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REVIEWS

Dante Alighieri.

Purgatorio.

Saverio Bellomo and Stefano Carrai, eds.

Nuova raccolta di classici italiani annotati, 24. Turin: Einaudi, 2019. XLVIII + 601 pp. €60.

There are not many certainties in the history of medieval Italian literature. One of them is that the commentary tradition on Dante's *Commedia* has always constituted one of the most extraordinary and successful strands of European exegetical literature. As it is well known, the first texts aimed at explaining and summarizing what was shortly to become a classic of Western literature were written a few months after the poem's publication. Through his *Divisione* and then with the *Chiose all'Inferno* (1322), Jacopo Alighieri inaugurated one of the richest commentary traditions of European vernacular literature. Over the years, many scholars approached the *Commedia* attempting to grasp its most hidden meanings and provide the ever-growing audience with tools that would facilitate their understanding the "sacred poem." Jacopo della Lana, the *Ottimo*, Pietro Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio, Guglielmo Maramauro, Benvenuto da Imola, Filippo Villani, and Cristoforo Landino are just some of the many *literati* who, between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, focused their energies on studying and explaining Dante's masterpiece, thereby contributing uniquely to its prodigious dissemination.

After a long interlude that began at the end of the Cinquecento, that burdensome legacy was collected by nineteenth-century intellectuals, who rediscovered and promoted the so-called universality of Dante, making him the *sommo poeta* that everyone knows nowadays. Having become a "universal" poem, the *Commedia* was later studied by hundreds of scholars, who analyzed it through the most diverse critical perspectives. Needless to say, the renewed love for Dante's masterpiece resulted in the production of a genuinely exceptional quantity of commentaries that sought to bring both the specialist and general audience closer to the poet's most famous work. In Italy specifically, the twentieth century witnessed the blossoming of an impressive number of—often excellent—exegetical texts on the *Commedia*. From the 1940s, generations of high school and university students, as well as ordinary readers, were able to decipher (and love) Dante's often arduous *terzine* thanks to the work of eminent scholars such as Armando Momigliano, Natalino Sapegno, Umberto Bosco, and Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi.

In terms of Dantean exegesis, recent years have been explicitly characterized by a radical review of the critical edition of the poem's text established in 1965 by Giorgio Petrocchi, and by a renewed interest in the *Commedia*'s ancient commentators, combined with the need to analyze the poem through a critical perspective that refers to its fourteenth-century interpretation. Undoubtedly, one of the world-

leading experts of the *Commedia's* commentary tradition was Saverio Bellomo. After having dedicated years to analyzing and editing the exegetical works of Filippo Villani (1989), Jacopo Alighieri (1990), and Guglielmo Maramauro (1998), Bellomo focused his interests on the evolution of the early Dante criticism, offering the world of Dante Studies fundamental works such as the *Dizionario dei commentatori danteschi* (2004) and the excellent companion *Filologia e critica dantesca* (2007–2012). Because of his extraordinary knowledge of the *Commedia's* medieval exegesis, in 2013 Bellomo decided to publish a commentary on the *Inferno* that would recover and enhance the testimonies of the first scholars who elaborated a radical interpretation of Dante's poem. The commentary had an extraordinary success, both among the academic public and non-specialist readers. His sober and straightforward style and unique ability to handle ancient sources without any displays of arid erudition consecrated Bellomo's *Inferno* as one of the new classics of Dantean exegesis. The volume dedicated to the first *cantica* was the first chapter of a work that was supposed to cover the entire *Commedia*. Sadly, Bellomo passed away in 2018, when he was completing his commentary on the *Purgatorio*. His death has left a vacuum difficult to fill in the Italian academy and the international community of Dante Studies. Nevertheless, thanks to the strong will of some of Bellomo's colleagues and friends, who wanted to ensure his (unfinished) commentary on the second canticle was not wasted, Dante's readers now have the opportunity to see the second chapter of Bellomo's exegetical work.

The volume Einaudi released in 2019 is edited by Stefano Carrai, a colleague and fraternal friend of the author, who brilliantly completed Bellomo's work, which lacked only the commentary on cantos 29, 32, and 33. Following the model already established in the *Inferno*, this edition of the *Purgatorio* is characterized by specific elements that make the reading of the text fluent and extremely easy: a short but very accurate commentary on the verses; a long and detailed introduction to each *canto* containing all the information about the narrative structure and the characters of each episode; and finally a closing note in which Bellomo analyzes the style of the *canto* and explores the exegetical issues through a direct dialogue with the works of the ancient and modern commentators. In my opinion, the essays that close each *canto* constitute the commentary's most fascinating element. In these brief yet refined pages, Bellomo combines an admirable stylistic elegance with a solid analytical ability, reinforced by a knowledge of Dantean exegesis that few scholars in the world could boast. For example, let us take canto 14, traditionally recognized as one of the most heterogeneous of the entire *Commedia*, in which Dante describes the frame of the envious, of which the poet already speaks in the previous *canto*. The *nota conclusiva* opens by proposing to the reader a division of the *canto* into four parts to help the audience to better orient themselves in the complicated episode narrated by Dante. The first element that the commentator highlights is the leitmotif of the proper name that links the first three sections of the *canto*. Bellomo especially emphasizes the practice of censoring proper names, a rhetorical procedure of which Pietro Alighieri, in his *Commentarium super Dantis Commedia* (1342), highlighted the classical ancestry. The refined stylistic analysis then continues to show the continuity elements with the previous *canto*. After this, the commentator dwells on the character of Guido del Duca, using the explanation of the *Ottimo* about the expiation of his punishment to prove this character's

position within the frame of the envious, a point sometimes questioned by some modern scholars. Next, Bellomo focuses on Guido's political speech, highlighting its multiple rhetorical modules, and continues by analyzing the sin of envy and its corruptive influence on society through Cassell's Augustinian interpretation. The reader is left amazed at such a great capacity for synthesis combined with the incredibly detailed knowledge of Dantean centuries-old exegesis, as well as Bellomo's powerful interpretative skills.

