varying in size, were all sorely in need of substantial revisions.

Along the spectrum of this sample are present all the typical problems that affect Wikipedia as a whole: lack of content, underdeveloped materials, lack of references and citations, outdated theoretical frameworks, and erroneous statements. The case of Ghisolabella sits at the most straightforward end of the spectrum. In the face of sheer lack of content, adding a biographical entry (Fig. 1) on a thirteenth-century woman believed to have been a victim of sexual abuse absolves several important goals, in line with what Dante envisioned when he set the truth of this "foul tale" in stone.

⁹ Two entries in Italian and Catalan were published in 2006 and 2018, respectively.

Article [Talk](#) Read [Edit](#) [View history](#)

Ghisolabella Caccianemico

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Ghisolabella Caccianemico (Bologna, c. 13th century CE), also known as **Ghislabella** or **Ghisolabella dei Caccianemici**, was a noblewoman from a prominent **Guelph** family from **Bologna**. She was married to Niccolò dei Fontana, a nobleman from **Ferrara**,^{[1][2]} but she is primarily known for having been sold into prostitution to **Obizzo II d'Este**, **Marquis of Ferrara** by her brother, Venedico Caccianemico. Ghisolabella's story was famously included by **Dante Alighieri** in his poem, the *Divine Comedy*.

Contents [hide]
1 Biography
2 Role in Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i>
2.1 Overview
2.2 Significance
3 Legacy
4 References

Fig. 1. The lead section and content structure of the Wikipedia entry on Ghisolabella, developed during the first iteration of WikiDante; the full entry can be accessed (and improved) at the link https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghisolabella_Caccianemico.

Conversely, those entries that have already been on the platform for a long time warrant considerations that are much more complex and encapsulate, perhaps better than others, what it means for a scholarly community to change Wikipedia for the better. Let us discuss the case of Gualdrada Berti, a noblewoman from thirteenth-century Florence whom Dante praises as the “good Gualdrada” upon meeting her son, Guido Guerra, among the sodomites of *Inferno* 15.¹⁰ Before the first iteration of WikiDante, the Wikipedia entry dedicated to Gualdrada consisted of a section entitled “Biography,” which summarized the chapter that Giovanni Boccaccio dedicated to the noblewoman in *De mulieribus claris*.¹¹ Together with Giovanni Villani, Boccaccio lionized Gualdrada as a glorified exemplar of Florentine female virtue, and he did so by relating an anecdote that was likely very popular among the élite of mid-fourteenth-century Florence. According to this tale, Gualdrada and her beauty caught the attention of the Holy Roman Emperor Otto V during a festival held in the cathedral of Florence. When Bellincione Berti, Gualdrada’s father, granted the emperor permission to kiss his daughter, Gualdrada openly rebuked both men and proudly declared that the only man ever to kiss her would be her husband.

¹⁰ Wikipedia, s.v. “Gualdrada Berti,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gualdrada_Berti.

¹¹ Giovanni Boccaccio, *On Famous Women*, trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 219–21.

The anecdote concludes with the emperor praising Gualdrada's virtue, granting her a large dowry, and giving her in marriage to a newly minted count.

Now, scholars who have worked on Gualdrada—most notably, Pamela Benson—have long noted that this fictional anecdote, and the legacy that Gualdrada Berti enjoyed as a paragon of virtue and eloquence, was developed in late medieval Florence to bolster municipal pride through models of gendered excellence.¹² However, the Wikipedia entry on Gualdrada did not acknowledge this nuanced reading of the woman's identity and legacy; instead, it framed the anecdote recounted by Boccaccio as historical truth and essentially as the only significant component of the woman's biography. Revising a Wikipedia entry on Gualdrada thus entailed the painstaking process of reframing this story as a form of retelling presented as historical truth, borne within an intersectional tangle of political and gendered tensions (Fig. 2). As mentioned above, scholarship such as Benson's provided an indispensable backbone for this revision. Gualdrada's entry in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, which was cited for this revision, also

The image shows a screenshot of the Wikipedia article for Gualdrada Berti. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Article', 'Talk', 'Read', 'Edit', and 'View history', along with a search bar. The main heading is 'Gualdrada Berti'. Below the heading, it says 'From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia'. The lead section begins with: 'Gualdrada Berti dei Ravignani (Florence, c. 1168 - Poppi, 1226) was a member of the Ghibelline nobility of twelfth-century Florence, Italy. A descendant of the Ravignani family and daughter of the powerful Bellincione Berti, Gualdrada later married into the Conti Guido family. Her character as a pure and virtuous Florentine woman is called upon by many late medieval Italian authors, including Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio, and Giovanni Villani.^[1]' Below the lead section is a 'Contents' box with a 'hide' link, containing a numbered list: 1 Biography, 2 A Symbol of Virtue, 3 In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and 4 References.

Fig. 2. Fig. 2: The lead section and content structure of the Wikipedia entry on Gualdrada Berti, developed during the first iteration of WikiDante; the full entry can be accessed (and improved) at the link https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gualdrada_Berti. The hyperlinks marked in red (e.g., Bellincione Berti) indicate subjects that should warrant but do not yet have an entry on Wikipedia.

