



“Un libro, un sueño”: Latin American Adaptations and Interpretations of Dante’s Francesca



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Introduction

One of the most striking figures from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is Francesca da Rimini. This investigation will analyze how Latin American poets and authors employ Francesca in their work to gain a greater understanding of culturally-specific interpretations of the *Comedy* and their driving motivations. Furthermore, delving into the unique or subversive manners in which Francesca is represented may illuminate deeper complexities within the practice of artistic allusion and appropriation. The analyses performed here are ultimately done with the intention of not only expanding archival holdings relating Dante and Latin America but furthering our understanding of how Latinx culture has made use of his works.

Background

Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*:

- An Italian epic poem written in the 14th-century. Recounts a journey through the Christian afterlife in three parts (*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*).

Francesca da Rimini:

- Character in the *Inferno* based on a historical figure. Punished along with her lover, Paolo Malatesta, in the circle of the lustful for adultery.
- Extensively referenced within European art and literature.

Dante Today and Contemporary Archival Efforts:

- *Dante Today* is a curated, crowd-sourced, online archive featuring contemporary “sightings” and “citings” of Dante and his work. Founded in 2006 by Dr. Arielle Saiber, co-edited by Dr. Saiber and Dr. Elizabeth Coggeshall.
- An overwhelming majority of submissions/posts focus on the Global North and regions like Latin America remain understudied.

Where are references being logged? –

A map of posts tagged with a specific, Latin American country on the *Dante Today* archive.

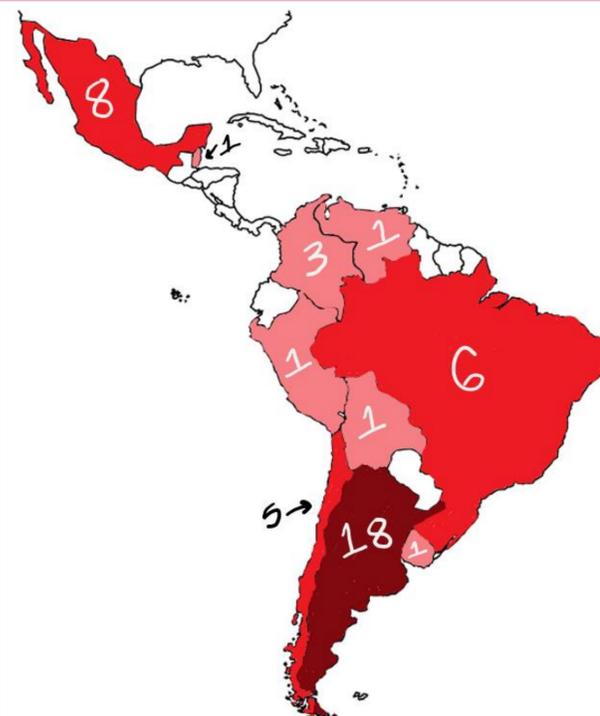
Tagged Cities –

Buenos Aires, AR: 10
 Campinas, BR: 2
 Mexico City, MX: 1
 Cusco, PE: 1
 Córdoba, AR: 1
 Bogotá, CO: 1
 San Pedro, BE: 1
 São Paulo, BR: 1

Francesca and Latin America –

Referenced 7 times (mostly in Argentina)

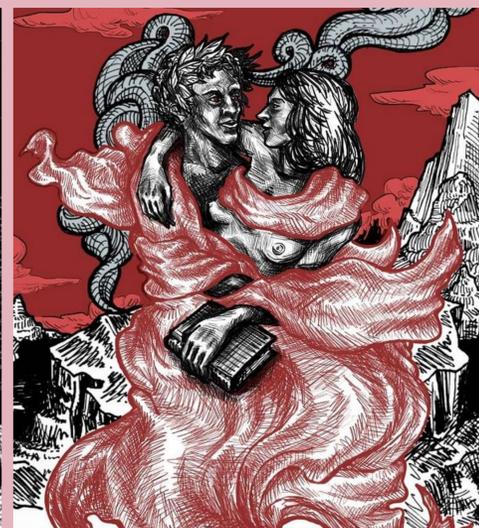
Compiled on January 31st, 2022.