After closing the soft pages of this beautiful edition of the *Purgatorio* and reflecting on such a work's greatness, one cannot help but feel deeply saddened, thinking that Dante's readers will never be able to read Bellomo's commentary on the *Paradiso*. After this initial heartbreaking thought, however, one can't help but smile for the great fortune they have had to read one of the most extraordinary Dante commentaries of the last century—a work that will surely make generations and generations of new lucky readers fall in love with the *Commedia* and its author.

Natale Vacalebre, *University of Pennsylvania*

Elena Lombardi.

Imagining the woman reader in the age of Dante.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 304 pp. \$80.

In the Palazzo Comunale of San Gimignano, there is a fresco depicting a man and a woman reading a large volume; the man is holding the text, while the woman is right behind him, clenching his shoulder from her posterior position. The fresco is unfortunately damaged and therefore it is not possible to identify the two individuals, nor do we fully understand the relationship between them. It is from this fresco and the spatial relationship of the figures that Elena Lombardi departs on her ambitious project of depicting women engaged with reading. Her intention and the limits of such research are expressed from the very beginning: the author is *imagining* what a female reader might look like, and what her approach to literature would be, with a focus on lyric poetry. The scholar aims not at identifying precise names or identities, but rather at describing how these readers were imagined by poets of the Italian tradition, such as Dante, Boccaccio, and Cavalcanti. The vernacular production of these artists is justified in many instances—it suffices to think of the *Decameron*—as the will of the artists in pleasing their female readers. Therefore, what starts to appear more regularly are women as addressees; it is with this intentional yet imaginary audience that the male writers interact.

It is along these lines that Lombardi structures her book, devoting the first chapter, a thorough introduction, to describe the main features of female literacy in the Late Middle Ages, starting with the issue of numbers: were women trained in writing and reading, and in what proportion? The historian Giovanni Villani, for instance, to show the power of Florence, speaks of at least ten thousand boys and girls learning how to read; these numbers immediately appear to be extremely

generous—even more so if one considers that he talks of people of both sexes. Yet, some sort of teaching was surely perpetrated. Ample space is then necessary to discuss what women could have read, including questions of what kinds of books and what sorts of materials they had available. The second chapter, by contrast, goes deeper into the goals of the book, namely trying to ascertain who were the women imagined by these male writers and poets as their audience. One example of this relationship is represented by Dante. He acknowledged the necessity for a poet of communicating with women, something that must happen in vernacular because they largely cannot read Latin. The issue, though, runs deeper, and Lombardi sheds light on other instances in which a female voice—or at least an imaginary female voice—could be identified. One such example is Cavalcanti's "Donna me prega," in which a male poet is speaking only because he becomes the addressee of a request. The evolution of this position shows itself again with Dante, who in the *Vita Nova* establishes a rather broader conversation with some women. First, Dante moves from a general "woman," celebrated in many of his poems, to Beatrice, an identifiable and living character. Second, the *Vita Nova* features women to whom Dante illustrates his *new life*, and who are the only ones who could fully understand his intentions. Dante praises these women as being gifted with knowledge and intellect to understand the complexity of the new path of his life: women, thus, that the poet deems capable of a deep and equal relationship, far from the distortions of the *donne schermo*. Dante reveals the evolution of his reading of the female role in the *Vita Nova* is also further complicated by his exchanges, direct and indirect, with other members of the lyric love tradition.

Lombardi's third chapter follows these lines and discusses the association between poems and the bodily image of the woman, which must be dressed—or undressed, if it is cloaked under an allegory or with complex language—to be revealed to a male reader. This is an ancient trope that through centuries was associated with gendered elements such as ornaments and makeup, generating the direct contrast between the bombastic and insincere female disguise and the naked and direct word. Lombardi analyzes the phenomenon of the personification of texts—each one seems to have specific elements, such as the young and less adorned *ballata*, or the noble matron with whom the *canzone* is identified. In this very stimulating journey through poems and poets and between personified texts and allegedly real women—including the Dantean Matelda as the symbol of what lies in between—the discussion could not but peak with Beatrice herself, the ultimate interlocutor in Dante's path. Beatrice, for Dante, represents the union of different aspects and goals: she is the loved woman, the allegory of a higher purpose, both a character and a real woman, whose shape in the *Commedia* is difficult to trace. It is from this point that Lombardi investigates how the character of Beatrice came to be, her voice, and her agency. It is through her presence at the top of the Purgatory mountain and her skim-reading of the *Vita Nova*—as Lombardi poises it—that Dante can reassess his previous poetical life in view of the *Commedia*. In the poet's creation, therefore, Beatrice is a reader capable of judging and even emending what she "read" first in the young work, then in the *Purgatorio*, and finally as a teacher and guide in the *Paradiso*—especially in the first *canti*. Although unique and with an importance that has no equal in his whole production, Beatrice is not the only woman with a specific role in the *Commedia*, and Lombardi emphasizes the literary ambiguity of

Francesca's story in Canto 5 of *Inferno*, another form—although possibly corrupted—of an in-between literary existence and reality.

There is much more in this very well-thought-out book, and Lombardi does try to encompass the various and multifaceted themes of women reading, from different perspectives. The result is a text that is rich in all of its parts, that does not limit the study to one single tradition but tries to tie the connections between what was a shared cultural space. *Imagining the woman reader* is therefore an ally for all those scholars and enthusiasts interested in the complexity of a dense yet necessary discourse on entangled genders.

Mario Sassi, *University of Pennsylvania*

Fabio A. Camilletti.