¹² Pamela Benson, "Gualdrada's Two Bodies: Female and Civic Virtue in Medieval Florence," in *The body and the soul in medieval literature: The J.A.W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, Tenth Series, Perugia, 1998*, eds. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 1–15.

served as a model but was significantly updated and altered to reflect up-to-date methodological frameworks.¹³

The entries for Ghisolabella and Gualdrada exemplify what kind of work is needed on the platform for entries related to Dante at all levels. Both cases relate to thirteenth-century women who do not even appear but are only mentioned in passing in the poem; these issues are only amplified in more developed entries.¹⁴ I frame these inadequacies as work to be done quite deliberately. It is a matter of perspective: the elephant in the room—the reputation and structural issues of Wikipedia—can become an opportunity rather than an obstacle. Despite several issues, Wikipedia stands as a free and open, multilingual, structured knowledge repository that can be accessed by a broad worldwide audience. There are several ways in which one—student and scholar alike—can be a Wikipedia user. One can cite Wikipedia entries, which is the practice that rightfully gathers the most censoring. One can simply read or utilize the same entries, with their backbone of references, as a starting point for further research. One can elect to use field-specific expertise to edit—and substantially improve—one or more entries.¹⁵

Aside from readers worldwide, scholarly communities also benefit from a better representation of their field and have increasingly started to gather to contribute to the platform. In medieval studies, groups of premodernists have started organizing successful projects such as Medieval Wiki, a project with the goal of improving the quality of Wikipedia entries broadly related to the Middle Ages.¹⁶

¹³ Renato Piattoli, “Ravignani, Gualdrada dei,” *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gualdrada-dei-ravignani_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/. For example, the triumphalist language reserved for Gualdrada as well as, most importantly, Dante’s *Inferno* has not been included in the Wikipedia entry; after all, this language would have been flagged as not compliant with Wikipedia’s NPOV policies.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that for this pilot project, we deliberately excluded Beatrice and Francesca da Rimini, whose entries were affected by the same issues but required a different approach because of their size and highly developed structure. Two students revised specific paragraphs of these entries during the second iteration of WikiDante, but there is still much to do. In this case, the best strategy would be to envision a collaborative editing campaign in which groups of students or scholars work on the different components of these entries, which require interdisciplinary skills, from art to music history.

¹⁵ Robert E. Cummings, “Writing knowledge: Wikipedia, public review, and peer review,” *Studies in Higher Education* 45 (2020): 950–62, 951.

¹⁶ Medieval Wiki, dir. Beth Whalley, Lucy Moore, and Fran Allfrey, <https://medievalwomenwiki.wordpress.com/>; see also Wikipedia, s.v. “Wikipedia:WikiProject MedievalWiki,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiProject_MedievalWiki.

From a purely pedagogical perspective, many publications in the past fifteen years have charted the educational outcomes offered by engaging students in editing campaigns on Wikipedia.¹⁷ Several medievalists—particularly historians and art historians—have successfully launched projects aimed at training students, primarily at the undergraduate level, to become Wikipedia editors and write or revise entries related to premodern peoples, artifacts, texts, and ideas.¹⁸

This process can be certainly carried out independently; however, interested groups in institutions in Canada and the United States may also benefit from the support offered by Wiki Education, a non-profit specifically built to function as a liaison between Wikipedia and scholarly communities.¹⁹ The organization offers instructors and project leaders support, infrastructure, and training materials, which can be tailored around customized activities and deadlines chosen by the instructor, who can monitor students at all times. Learning in a controlled and structured environment can be helpful to students, who need time and space to grow confident before they effectively start contributing to Wikipedia.

2. *Guiding principles*

What does it mean to follow Wikipedia's content policies while working on historical texts, people, and artifacts? In practice, the theoretical principles upon which the platform's reliability is founded (especially the NOR and NPOV policies) require constant negotiation. Especially for an author like Dante, the simple act of acknowledging genealogies—even by sheer juxtaposition—

¹⁷ The literature outlining such experience is vast; for a comprehensive overview, see Zachary J. McDowell and Matthew A. Vetter, "Wikipedia as Open Educational Practice: Experiential Learning, Critical Information Literacy, and Social Justice," *Social Media + Society* 8 (2022): 1-11, and cited bibliography.

¹⁸ Jennifer C. Edwards, "Wiki Women: Bringing Women Into Wikipedia through Activism and Pedagogy," *The History Teacher* 3 (2015): 409-436; Stephennie Mulder, "Teaching with Wikipedia," *Not Even Past*, available online at <https://notevenpast.org/teaching-with-wikipedia/>; Glair Anderson, "Editing Wikipedia: Stars, Robots and Talismans Honours Course," *Teaching Matters Blog*, available online at <https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/editing-wikipedia-stars-robots-and-talismans-honours-course/>.

¹⁹ Wikimedia Foundation, the nonprofit organization that runs Wikipedia, initiated several collaborations with academic institutions prior to the foundation of Wiki Education, a grant-funded spin-off of Wikimedia Foundation explicitly devoted to these programs: see Brian W. Carver, Rochelle Davis, Robin T. Kelley, Jonathan A. Obar, and Lianna L. Davis, "Assigning Students to Edit Wikipedia: Four Case Studies," *E-Learning and Digital Media* 9 (2012): 273-282.

produces novelty and builds fertile ground for connections and innovation. More importantly, historiographical discussions are always influenced by positionality and changing sensibilities and methodologies. Even the sheer choice of what warrants an independent entry on a reference work—not just Wikipedia—depends on viewpoints that may vary over time. Rather than claiming neutrality, an equitable approach to Wikipedia may thus strive for it, while working tirelessly towards epistemic and knowledge equity as well as an informed representation of the past.

