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**Italo Bertelli. 'Studi sul Due e Trecento. Analisi e letture da
Giacomo da Lentini a Dante.' Pisa - Rome: Serra, 2017.**

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that can be read by scholars and neophytes alike, for the different contributions enlighten various aspects and problems in Dantean historiography. Moreover, the main virtue of this volume is that it stems from several workshops occurring over several years, and as such brings about a continuous conversation between the different articles, even if sometimes critically in opposition to each other. In this way, these contributions serve as a fundamental update on the state of the field.

Mario Sassi, *University of Pennsylvania*

Italo Bertelli.

Studi sul Due e Trecento. Analisi e letture da Giacomo da Lentini a Dante.
Pisa-Rome: Serra, 2017. 92 pp. €22

Italian vernacular literature is a multi-faceted research topic. It contains the dawn of a poetry that, while it shows noteworthy connections to the Medieval Provençal lyric tradition, it struggles to find an original means to communicate its own literary message. Indeed, as is well known, during the relatively short period of time going from the early-13th century to the beginning of the 14th century, Italian poetry significantly changed in terms of content, style, and form. Following this line of reasoning, Italo Bertelli's recently published study (*Studi sul Due e Trecento. Analisi e letture da Giacomo da Lentini a Dante*, 2017) has intended to offer close readings of well selected – and quite different – literary works of seven vernacular poets. Through this work, Bertelli has shown how remarkable the difference is between – for instance – Giacomo da Lentini's lyric production and Iacopone's religious compositions, as well as between Compiuta Donzella's sonnets and Dante's *Vita Nova* (VN).

Divided into seven brief chapters, Bertelli's short volume (86 pages) is mostly devoted to a careful analysis on the rhetorical, stylistic, and formal peculiarities of a small selection of poems. The first chapter offers a detailed analysis of Giacomo da Lentini's ballad *Meravigliosamente*. Depending upon Occitan literature's stylistic features and Sicilian poetry's expressive grace, this ballad embodies some of the most important characteristics of Giacomo's lyric production: the rich inventiveness of his verses, the originality of his style, the beauty of his images, etc.

The second chapter dwells on the three sonnet composed by Compiuta Donzella: *A la stagion che 'l mondo foglia e fiora; Lasciar vorria lo mondo e Dio servire; Ornato di gran pregio e di valenza*. As the reader knows, Compiuta Donzella was the earliest woman poet of the Tuscan vernacular and was connected with influent late-thirteenth century poets such as Bonagiuta, Chiaro Davanzati, and Guittone. Although Bertelli recognizes the importance of Compiuta Donzella in Italian Medieval literature, he makes it clear that Donzella's lyric production should not be excessively praised. In fact, even though her three sonnets are a unique tool to fully understand the very beginning of Italian vernacular poetry, Donzella's artistic culture suffers from a lack of rhetorical and ideological limitations.

Thematic and stylistic limitations also affect Gianni Alfani's ballad *Donne, La donna mia ha d'un disdegno* (third chapter). Bertelli, in fact, points out that this ballad overly depends on a passive imitation of Cavalcanti's lyric *corpus*. At the same time, however, Bertelli suggests that the ballad's conventional images (i.e., Love's bow; the woman's disdain, etc.) have unconventional characteristics.

Although relatively brief, the analysis of Verzellino's poetic exchange with the Tuscan poet Dino Frescobaldi is particularly engaging (fourth chapter). According to Bertelli's close reading, Verzellino's sonnet helps the reader understand the psychological interests characterizing Florence's social community in the late-thirteenth century. In addition, on the other hand, the sonnet sheds some lights on the intense network of intellectual relations between the vernacular poets.

By observing Chiaro Davanzati's lyric production, the fifth chapter of Bertelli's study investigates the cultural, intellectual, and literary relationship between Guido Guinizzelli and Chiaro himself. Additionally, Bertelli suggests that the influence of the Occitan and Sicilian poetry was everything but irrelevant on Chiaro's rhymes.

What was quite stimulating were the pages dedicated to Iacopone's religious poetry. Divided into four sections, the chapter dwells on the style, content, and literary sources of the laud *Donna de Paradiso*. After having acutely analyzed the most relevant images of Iacopone's poem – i.e., Christ's manifestation; Mary's lamentations, the invocation to Jesus, etc. – Bertelli concludes by affirming that Medieval popular spirituality played a pivotal role in shaping the verses of *Donna de Paradiso*.

Finally, the last chapter of the book is – as already mentioned – focused on Dante. In particular, it scrutinizes the well-known sonnet *Tutti li miei penser parlan d'amore* (VN 13) and underlines the relevance of this sonnet for the narrative development of Dante's *Vita Nova*.

In other words, Bertelli's book is a useful guide through the main issues concerning the early origin of Italian vernacular literature. In fact, even though the relatively limited length of this present study does not really allow the reader to become engaged completely with the complexity of the whole picture, *Studi sul Due e Trecento* may function as an introductory approach to some of the most interesting, fascinating, and stimulating questions debated by the literary critics in the last few years.

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Vittorio Montemaggi.

Reading Dante's Commedia as Theology. Divinity Realized in Human Encounter. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 307 pp. \$87.

Vittorio Montemaggi is both a theologian and an Italianist within the interdisciplinary field of religion and literature. He began his career nearly two decades ago in