The Portrait of Beatrice. Dante, D.G. Rossetti, and the Imaginary Lady. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 258 pp. \$50.

The Portrait of Beatrice has a defined aim: to adopt a double gaze in approaching the works of Dante and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The volume has as its focus the two authors' different responses to a crucial aspect of Western culture, namely the convoluted relationship between word and image, literature and the visual arts. Fabio Camilletti sets out to examine "the intellectual dialogue between Dante and Rossetti" by investigating ways in which each deals with the complex issue of figurability. Seeking to avoid "becoming trapped within the binary, hierarchizing, and implicitly judgmental opposition between original and later work, and between the author's 'will' and the 'distortions' of his interpreters" (p. 9), Camilletti's analysis ultimately endeavors to emphasize how Dante's and Rossetti's respective responses to the same problem, when considered in parallel, can be seen to enlighten one another.

The figure of Beatrice – without any doubts, in Camilletti's observation, "one of the most elusive characters in literary history" (p. 4) – has given rise over the centuries to almost ceaseless critical debate aimed at exploring her identity, evidencing her life, probing her existence. Whilst this search reached its (almost neurotic) peak in the context of Romanticism and later Positivism, Beatrice's very absence, to quote Camilletti, turned into "an incentive toward the visionary re-creation of the beloved's ideal beauty" (p. 4), thus shifting the domain of the *quête* from the external materiality of documentation and historical evidence to the inner domain of the self. Viewing the intergenerational dialogue between Dante and Rossetti through the lens of this precise cultural interstice allows the discussion of the book "to move beyond the outworn debate about [Beatrice's] actual existence and instead to focus on her quiddity, of a miracle made into flesh, that the poetic word seeks incessantly to grasp" (p. 9).

The imaginary portrait of Beatrice realized by Dante in chapter 23 of the *Vita Nuova*, together with the portrait Rossetti obsessively evokes throughout his

oeuvre, are thus the objects of the volume's analysis. In the book's double focus, with its simultaneous glancing at the verbal and the visual, Giorgio Agamben's reassessment of the Warburgian notion of *Pathosformel* constitutes the privileged perspective of Camilletti's analysis, whose inquiry frequently returns to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytical categories. With the adjective "imaginary", Camilletti alludes both to the non-existence of the portrait (with direct reference to the literary genre of the imaginary portrait) and to the Lacanian realm, a privileged and powerful lens through which the author addresses the dichotomy. One of the greatest strengths of the volume is thus its quintessentially interdisciplinary perspective, magnified by Camilletti's attentive and illuminating gaze on the radically different context of the two authors at issue, never seeking to oversimplify or force his analysis but instead elegantly conveying the richness of complexities of its readings instead.

Camilletti's investigation of the dialogue between Dante and Rossetti takes wing from his insightful reflections on the aforementioned episode in the *Vita Nuova*, an episode experimental in terms of intermediality. In moving from a mental image of the beloved to poetic writing, from the sensible domain to the materiality of the written sign, Dante's approach is strongly rooted in the philosophical and medical culture of the Middle Ages that Camilletti references and discusses. The diffractive movement recalled by Dante and inserted into the narrative of his *libello*, as the author of the volume emphasizes, emblemizes a crucial tension, already anticipating the manifold ambiguities which will later bring about the metamorphosis of the image-word dichotomy, whilst radicalising it.

From his analysis of the first of Rossetti's works inspired by this crucial moment in Dante's narrative, the artwork *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* (Rossetti's first "appropriation" of Dante and of his work), to the unfinished *St Agnes of Intercession*, and faithful to the aims and methodology of the study, Camilletti proceeds with extreme critical sensibility and an engaging point of view. It is in this mode that he emphasizes phenomena of fracture as well as the several contradictions intrinsic in Rossetti's own responses to the issue of figurability through his own engagement with Dante's text. As progressively emerges from Camilletti's reading of "The Portrait of Beatrice", Rossetti's dealing with the image-word fracture in engaging with Dante's work implies, first of all, the difficult process of coming to terms with his own Italian legacy and his lineage. Rossetti's perspective, as Camilletti emphasizes early on, is formed through his privileging of the *Vita Nuova* over other of Dante's works, as well as his representation of Dante as both artist and painter, aiding Rossetti's own coming to terms with the intellectual inheritance of his father and with his own personal life (and, above all, with Elizabeth Siddal) and constituting, ultimately, a means by which he can construct a precise authorial identity within the context of Victorian London and the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The volume's elegant structure progressively uncovers this process, culminating in the concluding Chapter, "Veils", which, in revealing these numerous complexities retrogressively, illuminates earlier discussions in the book, adding nuances and inviting questions, rather than coercing the discussion towards any forced, monolithic conclusions.

Fabio Camilletti's "The Portrait of Beatrice", with its highly intriguing, penetrating, and sophisticated perspective, is an important contribution in both Dante and Rossetti scholarship, and at the same time inscribes itself within that body of

critical studies which has looked at appropriations of Dante's work over the centuries, adopting what Camilletti poignantly defines "alinear patterns of enquiry", among which we might list the volume *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, co-edited by Camilletti, Manuele Gagnolati, and Fabian Lampart, (Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2010), as well as single-author critical studies, such as Manuele Gagnolati's *Amor che move: Linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2013), Jennifer Rushworth's *Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch, and Proust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), or Julia Caterina Hartley's *Reading Dante and Proust by Analogy* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2019). Demonstrating the productiveness of such a dynamic critical approach, Camilletti's contribution opens new paths for further exploration of Dante and Rossetti, whilst testifying to the vast potential of its own methodological approach.

Valentina Mele, *University of Cambridge*

Ethics, Politics and Justice in Dante.

Giulia Gaimari and Catherine Keen, eds.

London: UCL Press, 2019. 176 pp. £17.99.