This guiding principle reads contributing to Wikipedia as a form of digital public scholarship or, depending on the goals, digital scholarly activism. Digital public scholarship entails becoming ambassadors of field-specific knowledge and bringing that knowledge to a broad global audience through the use, development, or combination of one or more digital tools. Within the context of bringing Dante to Wikipedia, digital public scholarship is a student who elects to revise the description of the punishments in Malebolge with the specific goal of objectively representing their graphic nature vis-à-vis their Ovidian influences.²⁰ The student and their audience both stand to gain from this endeavor. Readers who come to read the entry about Malebolge—whether their curiosity stemmed from reading the poem or playing a videogame—but have not come across the *Metamorphoses* will learn about how Dante’s design of the lower circle of Hell is profoundly indebted to a classical text, and why. On their part, the student learned firsthand about reception history and the complexities of intertextual relations across time, languages, and religious identities.

Digital public scholarship, however, can take much more explicit directions toward the bolstering of information equity and inclusion. Since the premodern past, Dante included, often runs the risk of being misrepresented and misused, it could be argued that any contribution aiming towards an informed representation of the past strives for this goal. However, contributors elect to improve or revise entries that cater to communities, voices, and themes that are found to be deserving more representation, visibility, or critical attention. That is why WikiDante’s first iteration selected women—specifically women outside the realm of classical antiquity—as a test site for the potential of an activist approach to contributing to the platform. The disproportionate underrepresentation of women and women-related content on the platform—an issue that is now popularly referred to as the “gender

²⁰ Wikipedia, s.v. “Malebolge,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malebolge>.

gap” of Wikipedia—has long been recognized over the years, and it has prompted many initiatives worldwide, many of them actively encouraged by Wiki Education.²¹ Thus, recuperating and consigning to millions of English-speaking readers the lives and stories of sixteen women included by Dante in his poem is only one small part of a worldwide movement across countries and languages—one which reflects only a fraction of how working alongside Dante and Wikipedia can contribute to knowledge equity.²²

3. *How does WikiDante work?*

WikiDante consists of a set of three activities and best practices distributed over the course of a semester-long project. These three steps, which are progressively growing in complexity, result from the adaptation of general assignments suggested by Wiki Education for undergraduate classes to the specificities of Dante, the *Divine Comedy*, and the centuries-long community of readers and scholars who have contributed to understanding the poem. In order to become informed WikiDante contributors, students involved in the project concurrently learn how to work on the platform and how to use a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, databases, and reference works, digital or in print, related to Dante and his poem.

3.1. *Evaluate (and get to know) Wikipedia*

The first step consists in receiving training on Wikipedia and its policies and evaluating existing content on Dante and the *Divine Comedy* that is already published on the platform. This activity typically takes place towards the end of *Inferno*, when students have

²¹ Edwards, “Wiki Women.” As of June 2022, 18.39% of content globally produced in all Wikimedia projects—including Wikipedia—are about women: Humaniki, <https://humaniki.wmcloud.org/>, launched in spring 2021, is the most up-to-date tool to gauge the representation of genders by country, project, and period. It has also been found that a disproportionate majority of Wikipedia editors identify as male and that the platform is often deemed an inhospitable space by women and minorities. Encouraging a diverse group of students to become Wikipedia editors, even just for the span of a project-length involvement, contributes towards diversifying the body of contributors to the platform.

²² For an in-depth critique of the structural biases in Wikipedia and how to work towards the goal of knowledge equity within the platform, see Jackie Koerner, “Wikipedia Has a Bias Problem,” in *Wikipedia @ 20*, ed. Reagle and Koerner, available online at <https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/rpamp9jh/release/2/>; and Matthew Vetter, “Possible Enlightenment: Wikipedia’s Encyclopedic Promise and Epistemological Failure,” in *Wikipedia @ 20*, ed. Reagle and Koerner, available online at <https://wikipedia20.pubpub.org/pub/vduoh45c/release/5/>.

already become familiar with the poem and its vast network of cultural references and reception history. It is to be expected that none of the students were Wikipedia contributor before joining the project. In addition, most students will approach the training and evaluation with an ingrained negative bias toward Wikipedia, resulting from years spent being told never to approach or use the platform for the reasons we have previously discussed. This will also be the first time students think critically about what it means to write an entry in a reference work destined for a lay audience.

Thus, a first step that combines training and observational learning is highly beneficial. After learning about the content policies and structure of Wikipedia, students are asked to examine an existing entry on Dante, which they can choose from a list prepared by the project leader, and to evaluate the article's structure and compliance with Wikipedia's policies.²³ This is the first breaking point of students' distrust of Wikipedia. These prompts encourage probing existing content for structural problems and issues related to the entry's compliance to tone, bias, and citational practices. Students are also asked to peruse the entry's editing history (accessible as a separate tab) and familiarize themselves with the fact that no Wikipedia entry started the way it is now but was gradually developed, lengthened, and altered (sometimes not entirely for the better). By combining a revision of the entry's history and the related discussion of issues, either solved or open, on the entry's "Talk" page (again accessible as a separate tab), students acquire a deep awareness. Let us discuss, as an example, the case of a student later making minor improvements to the paragraph on Dante's treatment of sloth in the Wikipedia entry dedicated to this vice.²⁴ No one would expect such an article to have had a particularly controversial history. However, the entry did suffer from several inappropriate interventions by different users over the course of the year in which the students made their contribution—all additions (such as a fervent bout against modernity and its satanic obsession with sloth) that were immediately removed by members of the Wikipedia community as they went against the website's NPOV policy.²⁵

²³ Within WikiDante's two iterations, this activity was conducted with the support of a detailed set of evaluating guidelines and prompts provided by Wiki Education; see <https://dashboard.wikiedu.org/>.

