

Dante in Oxford: The Paget Toynbee Lectures 1995–2003

The Paget Toynbee Lectures, established in 1995, are a prestigious series of annual lectures delivered at Oxford University. Named after the late Professor Paget Toynbee, a renowned Dante scholar and former Merton Professor of English Literature, these lectures have brought together leading scholars from around the world to explore the profound impact of Dante's works on Oxford University and English literature more broadly.



Dante in Oxford: The Paget Toynbee Lectures 1995-2003 by Lauren Lyman

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1112 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 201 pages



This article provides a comprehensive overview of the Paget Toynbee Lectures, examining their historical context, key themes, and the contributions of distinguished speakers over the years. By delving into the rich tapestry of Dante's influence, we gain a deeper understanding of the enduring legacy of this literary giant in the heart of one of the world's leading academic institutions.

Historical Context

The Paget Toynbee Lectures emerged within a vibrant intellectual landscape at Oxford University. Dante's works had a profound influence on the university's curriculum and scholarship since the Middle Ages. In the 19th century, Dante studies flourished with the establishment of the Dante Society in 1881. By the 20th century, Oxford had become a hub for Dante scholarship, attracting renowned scholars such as Toynbee and Professor Charles Singleton, who held the Dante Chair from 1956 to 1988.

The establishment of the Paget Toynbee Lectures in 1995 marked a significant milestone in Oxford's Dantean tradition. The lectures provided a platform for scholars to engage in cutting-edge research, exploring new perspectives on Dante's works and their reception in English literature.

Key Themes

Over the years, the Paget Toynbee Lectures have covered a wide range of themes related to Dante's works and their influence. Some of the key themes include:

- **Dante and the Divine Comedy:** The lectures have examined the structure, themes, and allegorical significance of Dante's masterpiece, tracing its impact on Western literature and culture.
- **Dante and English Literature:** The lectures have explored the influence of Dante on English writers from Chaucer to Eliot, analyzing the ways in which Dante's ideas and imagery have shaped the English literary imagination.
- **Dante and Comparative Literature:** The lectures have investigated the transnational significance of Dante's works, examining their

reception and influence in various European and non-European literary traditions.

- **Dante and Cultural History:** The lectures have considered the historical and cultural context of Dante's works, exploring their relationship to medieval society, politics, and religion.

Distinguished Speakers

The Paget Toynbee Lectures have featured an impressive roster of distinguished speakers. These scholars have presented groundbreaking research that has significantly enriched our understanding of Dante's works and their impact on English literature. Some of the notable lecturers include:

- **Professor John Took:** "Dante and Britain" (1995)
- **Professor Charles Sisson:** "Dante: His Times and His Poem" (1996)
- **Professor Robert Hollander:** "Dante's Pilgrim" (1997)
- **Professor Helen Cooper:** "Dante's Virgil and the Nature of Authority" (1998)
- **Professor Patricia Fortini Brown:** "Venice and its Empire: From the Viewpoint of the Renaissance" (1999)
- **Professor Anthony Oldcorn:** "Dante and the Limits of the Human" (2000)
- **Professor Andrew James:** "Dante and Modern British Poetry" (2001)
- **Professor Zygmunt Baranski:** "Dante's Inferno: The Polish Reception" (2002)

- **Professor Jill Mann:** "Images of the City in Dante's Commedia" (2003)

Impact and Legacy

The Paget Toynbee Lectures have had a profound impact on the study of Dante in Oxford and beyond. The lectures have fostered a vibrant intellectual community, bringing together scholars from various disciplines to engage in interdisciplinary research. They have also inspired new courses and seminars, contributing to the dissemination of Dante's works and their influence.

The legacy of the Paget Toynbee Lectures continues to grow. The lectures have established Oxford as a leading center for Dante studies, attracting students and scholars from around the world. They have also raised the profile of Dante within English literature, encouraging a deeper appreciation of his works and their enduring significance.

The Paget Toynbee Lectures have played a vital role in fostering the study of Dante in Oxford University and beyond. Through their exploration of key themes, invitation of distinguished speakers, and commitment to interdisciplinary research, the lectures have enriched our understanding of Dante's works and their profound impact on English literature and Western culture. The legacy of the Paget Toynbee Lectures will continue to inspire scholars and students alike, ensuring that the study of Dante remains a vibrant and dynamic field of inquiry.

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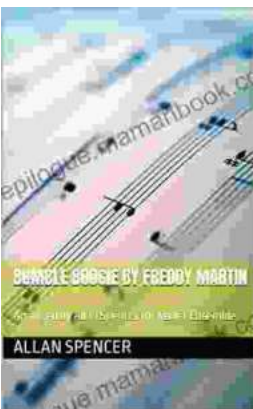


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