In their introduction to this collection of nine essays, editors Giulia Gaimari and Catherine Keen state the main goal is to provide "new readings of multiple aspects of Dante's ethical, political and legal meditations" based on "one of the most recurrent encouragements emerging from Dante's *oeuvre* as a whole" which concerns "the urgency of keeping justice in the heart, and of guaranteeing equity by doing justice to others – in service of both worldly and otherworldly peace and happiness for the individual and the community alike" (12). The essays cover the three areas listed within the title (ethics, politics, and justice) but rather than analyzing texts where political theory is most explicitly treated, such as *Monarchia*, the essays engage with Dante's evolution as a poet, focusing on *Convivio*, *Commedia*, and *Eclogues*. One of the many strengths of this compilation is that, even as they engage with passages which have been frequently discussed in the scholarship, the essays offer fresh perspectives and bring together significant new contributions to the debate.

Most of the essays within the volume examine Dante's historical and intellectual context, focusing mainly on written medieval sources such as encyclopaediae, Aristotelian and biblical commentaries, homiletic practices, and civic statutes. The opening four essays look to sources within Florence and during Dante's lifetime to provide new interpretations of the text. In the first, Anna Pegoretti analyses the relationship between grammar and justice in the well-known excerpt from *Convivio*, 2.12. 1-7. She approaches it in a new way by considering how ideas of morality are tied to language by comparing this passage to the education system of Dante's Florence, and specifically how *arte de gramatica* was defined within this

system. Similarly, Nicolò Maldina considers the Franciscan friar, Servasanto da Faenza, who preached at Santa Croce during the last decade of the thirteenth century, and how his sermon on St. Bartholomew and friendship conveys the same cultural context that Beatrice uses to describe Dante as “l’amico mio, e non da la ventura” (*Inf.* 2.61). Though the line is commonly thought to be inspired by Ovid, Brunetto Latini or Abelard, Maldini argues that “none of them offers a solid reference to the real sense of Dante’s verse” whereas Servasanto does (38). Thirdly, Giuseppe Ledda compares contemporary scholastic interpretations of the four animals in *Inf.* 1 with encyclopaediae and bestiaries. His method draws on the polysemy of the poem and interprets the beasts as moral and political symbols rather than following the most common interpretation of them as religious symbols. It would be fascinating to explore the arguments further by considering visual material culture in addition to the written sources. For example, does the representation of the *lonza* in visual culture corroborate Ledda’s argument and those found in the written sources? Finally, Nicolò Crisafi and Elena Lombardi also consider a popular episode, that of Paolo and Francesca. Their fresh methodological approach considers ideas of testimony and legal practices. They argue that Francesca is an authoritative and active character who testifies on her own behalf, a role reserved only for men in medieval Florence; thus, creating a role reversal where “Francesca takes up the role of main witness while the men in the canto learn to listen” (76).

The next two essays turn instead to classical and biblical sources. Justin Steinberg argues that describing the moral system by which souls in Hell are punished as *contrapasso* is incorrect and rather, by returning to Aristotle’s definition of *contrapassum*, we can see that *contrapasso* is limited and cannot speak to God’s divine justice. Instead we can read *Inf.* 28 as ironic, where Bertran de Born does not understand his punishment because it goes beyond *contrapasso*. Filippo Gianferrari’s essay also takes a frequently commented-on canto, *Par.* 25 and goes back to the Bible as source. He considers the different sections of St. James’ epistle and the similar imagery used by Dante in the canto such as flames and agricultural motifs in connection with Dante naming himself a *poeta* (*Par.* 25.8); arguing that St. James allows Dante to legitimize himself as a *poeta*.

Sabrina Ferrara offers a different perspective, by exploring the least commented-on work of Dante, his *Eclogues*. She traces Dante’s ethical evolution and the role ethics plays in the *Eclogues* in comparison to the *Commedia*; stating that Dante argues for poetry to always be ethical, regardless of language and that it should be accessible to the non-learned as well, a counter-argument to del Virgilio and his group of poets.

The final two chapters analyse Dante in later contexts to consider the different methods of Dante scholarship and reception in Italy and Britain. Catherine Keen’s essay traces the history of popular and scholarly responses to Dante such as the *Lectura Dantis* from 1373 to the present. She argues, similar to the previous essays, especially Ferrara’s, that Dante has always been accessible and popular but that we should also remember Petrarch’s concern that popularity leads to misunderstanding. This is particularly important when considering, for example, Dante’s adoption by the Italian Fascist regime. Keen traces many of these movements and their uses of Dante, demonstrating his continuing relevance.

The final essay by Claire Honess and Matthew Treherne traces the impact of the public outreach element of their AHRC-funded project on Dante and Late-Medieval Florence (Leeds-Warwick, 2011-2017). The project is an example of “how specialist and non-specialist Dante audiences were able to come together in creative ways” (144) through, for example, reflections on the meaning of community within their contemporary city, bringing the landscapes of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise to life with poetry and art. These two culminating chapters offer stimulating reflections on Dante’s enduring accessibility and how he can still speak to audiences today.

The volume offers new methodological approaches to consider Dante’s depictions and understandings of ethics, politics, and justice, offering fresh readings on both popular and less widely considered passages of Dante’s poetic works.

Elisabeth Trischler, *University of Leeds*

Thomas Persico.

Le parole e la musica. Poesia ed esecuzione dalla Vita nuova alla Divina Commedia.

Rome: Aracne editrice, 2019. 288 pp. €23

Thomas Persico’s monograph is the most recent publication delving into the role of music in Dante’s poetics. This remarkable contribution enters the long-standing heated debate between two groups of scholars: those accepting the theory of an Italian divorce between music and poetry, and those who have called for a reappraisal and reassessment of the relationship between them. Persico’s studies bring order to this intricate conversation and, through rigorous textual and lexical analyses, shed new light on the topic.