²⁴ Wikipedia, s.v. "Sloth (deadly sin)," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sloth_\(deadly_sin\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sloth_(deadly_sin)).

²⁵ Wikipedia, s.v. "Talk: Sloth (deadly sin)," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Sloth_\(deadly_sin\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Sloth_(deadly_sin)). As noted by several users on

By examining and evaluating an entry along with its layers of technical and content issues, students become shrewd observers of an environment which they either passively used or outright avoided. When asked to perform this evaluation, students always either identify room for improvement or classify the entry as severely underdeveloped, flagging structural problems that require substantial work and pointing to the direction this work should take. While carrying out this activity, students also note features that can be ascribed to the specificity of the materials they are evaluating, which, at this stage, predominantly deal with historical—and specifically, premodern—materials. For example, entries related to Dante that have not been revised by a student or a scholar are typically backed with citations from nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century reference works, which, while being not only unauthoritative in the field but also sorely outdated, are sometimes the only sources to be used and cited by non-specialist Wikipedia contributors because they are easily—not to mention freely—available online.

Within the environment of an undergraduate class on the *Divine Comedy*, this stage is also a first opportunity to introduce students to the wealth of existing reference works that focus on Dante and his texts. Other than evaluating their chosen Wikipedia entry in itself, they are also asked to cross-examine the entry against a least two other reference works in either English or Italian: the *Dante Encyclopedia* (2000); for some cases, Toynbee's *Dictionary of Proper Names* (1898); and the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (1970).²⁶ A secondary, yet important, observation that will often stem from this cross-evaluation is that an entry in these reference works may differ in structure from its Wikipedia equivalent, in that the former was specifically written for an audience interested in Dante and thus devoted the better part of the entry to the relation of a given individual, text, or theme to Dante and his work; while the latter is a general tertiary source, whose readers may or may not consider

the entry's Talk page, this entry would deserve far more than a Dante-specific implementation, which was outside the scope of our project.

²⁶ *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. Richard Lansing (New York and London: Garland, 2000); *Enciclopedia dantesca*, dir. Umberto Bosco (Rome: Treccani, 1967-83), available online at https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/elenco-opere/Enciclopedia_Dantesca; and Paget Toynbee, *A Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898, repr. 1968), searchable online at <https://dante.princeton.edu/pdp/search.html>. In the case of the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, students should also be alerted that duplicate but more recent entries on the same historical figures may be available on the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome: Treccani, 1960-2021), available online at <https://www.treccani.it/biografie/>.

Dante a priority. This observation, which takes different forms depending on the type of entry, will be crucial when participants will actively contribute to the platform and decide whether to adhere to, or depart from, the structure of existing reference works.

3.2. *Cite (responsibly)*

In the second step of WikiDante, which typically takes place towards the end of *Purgatorio*, students are asked to improve an existing Wikipedia entry by adding one or more relevant citations to one secondary source, while only introducing minimal edits to the actual entry. In the two iterations of WikiDante, this activity was designed to provide students an opportunity to explore the genre of *lectura Dantis*, a type of scholarly writing specific to Dante Studies that they had likely never encountered before. More specifically, each student was assigned one *lectura Dantis* from the California Lectura Dantis series on *Inferno* (1998) and *Purgatorio* (2008).²⁷

While simple, this task constitutes a significant step forward. In the two iterations I directed, students were first asked to complete several online training modules provided by Wiki Education on their learning platform, to familiarize themselves with online editing. These training modules are best carried out through a flipped classroom approach, with students primarily going through this training asynchronously.²⁸ However, during this phase, it is highly beneficial to devote some meeting time to troubleshooting in order to address directly problems students may have encountered. These moments are particularly useful because they encourage other students to share the problems they faced, interrogate their training, and engage with peers as they are all learning something new and approaching the daunting task of publishing a contribution online, however minimal.

One of the main challenges faced by students at this stage lies in handling Wikipedia's citation system, which is primarily designed for the citation of peer-reviewed articles published in

²⁷ *Lectura Dantis: Inferno. A canto-by-canto commentary*, ed. Allen Mandelbaum, Charles Ross, and Anthony Oldcorn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); *Lectura Dantis: Purgatorio*, ed. Mandelbaum, Oldcorn, and Ross (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008). In future iterations, enlarging the scope may entail scouring International Dante Bibliography with its annual survey of publications related to Dante and his poem, putting his advanced search system to provide students with a list of recently published essays or giving them the responsibility of retrieving them and electing an entry they think that new publication would improve.

²⁸ For similar observations, see Di Zou, Haoran Xie, Fu Lee Wang, and Reggie Kwan, "Flipped learning with Wikipedia in higher education," *Studies in Higher Education* 45 (2020): 1026–45.

journals that are available online, with either a web address or unique identifiers (e.g., a DOI). This type of citation can be implemented through Wikipedia's self-populating citation tool. However, only a negligible portion of the secondary sources used by *dantisti* and, more generally, by premodern scholars falls under this category. Critical editions or translations of premodern primary sources (including Dante's poem and its translations into English), commentaries, reference works in multiple volumes with different directors, editors, and translators—none of these sources are discussed in detail by Wikipedia's citation guidelines and they require some shrewdness with the platform's manual citation interface, which allows for the addition of an almost infinite number of fields for a publication record.²⁹ Learning how to add these citations constitutes an invaluable lesson for students who are, more often than not, just learning about citation styles, citational practices, and the different components of a bibliographical entry.