Francesca and Paolo as Portrayed by Latin American Artists –

- *Francesca, Paolo y Minos el rey poderoso*, Esteban Serrano (Argentina)
- *Canto V del Inferno*, Leonardo Achilli (Argentina)
- *Inferno V*, Maru Ceballos (Argentina)

Left: “leo, tuve nena y casi me desmayo” [I read, I had girl, and I almost fainted]



Methods

Reference analysis:

- Searching for new references on existing archives (like *Dante Today*), library catalogs, and other search engines
- Reading and analyzing found texts in their original language (e.g., *Inferno*, V, 129 by Jorge Luis Borges)
- Noting significant themes, ideas, or commonalities between other references
- Investigating historical and/or cultural influences within the texts through secondary research (e.g., *Dante and Argentine Identity* by Heather Renee Sottong)

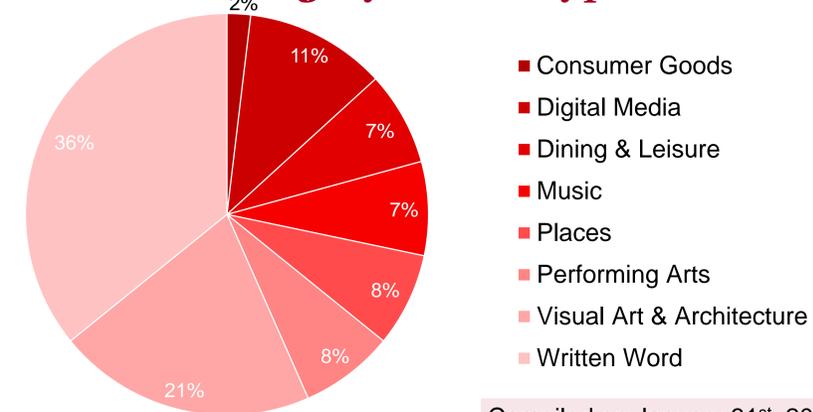
Archival work on *Dante Today*:

- Compiling descriptive text, images, tags, and categories for all posts
- Linking each post to supplementary or source information
- Connecting location- or nation-based posts to pins on the site’s Google Map

Goals of this investigation:

1. Contribute to archival holdings for currently underrepresented cultures and regions, in this case, Latin America
2. Investigate how adaptation can be influenced by culture and how different cultures approach source materials uniquely
3. Consider the *Divine Comedy*’s classification as “world literature”

Latin American Posts on *Dante Today* by Media Type



Compiled on January 31st, 2022.

Discussion

The investigation aims to analyze specific examples of Dante’s influence on Latin American literature with the intent of increasing current archival holdings for a drastically underrepresented region. In understanding how these authors position themselves concerning both Dante’s work and the West’s ubiquitous appropriation of said work, it may be possible to gain insight into how literature is connected to global exchanges, specifically within the context of post-colonialism. Furthermore, analyzing archival trends with a focus on the figure of Francesca and the specific region of Latin America may offer a better understanding of the *Divine Comedy*’s place within “global” literature – an ongoing academic discussion.

Future Directions

- Why is there a concentration of references from Argentina specifically? Why do other nations within the same region have relatively fewer logged references? Is this pattern indicative of a simple lack of adaptations/references in Latin America or a product of the crowdsourcing process employed by the *Dante Today* archive?
- How and why do authors reinterpret Francesca and Dante’s work as a whole? Should the *Divine Comedy* be considered “global literature”?

References and Image Credits

Achilli, Leonardo. *Canto V del Inferno*. 2018. Private collection, Argentina.
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