The first chapter provides a thorough and lucid account of the scholarly debate around Dante and music. Persico demonstrates deep knowledge of 150 years of studies carried out by Italian and international scholars alike. His concise review is highly informative and well-documented: the impressive footnotes alone will be valuable to anyone researching the same topics. What emerges from this chapter and inspires the following ones is the need for a better appreciation of the role of musical performance in Dante’s poetry. Some of the studies he engages with revolve around the different connotations of Occitan and Italian poets and singers, the *vexata questio* of the Italian divorce between poetry and music, and the interpretations of Casella’s episode in *Purgatorio* 2. The closing paragraphs assess the studies of scholars who combine literary and musicological competences. In the past twenty years, many brilliant contributions, such as those by Maria Sofia Lannutti and Maria Clotilde Camboni for instance, have successfully tried to debunk the notion that music is not essential to late medieval Italian poets. Persico joins forces with them and confirms the fruitfulness of their multidisciplinary approach.

The following chapters explore key issues which have long awaited a systematic study. In Chapter 2, Persico carries out a lexical inquiry on 201 medieval musical treatises with the goal of tracing a semantic shift in the lemma “modulatio” from the earlier to the later Middle Ages. Thus, he can cogently prove how this term, famously found in Augustine’s definition of the *scientia musica*, slowly stops hinting at a scientific component of music and starts indicating the concrete sonorous event instead. After reading this chapter, it becomes evident how Dante’s use of the term in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is informed by this intricate, multi-layered system of meanings.

In Chapter 3, Persico turns to the lemmas “oda” and “cantus” and ascertains their genuinely musical meaning. He traces their development in musical treatises and analyzes them in connection with other key concepts, such as “modulatio,” “plausus,” and “sonus.” Chapter 4 builds on the assumption that “lungo il percorso poetico di Dante si manifesta infatti la sostituzione dei vocaboli “dico/parlo” con i lemmi “canto,” “cantare” e derivati” (“in the course of Dante’s poetic path, we can observe the substitution of the terms “dico/parlo” with the lemmas “canto,” “cantare,” and their derivatives,” p. 83). This issue is crucial to Dante studies. The importance of the lemma “cant★” for the *Comedy* is undeniable, considering its division into *cantiche* and *canti*. Nevertheless, Persico only touches on this point at the end of the chapter, focusing instead on Dante’s youth poems, the *Vita Nuova*, and the earlier tradition of Italian poetry. His readers need to wait until the last chapter to learn more about the implications of his lexical investigations on the mentioned lemmas for the *Comedy*.

What follows is an interesting methodological digression. In Chapter 5, entitled “Cant★: alcune riflessioni statistico-quantitative,” Persico explains in depth which digital and traditional corpora he interrogated and how. These are the *Corpus TLIO* (*Tesoro della Lingua Italiana delle Origini*) and the *LirIO* (*Corpus della Lirica Italiana delle Origini*), both accessible through the GATTO platform, *Concordanze delle Opere volgari e delle Opere latine di Dante Alighieri* (ed. by Società Dantesca Italiana and Opera del Vocabolario Italiano), and *Dante Search* (edited by Mirko Tavoni and available online). Persico presents detailed tables, data visualization charts, and a thorough discussion of the adopted methodology. A thought-provoking analysis of the data thus collected concludes the chapter and attests to the value of this type of textual and lexical study. Personally, I found Persico’s remarks on Iacopone and the genre of *lauda* particularly interesting (pp. 124–130).

The last two chapters build on the lexical analyses of the previous chapters to advocate for the importance of musical performance in Dante’s poetics. Among other topics, the author, who is also an organist as well as a musicologist and literary scholar, discusses the episode of Casella and the controversial reference to *organi* of *Pur.* 9. Through yet another detailed lexical account of the history of the pair *organum/organi*, he cogently confirms the interpretation of *organi* as referring to musical accompaniment rather than vocal polyphony. In the final chapter, as anticipated, he reflects on the formal division of the *Comedy* in *cantiche* and cantos. Persico takes Antonio da Tempo’s distinction between *cantio extensa* and *cantio brevis* as the point of departure for his general interpretation of the structure of the *Comedy*, which is highly informative and convincing.

This monograph fills a conspicuous gap in the literature on the relationship between Dante and music. It offers comprehensive and original analyses which rely on innovative methods of inquiry and the solid philological competence of their author. Its ambitious scope is to ascertain once and for all the crucial role played by musical performance in Dante's poetics by revealing its traces in the language of both his treatises and poetry. Persico demonstrates that music and musical performance occupy a fundamental place in Dante's poetry. His study is rigorous, well-documented, and highly informative. It is a valuable work, which deserves the same attention and credit from American *dantisti*, as well as from scholars of late medieval poetry and music, as it is receiving in Italy.

Paolo Scartoni, *Rutgers University*

Roberta Morosini.

Il mare salato. Il Mediterraneo di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio.

Rome: Viella, 2020. 354 pp. €39.

In *Il mare salato*, Roberta Morosini sets out to use a "Mediterranean philology" to treat the *tre corone* not as documents for a cultural history of the sea, but rather as literary innovators who use the sea as a "structure" in their narrative and poetic works. Dedicated to the late scholar of the Mediterranean, Predrag Matvejević, this study uses the concepts of hybridity, connectivity, and liquidity essential to Mediterranean Studies to explore the Sea's place in the great works of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch, with a section dedicated to each one.

Comparing the title of the book to the table of contents, readers will immediately notice that the sequence of authors differs, with Boccaccio occupying the central chapter in the book. In an author's note and in the introduction, the author reveals that this project, originally focused on Boccaccio and the Mediterranean, expanded to include Dante and Petrarch as well.