Aside from these technical aspects, this step may offer many opportunities to encourage students to increase their awareness of equitable citational practices. This is, for example, one of the foundational goals of one of the significant endeavors of a community of premodern scholars on Wikipedia, Medieval Wiki, which, among other things, systematically strives to increase the visibility of historically marginalized groups of scholars, which translates to citing and representing Black medievalists and medievalists of color as well as women, non-binary, and queer scholars or artists who use medieval texts, objects, or themes in their work.³⁰ Extending this methodological framework to the WikiDante framework is highly productive, with the poem's status as a canonical text of world literature with a historically transnational—and global—and inherently diverse community of readers and interpreters.

3.3. *Create, revise, and publish*

The third and last activity is by far the one that contributes to Dante's representation on Wikipedia in the most noticeable way. Within this portion of the project, students elect to create a new entry or perform substantial revisions on an existing entry in the forms that have been previously discussed.

Creating a new entry consists of writing and publishing a Wikipedia article that did not exist before while also paying crucial

²⁹ Wikipedia, s.v. "Wikipedia: Citing sources," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Citing_sources.

³⁰ Medieval Wiki, <https://medievalwomenwiki.wordpress.com/>.

attention to the digital infrastructure in which this new entry is going to be situated. Before electing to create a new entry, it is best for the instructor or group leader—possibly in collaboration with the contributor—to verify whether the new entry will comply with Wikipedia’s requirement of notability.³¹ Almost all new entries conceived in a WikiDante project, especially those which already have an equivalent in an existing reference work, will comply by default with this requirement, but it is important to verify that beforehand to avoid the risk of a new entry being deleted upon publication simply because its notability is not evident to a non-specialist reviewer. To achieve this goal, it is vital that the contributor working on a new entry remember to furnish their draft not only with citations but also with active links to existing Wikipedia entries. Immediately adding complementary navigational tools such as categories and the Dante navbox template, which I will discuss below, will also significantly decrease the risk of deletion for a newly published entry.

Many of these new articles will be biographical entries of historical figures appearing or mentioned in the poem. In all these cases, the entry will be best structured into at least two sections: one outlining that figure’s biography (“Biography”) and one outlining the inclusion of said figure in the works of Dante (“In the works of Dante Alighieri”) or in the *Divine Comedy* (“In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*”). Through practice, we have found that these general labels are the most flexible and allow for a somewhat consistent structure across the platform. An exceptionally well-developed example of this approach is the entry for Nella Donati, which charts in a clear structure her biography as well as her presence in several works of literature, starting with Dante and his tenzone with Forese.³² However, Wikipedia entries come in many forms, and as in all reference works, there are entries dedicated to works of literature (or portions thereof, as each *cantica* is given a very lengthy entry), themes, concepts, literary forms, and a wide range of possibilities that require varying approaches. At all times, it is crucial to remember that WikiDante is part of a very large ecosystem, so it is always best to invite contributors to compare and contrast with similar entries that are better developed before coming up with a one-of-a-kind solution that deviates substantially from standards utilized elsewhere.

³¹ Wikipedia, s.v. “Wikipedia: Notability,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Notability#General_notability_guideline.

³² Wikipedia s.v. “Nella Donati,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nella_Donati.

This observation is also true for substantial revisions to existing entries, which can entail many types of contributions such as expanding a stub, an underdeveloped entry, or an important section of a very long entry. In such cases, it is particularly important—especially if WikiDante is implemented as a classroom project—to clarify what a “substantial” contribution means.³³ A satisfactory guideline can consist of writing at least five paragraphs citing at least six different sources other than the poem, either primary or secondary. It is useful to set these thresholds as a guideline, rather than a requirement, because a contributor may be working on a decidedly narrow topic, in which the most substantial portion of their research effort is retrieving relevant secondary sources. Another likelihood to consider is that the majority of sources on a given topic may only be available in languages other than English, which undoubtedly qualifies as a more complex work than utilizing a source written in the student’s native language.³⁴

From an organizational standpoint, it is important for instructors and group leaders to provide a list of potential articles that students can elect to create or revise, and to schedule an internal deadline for the submission of topics and entries of interest for the instructor’s approval. However, it is also highly beneficial to give students the option to suggest an entry of their own choosing, which makes it possible to harness an important facet of students’ interest in the poem. For example, in the second iteration of the project, one student elected to research and write about the illustrations to *Paradiso* published by Jean Giraud, a French comic artist (also known as Moebius), in a three-volume edition of the *Divine Comedy*.³⁵ While the Wikipedia entry on Giraud discussed in detail the artist’s works, primarily his fantasy and Western comics, as well as his influence on cinema and science fiction, no mention was made of his work on *Paradiso*. This student, then, was able to research, use, and cite primary and secondary sources to describe a little-studied, yet fascinating, piece of reception history, relevant to the reception of both Dante’s poem and the illustrations

³³ Carver et al., “Assigning Students to Edit Wikipedia,” 276.

³⁴ This is especially true for the context in which WikiDante was first carried out as a project, an English-speaking undergraduate classroom in which most students could not easily access scholarly publications written in Italian.