In the first chapter, on Dante's use of the sea in the *Commedia*, Morosini identifies Dante's sea as an archive for the human experience across time and space. This chapter is divided into two "itineraries": a "geographic-representative" itinerary that tracks Dante's use of maritime geographies towards the creation of a world, and a "poetic-representational" one that explores Dante's symbolic use of shipwrecks, sirens, and classical figures (e.g. Medusa, Jason, and Hypsipyle) related to the sea. Moving adeptly among the rich commentary tradition, Morosini locates not only moments where the *Commedia* evokes maritime geographies, characters, and symbolism, but also how these were interpreted by the poem's early readers, with special attention given to Boccaccio's commentaries.

The central chapter, which is the longest and best-developed, argues that Boccaccio's modernity can be seen in his use of the sea as a narrative space. In this chapter Morosini makes her central claim: that Boccaccio's Mediterranean transcends Dante's and Petrarch's symbolic use of the sea, serving as a productive

narrative structure in the *Decameron*. Furthermore, it is a step towards the modern, substituting the knight of medieval romance with a modern range of merchants, pirates, cargo, and riches. “Il mare sostituisce la foresta e la novella abbandona l’obbligo di concentrarsi su un protagonista unico.” Readers of the *Decameron* will find her analysis of individual novelle to be compelling and convincing, especially the sections on Alatiel, Zinevra, Paganino, and Torello. In the second part of the chapter, Morosini demonstrates her deep knowledge of Boccaccio’s entire corpus, extending her reading into Boccaccio’s humanist and classicizing Latin works: the *Genealogie deorum gentilium* and the *De mulieribus claris*.

The third chapter is an essay on Petrarch’s Mediterranean that identifies two opposite poles in his use of the sea. At one end there is the *Itinerarium*, in which Petrarch uses his friend’s journey to the Holy Land as a pretense for describing the geography of Italy in great detail. At the other end is the *Canzoniere*, especially *Rvf.* 189, the sonnet *Passa la nave mia colma d’oblio*. Pushing back on Picone’s allegorical reading of the sonnet, Morosini reaches the conclusion that in Petrarch’s vernacular lyric poetry, “*mare* e *Francesco* sono sinonimi.”

Compared to the rich analysis of the *Decameron* and Boccaccio’s other works, Dante and Petrarch fade into the background, becoming the foils to its true protagonist: Boccaccio’s innovative use of the Mediterranean as a narrative structure. This shortcoming, if it can be called such, is one that the book wears on its sleeve. The author readily acknowledges Boccaccio as the centripetal force for this project, and as such prepares the reader well for what is an excellent study of the *Decameron*’s use of the sea.

A few editorial oversights, such as the citation of *Convivio* in place of the *De vulgari eloquentia* (p. 57) and the 30th canto of *Paradiso* instead of the 33rd (p. 143), are more than forgiven on account of the elegant presentation of 77 figures (primarily miniatures from illuminated manuscripts) in vivid color that not only illustrate Morosini’s arguments, but serve as objects of her effective reading.

Il mare salato offers a compelling reading of Boccaccio as a literary innovator who uses the Mediterranean as a tool for his narrative. Thus Morosini’s “Mediterranean philology” is successful as an analysis of the sea that contributes directly to our reading of the text. Morosini captures the complexities of the Mediterranean: the dangers and opportunities it poses to those who cross it, and the wide expanse of experiences it provides to those who write it. In addition to scholars working on the Mediterranean in Italian literature, this study will be useful to anyone interested in Boccaccio’s narrative techniques and innovation.

Alejandro Cuadrado, *Columbia University*

Maddalena Signorini.

Sulle tracce di Petrarca. Storia e significato di una prassi scrittoria.

Biblioteca dell’«Archivum Romanicum». Serie I: Storia, Letteratura, Paleografia, 500. Florence: Olschki, 2019. XII + 224 pp. €28.

Few authors have a close relationship with their own writing as Petrarch, and classic studies like those by Armando Petrucci and Albinia de la Mare have proven that Petrarch's graphic choices represented an important part of his intellectual program. This was made clear also by the annotations he left in the books he owned. At the center of Maddalena Signorini's splendid volume is a specific corpus of Petrarch's annotations: thirty-nine traces (*tracce*) he left on the flyleaves of several of his books. Signorini classified all of them according to an efficient scheme.

The operative word here is precisely "traces." Scholars have suggested to use this word in a larger, more general sense, to replace "sources": traces are what historians use to talk about the past. And traces, as an anthropological attitude, are typically associated to the work and the method of Carlo Ginzburg. Signorini's traces have instead a more technical and restricted sense of adventitious written records which appear in places not originally conceived for writing, according to an use suggested originally by Petrucci and Alfredo Stussi. Yet, this does not mean necessarily that they were extemporaneous writings. The story of the term is the focus of the first chapter of the book, in which Signorini shows how "trace" has been gradually accepted and better defined in this technical meaning. Particularly interesting are the pages on autograph texts, those in which the author is not merely dictating, but writing his own words, or at least correcting them (11), and that after the thirteenth century are the norm rather than the exception.

In the following chapter Signorini introduces the corpus at the center of her study, Petrarch's "traces", those texts he left in the flyleaves of his books (or, to be more precise, in the flyleaves that have arrived to us: the corpus was certainly larger). The fact itself that Petrarch was the owner of the books in which he left these records suggest that they corresponded to a precise will, and not to an extemporaneous action. In many cases they were actually "depositories of memory" (16). The unsuccessful plans Petrarch had to donate his library to Venice might be read in connection with many of his traces. Signorini divides them in three categories: biographical, exegetical, and of service. These latter are the most common, with 16 occurrences, and report pieces of information about the book they are drafted in, being comparable to notes of possession. Yet, Petrarch did not want to proclaim himself the owner of the book by inserting them, rather, as Signorini convincingly argues, he wanted to tell the story of his book collection. The most intriguing category is the biographical one, with a special mention for the flyleaf of Par. Lat. 2923, already studied by Pierre de Nolhac, and the *Virgilio Ambrosiano*. Those in the third group, the exegetical one, are traces in a less proper way, since they establish an explicit connection with the content of the book in which they are recorded. Reflecting in terms of time and space, Signorini shows how all these traces were part of Petrarch's project to fashion his persona and his biography, confirming the association between the traces and the public destination that he wished for his library. This chapter includes a paleographic section that beautifully guides the reader into Petrarch's graphic experimentations, and a discussion about the positions of the traces in the page and the reasons behind Petrarch's choices.

The third chapter narrows vertically (61) the focus on two traces, the trace on the death of Laura in the abovementioned *Virgilio Ambrosiano*, and the distichs at the end of the commentary on Macrobius (BL, Harley 5204). After Petrarch's

death, the Laura-trace was copied at least 82 times, being occasionally translated in the vernacular because of its connection with the *Canzoniere* and the *Trionfi* (and it was not the only Petrarchean trace to have such a vibrant afterlife). This reception caused a shift in the meaning of the brief text, which lost its original moralizing tone. The Harleyean trace, instead, is notable because includes Petrarch's name, offering Signorini the opportunity to deepen her discussion on Petrarch's authoriality.

The book is completed by a treasurable final section, in which Signorini offers an edition of the texts, chronologically organized. Crucially, the edition is accompanied by short commentaries and photographic reproductions which further allow to directly appreciate the brilliance of Signorini's analysis.

This is a refined piece of scholarship, wonderfully written and researched, that enriches our understanding of Petrarch as a writer and as an author.

Eva Del Soldato, *University of Pennsylvania*

Simon Gilson.

Reading Dante in Renaissance Italy. Florence, Venice and the 'Divine Poet'. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. XIV + 434 pp. \$120.

Leggere Dante a Firenze. Da Boccaccio a Cristoforo Landino (1350-1481).

Trans. Giulia Gaimari. Ed. Anna Pegoretti.

Frecce, 286. Rome: Carocci, 2019. 333 pp. €28.

Fifteen years ago, Simon Gilson gave new freshness to studies on Dante's reception in the early modern age with his *Dante and Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). In that dense and harmonious volume, Gilson analyzed Dante's fortune between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries through studying how several generations of educated Florentine citizens had absorbed and re-used the figure of the poet in the city's cultural context. Italian readers will therefore be delighted to see the first Italian translation of this classic of contemporary Dante criticism finally published. The book released by Carocci does not only contain the translated text of the 2005 volume. The pages of this elegant book from the bright red cover contain an updated version of the work, superbly edited by Anna Pegoretti, which takes into account the most recent publications on the reception of Dante's work. This element makes Gilson's work even more precious, especially if one considers the extraordinary development in recent years of studies on Dante's reception in the early modern age.

Shortly before the release of the Italian edition of *Dante and Renaissance Florence*, Gilson provided his audience with another fundamental text on Dante's fortune—a work that is not only the ideal complement to his previous volume, but also the most complete historical tool on the intricate reception of Dante's works in the “Century of Petrarch.” *Reading Dante in Renaissance Italy* represents an

indispensable compass for navigating the tricky waters of Dante's sixteenth-century fortunes in Italy. The geographical focus of the work consists of the two most important cultural and commercial centers of Renaissance Italy: Florence and Venice. Gilson's analysis focuses on the critical responses and publishing initiatives that developed in the cultural circles of the peninsula between the publication of Cristoforo Landino's *Comento sopra la Commedia* (Florence, 1481) and the realization of the monumental editions of Dante's works edited by the great sixteenth-century Italian polygraphs, such as Francesco Sansovino and Lodovico Dolce. The path through which the author leads us is probed through the leitmotif of the centuries-old relationship between *res et verba* ("words" and "things"), that is between the formal properties and the philosophical content of Dante's texts. These elements, according to Gilson, have historically constituted the pivots on which the literary debate about Dante's work was focused in the century of Bembo and Manuzio and which caused the decline of the poet's fortune between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

One of the most outstanding achievements of this book is dealing with the reading and dissemination of Dante's work through the cultural perspective of producers, educated readers and scholars of sixteenth-century Italy. The contextualization recreated by Gilson is exemplary. Each chapter provides a rigorous and careful historical reconstruction of cultural environments and circles of dissemination of Dante's texts, giving back to the modern reader the experience of Renaissance reading and debate about the greatest Tuscan poet. Florence and Venice are the undisputed protagonists of the study and analytical development of the book. The first two chapters lead the reader into the dimension of Dante's Renaissance publishing. In chapter one Gilson illustrates the extraordinary perspective transformations in the reception of the *Commedia* developed since the publication of the first Venetian editions of Landino's *Comento*. The large folio editions designed by skilled printers such as Ottaviano Scoto and Bernardino Benali constituted the book model through which the dissemination of the *Commedia* was canonized—a model that was not replaced even after the enormous commercial success of the *enchiridia* printed by Aldo Manuzio, edited by Pietro Bembo. However, the text of the 1502 Aldine edition was the one that every sixteenth-century Italian printer associated with Landino's commentary; this, despite the exegetical work, presented many discordances with the text edited by Bembo. Gilson develops an equally accurate analysis of paratextual features in the following chapter, dedicated to *De vulgari eloquentia* and *Convivio*. This section shows how the reception of Dante's "minor works" was guided by various factors such as the *problema della lingua* in the 1520s or the critical practice of reading Dante's masterpiece through the poet's other works. Chapters three and four lead the reader into the circles of Florentine academies, introducing them to the lively debate about Dante and his work in the second half of the sixteenth century in the poet's homeland. The final chapters of the book take us back to the commercial capital of Renaissance Italy. In these pages Gilson impeccably recreates the literary and publishing genesis of the major sixteenth-century Italian commentaries on the *Commedia*—the *Esposizioni* by Alessandro Vellutello (1544) and Bernardino Daniello (1565). Simultaneously he explores Venetian printed culture by leading the reader into the workshops of the late-sixteenth-century polygraphs and exploring their relationship with Dante's universe.