³⁵ Wikipedia, s.v. “Jean Giraud,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Giraud; Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, vol. 3, *Paradiso* (Milan: Nuages, 1999). Other than Giraud’s own discussion in the introduction to the volume, see Adrian La Salvia, “Dante e Doré: L’aura della *Divina Commedia* nell’arte moderna,” in *Dante und die bildenden Künste*, ed. Maria Antonietta Terzoli and Sebastian Schütze (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 281–302, 296–97.

by Gustave Doré, who directly inspired Giraud's reinterpretation of *Paradiso*.

After selecting a relevant entry, participants are asked to perform an in-depth literature review under the project leader's supervision. Thanks to their previous observational training, students will already be familiar with the reference works in English and Italian and bibliography tools dedicated to Dante and his work, which they will parse for primary and secondary sources to digest and include in their revision; examine in terms of structure, language, and approach in order to evaluate their applicability to Wikipedia. After this initial phase, they will retrieve and digest a large body of materials and be asked to make informed choices about how to organize their presentation for the benefit of as wide and diverse an audience as possible.

While daunting—for most students, this will be the first time they share the results of their intellectual work online with a global audience—sharing a substantial contribution can and will be rewarding. Learning to eagerly await feedback, whether from a peer (if peer review from another student is implemented in the project) or an unknown member of the Wikipedia community (in a process that has been recently defined as public review)³⁶, is a precious educational goal. While most students' work will only be subjected to minor technical revisions (for example, once an article is posted or substantially revised, members of the Wikipedia community will often edit the text, add categories to the entry, and check citations), there is also a good chance that more substantial requests or edits will be immediately made. These interventions are often positive and constructive. The Wikipedia community—especially when it comes to groups of entries that are included in projects animated by very active leaders—is very active. In this phase, the instructor or group leader should act as a moderator and verify whether the claim being made is grounded.

4. *Future directions*

Wikipedia has been described as a documented palimpsest, a source in which layers of revisions and changes demonstrate evolving changes in knowledge, culture, awareness, and interests over time.³⁷ None of the entries improved or produced so far through WikiDante is perfect. Since their publication, many of them have already gone through several layers of improvement by other users,

³⁶ Cummings, "Writing knowledge."

³⁷ Liam Wyatt, "Endless palimpsest: Wikipedia and the future's historian," *Studies in Higher Education* 45 (2020): 963-971.

and it is our hope that others will contribute further to their development.

On the one hand, there is no doubt that contributing to Wikipedia is largely invisible work, meant by design to be unacknowledged as much as to be sustainable and widely accessible. On the other, Wikipedia's ranking on the most popular online search engines by far surpasses any project conceived in independent online environments. If an English-speaking reader of the *Divine Comedy* does an online search for "Ghisolabella," the Wikipedia entry on Ghisolabella Caccianemico created by a WikiDante contributor ranks first among seven thousand results. The result is immediately followed by a link to a dedicated page from Toynbee's *Proper Names and Notable Matters*, which was digitized as part of the Princeton Dante Project; and another dedicated page on "World of Dante," containing a short explicatory note.³⁸ The same reader would obtain similar results for Gualdrada, albeit with easier access, in this case, to her dedicated entry on the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*. Thus, for the general reader of the *Divine Comedy* who does not have access to advanced reference works because of either a language barrier or lack of access to a printed resource, these Wikipedia entries are now the most informative and easily accessible online resources on Ghisolabella and Gualdrada. Since they are hosted on a platform maintained by a large crowd-funded organization, these contributions will also always be accessible to readers.³⁹

This observation is reflected by visualization data. Since their creation in March 2021 as part of the first iteration of WikiDante, the Wikipedia entries on Ghisolabella and Gualdrada were each read by at least three individual users daily, and as of today, each

³⁸ Paget Toynbee, "Ghisolabella," in *A Dictionary of Proper Names and Notable Matters in the Works of Dante* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898, repr. 1968), available online at https://dante.princeton.edu/cgi-bin/dante/DispToynbeeByTitOrId.pl?INP_ID=212847; "Ghisolabella," World of Dante, dir. Deborah Parker, available online at http://www.worldofdante.org/pop_up_query.php?dbid=P134.

³⁹ One of the most central issues in digital humanities is designing projects that will have a long-term lifecycle and for which the work performed by contributors will not become inaccessible once a project runs out of funding or is interrupted when platforms or software are discontinued. Utilizing existing ecosystems, methods, and resources are two of the most effective best practices that ensure that a digital-born project is developed sustainably. "Build for Sustainability" and "Reuse & Improve" are two of the nine principles developed by the Principles for Digital Development Working Group, available online at <https://digitalprinciples.org/>; the findability, accessibility, and optimized reusability of digital assets are three of the four "FAIR Principles," *Go Fair*, 2016, available online at <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles>.

entry has been viewed by almost two thousand users.⁴⁰ These figures, which are already noteworthy for two historical figures who are mentioned only in passing in the poem, become overwhelmingly more substantial for different types of entries. The sixty-one articles that students implemented, revised, or created in the two iterations of WikiDante had millions of views between March 2021 and December 2021, the dates on which the two iterations were respectively concluded, and June 2022. Visualization data obviously has an unequal distribution among different entries, with views spanning from about 1,500 (e.g., the entry on Calcabrina, a minor demon from Malebolge) to over a million views per entry (e.g., more general entries such as that for an entire *cantica*, or for more general concepts in history and theology) per calendar year.⁴¹ The sheer magnitude of these numbers invites for consideration. These contributions—which we have labeled earlier in this essay as forms of digital public scholarship and, depending on the goals, digital scholarly activism—have immediate ripple effects on knowledge dissemination with regard to Dante and his work.

The focus of WikiDante's first of two iterations was on women appearing or mentioned in the poem, and the second iteration tested the interdisciplinary outreach of different strands of scholarly labor on the platform. Both experiments have confirmed this framework's potential for dissemination and scholarly activism, which could be applied to themes and questions beyond women's history and further embrace the *Divine Comedy's* unique investment in interrogating issues of ethics, justice, and freedom at all levels of human experience. For example, within the realm of Dante's exploration of sexual orientations, WikiDante contributors have already worked on two of the three sodomites appearing in *Inferno* 16—namely, Guido Guerra and Iacopo Rusticucci—but the last member of the group, Tegghiaio Aldobrandi, still does not yet have an entry. Most importantly, the Wikipedia entry on Brunetto Latini is in sore need of substantial revision and expansion.⁴² This revising campaign should entail a detailed discussion, which is now only partially outlined, of the scholarly debate surrounding the reasons for Dante's placement of his late

⁴⁰ Visualization data extracted with Pageviews, one of eight tools of Wikipedia's official page view analytics suite, Pageviews Analysis, available online at <https://pageviews.wmcloud.org/>.

⁴¹ Cf. Wikipedia, s.v. "Calcabrina," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calcabrina>; and Wikipedia, s.v. "*Inferno* (Dante)," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inferno_\(Dante\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inferno_(Dante)).

⁴² Wikipedia, s.v. "Brunetto Latini," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunetto_Latini.

mentor among the sodomites.⁴³ This discussion, aimed at a general audience, should not only comprise an overview of the hesitations by medieval and modern commentators but also represent the interpretations proposed by scholars who have read the *Divine Comedy* through queer theory in the past three decades.⁴⁴ Within the global, transhistorical, and interdisciplinary scope of Wikipedia, an entry on Brunetto should also refer to several instances in which his appearance in *Inferno* 15 has inspired generations of queer poets around the globe.⁴⁵

The possibilities offered by this approach reach far beyond the themes of gender and sexuality. In the second iteration of WikiDante, students were invited to choose from a wide range of topics related to their specific disciplinary interests. One student took on the delicate responsibility of revising the section on Dante's treatment of Muhammad in an existing article devoted to medieval Christian views on Muhammad.⁴⁶ Now, before the student's revision, this section essentially relied on a block quote from Edward Said's *Orientalism*.⁴⁷ Said's revolutionary work has brought a new understanding of how western societies represent—and misrepresent—the “East” as a cultural construct, and how these forms of representation are ultimately entrenched in imperialist fantasies. Premodernists have long been in dialogue with Said's foundational arguments and have sought to complicate the nature, coordinates, and implications of Orientalism as a concept when applied to time periods that predate modern forms of imperialism

⁴³ Only a few minor improvements in this direction have been made in the course of the second iteration of WikiDante, as attested by the entry's history tab.

⁴⁴ For an introduction to this theoretical lens, see Gary Cestaro, “Queering Dante,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Dante*, ed. Manuele Gragnolati, Elena Lombardi, and Francesca Southerden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 686–700. The bibliography on Brunetto, Dante, and sodomy in the poem is vast. Two foundational essays are Joseph Pequigney, “Sodomy in Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*,” *Representations* 36 (1991): 22–42; and John E. Boswell, “Dante and the Sodomites,” *Dante Studies* 112 (1994): 63–76.

⁴⁵ As outlined by Nicola Gardini, “Dante as a Gay Poet,” in *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, ed. Manuele Gragnolati, Fabio Camilletti, and Fabian Lampart (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2010), 61–74. Two more recent cases, to be added to those discussed by Gardini, are Lorna Goodison's rewriting of *Inferno* 15, on which see below; and Ocean Vuong's “Seventh Circle of Earth,” in *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2016); “Ocean Vuong on ‘Seventh Circle of Earth,’” Poetry School, available online at <https://poetryschool.com/how-i-did-it-i-forward-first-collection-special-ocean-vuong-seventh-circle-earth/>.

⁴⁶ Wikipedia s.v. “Medieval Christian views on Muhammad,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medieval_Christian_views_on_Muhammad.

⁴⁷ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

and colonialism.⁴⁸ Dante scholars, most notably Elizabeth Coggeshall, have engaged in likewise pursuits.⁴⁹ Dante's relationship with Islam and Islamic culture is very nuanced for a medieval Christian author, and our field has only recently begun to unravel the wide-ranging significance of this complexity, especially in its modern contemporary reception.⁵⁰ In the case of this Wikipedia entry, therefore, the goal became contributing to complicating views of the past, placing Dante's scathing representation of Muhammad—as discussed and critiqued by Said—in dialogue with Dante's more complex representation of other Muslim characters in the poem and the historical context (namely, crusading fantasies) that informed Dante's most dominant views on Islam. Concurrently, it also entailed engaging with the latest scholarship that has been recently produced to situate Dante's views on Islam.⁵¹ In this case, as with the ones I have previously discussed, an activist implementation of Wikipedia's NOR and NOPV policies entailed placing different positions and positionalities in dialogue with one another, under the aegis of informed historicization. This first contribution is only one step in what could be a year-long project aimed at revising all the instances in which Dante addresses issues of ethnic and religious diversity in the poem.

Finally, the poem's global reception holds numerous possibilities to use Wikipedia to advocate for and represent the diversity of voices surrounding Dante and his poem, which was only touched upon in the two past WikiDante iterations. For example, the Wikipedia entry on Jamaican poet laureate Lorna

⁴⁸ For an evaluation of engaging with Said's argument within the field of premodern Italian Studies, see Robert Clines, "Edward W. Said, Renaissance Orientalism, and Imaginative Geographies of a Classical Mediterranean," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 65 (2020): 481–533; and Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), who discusses the *Divine Comedy* in detail, esp. 229–33.

⁴⁹ On Said's reading of Dante, see Elizabeth Coggeshall, "Dante, Islam, and Edward Said," *Telos* 139 (2007): 133–51; and Kathleen Biddick, "Coming Out of Exile: Dante on the Orient(alism) Express," *The American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 1234–49.

⁵⁰ Teodolinda Barolini, "Dante's Sympathy for the Other, or the Non-Stereotyping Imagination: Sexual and Racialized Others in the *Commedia*," in *L'Italia allo specchio: Linguaggi e identità italiane nel mondo*, ed. Fabio Finotti and Marina Johnston (Bologna: il Mulino, 2014), 9–39; Andrea Celli, *Dante and the Mediterranean Comedy: From Muslim Spain to Post-Colonial Italy* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

⁵¹ *Dante and Islam*, ed. Jan M. Ziolkowski (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

Goodison does not offer, to this date, any mention of her profound engagement with Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which inspired several of her poems.⁵² Implementing a discussion of Dante's presence in works such as Goodison's to Wikipedia, informed by the work of scholars working at the crossroads of Dante Studies, reception history, and postcolonial studies is an easy step towards an invaluable goal: reshaping the landscape of Dante's reception as it is represented on Wikipedia so that it may truly reflect the realities of the poem's reception within many cultures and across generations of readers.⁵³

This essay has outlined a set of best practices and only a few of the many directions that new contributions to the representation of Dante on Wikipedia have taken and could take in the future. The poem's themes, references, and reception history are worth representing in their richness, making the advancements in the field's understanding and representation of this richness accessible to a wider audience. How much remains to be done is perhaps best exemplified by the data collected in the "Dante's Divine Comedy" navbox, a tool that existed on Wikipedia prior to WikiDante and which the two iterations of the project have only begun to improve.⁵⁴ This navbox works as a hub of new and existing entries related to Dante and the *Divine Comedy*, which are organized into categories and subcategories. For example, one of these categories, "Adaptations," provides access to entries on the poem's reception, which are divided into subcategories by medium of adaptation (e.g., cinema, literature, music, visual art). As of June 2022, only one of fifty entries in this category appears to have been authored by a woman.⁵⁵ Only another one, a stub on Amiri Baraka's

⁵² Wikipedia, s.v. "Lorna Goodison," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lorna_Goodison; see Lorna Goodison, "Brunetto Latini – Dante's Inferno, Chapter XV," in *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2017), 303–307, and "Canto I – Dante's Inferno," in *Collected Poems*, 557–62.

⁵³ Other than citing Goodison's poems inspired by and in dialogue with Dante, crucial starting points for this work of revision would be Jason Allen-Paisant, "Dante in Caribbean Poetics: Language, Power, Race," in *The Oxford Handbook of Dante*, eds. Manuele Gagnolati, Elena Lombardi, and Francesca Southerden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 668–685; Dennis Looney, *Freedom Readers: The African American Reception of Dante Alighieri and the Divine Comedy* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2011).

⁵⁴ The template is typically at the end of all entries related to the poem and can be viewed and edited at "Template:Divine Comedy navbox," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Divine_Comedy_navbox.

⁵⁵ The opera *Inferno*, composed by Lucia Ronchetti (b. 1963) and first performed in June 2021 in Frankfurt: Wikipedia, s.v. "Inferno (opera),"

autobiographical *The System of Dante's Hell* (1965), documents a work by a non-white artist inspired by the poem.⁵⁶ Among the remaining listed entries, only two deal with works produced outside of Europe and North America, only one of which is from the Global South.⁵⁷ The structural issues in these navigational tools—alongside the gaps and entries in want of revision we have discussed in this essay, which the two iterations of WikiDante have only begun to address—reproduce an outdated idea of the *Divine Comedy* and its reception: one that privileges a certain notion of nineteenth-century romanticization where only a limited group of European artists and writers dominate the scene of Dante's reception history,⁵⁸ in which Ghisolabella Caccianemico does not deserve a biographical treatment or a fictional anecdote celebrating the chaste virtue of a woman like Gualdrada Berti may be taken as historical truth without further contextualization. The model of scholarly activism proposed in this project could help rectify that, operating within one of the most used knowledge repositories worldwide.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inferno_\(opera\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inferno_(opera)).

⁵⁶ LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *The System of Dante's Hell* (New York: Grove Press, 1965); Looney, *Freedom Readers*, 106-36. It is worth noting that, albeit unsurprisingly, Looney's work is not cited in the stub dedicated to this book.

⁵⁷ The same observations could be made, in very similar terms, about other similar existing tools on Wikipedia related to the poem and its reception, e.g., Wikipedia s.v. "*Divine Comedy* in popular culture,"

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_Comedy_in_popular_culture.

⁵⁸ Even within this purview, much work could be done by systematically implementing the results of research on the reception of Dante in nineteenth-century British culture: see Federica Coluzzi, *Dante Beyond Influence: Rethinking Reception in Victorian Literary Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).