By carefully examining the many cultural, social, and economic contexts in which Dante was circulated, and the different characteristics of the readers for whom those editions were created and designed, Gilson offers his readers a work of the highest historical value. However, *Reading Dante in Renaissance Italy* is not only an exceptional text of contemporary Dante criticism. It is indeed an indispensable research tool and a fundamental model for future investigations on the history of the material reception of literary texts in the Italian Renaissance. There is no doubt that it will be read and consulted by many specialists, students, and non-academic readers in the years to come.

Natale Vacalebri, *University of Pennsylvania*

James Hankins.

Virtue Politics: Soulcraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy.

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020. XXIII + 736 pp. \$45.

Is there in Italy, in the period comprised between the fourteenth and the sixteenth century, any “political thought” worthy of the name? Is it possible to find elements that have any traction from the perspective of political philosophy in the writings of Petrarch, Boccaccio, Leonardo Bruni, or Leon Battista Alberti – not to mention much lesser known writers such as Roberto Valturio or Mario Salamonio? Is there any room for these authors in the histories of Western political thought? James Hankins’s view, admittedly not the dominant one in current scholarship, is resolutely positive. For Hankins, not only did a truly political thought exist in Renaissance Italy, but it was also a coherent one, at least in its fundamental features. What all Italian Renaissance authors writing about politics had in common was a deep-rooted concern with the problem of moral education, a problem that was, in turn, firmly anchored in the concept of virtue. What Hankins calls “Italian humanist political thought” was “a movement stimulated by a crisis of legitimacy in late medieval Italy and by a widespread disgust with its political and religious leadership.” Italian political writers of the time all shared a wide, and often bitter, experience with tyranny, so that they took on the mission of rebuilding Italy’s “depleted reserves of good character, true piety, and practical wisdom” (p. XV). They also found in the classical world, which they worked industriously to revive, an inspiring model, full of examples of moral nobility, political wisdom, and selfless dedication to country. Whether in the capacity of political advisors (as in the case of Petrarch) or by actually occupying political offices (like Bruni), humanist political writers put moral reform at the very center of their political agendas, their mission being to build a new (even if revived from the ancients) and uncorrupt virtue politics.

In more than seven-hundred pages, Hankins’s book outlines the main trajectories of what can be considered as a comprehensive history of Italian humanist political thought. The book consists of twenty chapters, plus a conclusion and a section of appendixes. The first four chapters serve as theoretical foundation for the

following ones, which are more historical in nature. In the first section, the author presents an overview of humanist virtue politics, describes Italian humanist political thought as a movement not committed to any particular form of government (a feature distinguishing it from classical political thought), and discusses humanist concepts of tyranny. In the following twelve chapters, the author surveys the political thought of a sheer number of humanist thinkers (Petrarch, Bartolo da Sassoferrato, Baldo degli Ubaldi, Giovanni Boccaccio, Leonardo Bruni, Biondo Flavio, Ciriaco d'Ancona, Leon Battista Alberti, George of Trebizond, Francesco Filelfo, Francesco Patrizi, and Niccolò Machiavelli). Three appendixes complete the work (an English translation of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* II, 9.19-22, where the author discusses political obligations; an English translation of Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi's 1399 speech before the Florentine Priors, as reported by Leonardo Bruni in his *History of the Florentine People* XI, 75-78; and a most welcomed catalogue of Renaissance editions, translations, and compendia of Francesco Patrizi's political works).

The broad range of subjects covered, both chronologically and thematically, makes it difficult to engage thoroughly with Hankins's book. I shall therefore concentrate on the chapters on Petrarch and Boccaccio, since these prove to be of greatest interest to the readers of *Bibliotheca Dantesca*. Petrarch occupies a prominent position in the book. He is the subject of two different chapters (5 and 6). His importance within Hankins's account of Italian humanist political thought cannot be underestimated. Not only does Petrarch fit very well into the mainstream of this movement, but he can also be considered as a sort of father figure of humanist virtue politics. By engaging with a variety of his works (from private letters to poetic compositions, both in Latin and Italian vernacular), Hankins shows that Petrarch was the first one to draw attention on the fact that virtue politics has to do with the moral disposition of the ruler rather than with a particular form of government. For Petrarch, Hankins argues, "it is the mens, the moral disposition of the agent, that governs the moral quality of an act and determines whether a law, or an action governed by law, is praiseworthy" (p. 156). Thus, educating the political leader, or the ruling elite in charge with the administration of power, becomes the essential task of Italian humanist political thinkers, regardless which particular regime or constitution is in place. In this sense, Petrarch anticipates one of the central tenets of humanist political thought: to conceive of virtue politics as transcending any commitments to particular forms of government. Since virtue politics is about the moral character of the ruler/s, and not about the way in which institutions are shaped, it proves compatible with different, even contrasting, regime types. Hankins also shows that Petrarch's commitment to moral reform is by no means undermined by his insistence on solitary life as a higher kind of existence. Not only is the *otium* described by Petrarch an ideal of private life specifically attuned to literary men, but he also states very clearly that no life can possibly gain greater divine approval than the one devoted to serve one's country (p. 181).

The need to reform human nature is also at the center of Boccaccio's political reflections, although his positions are colored with a much darker pessimism than Petrarch's, and with true disgust for the politics of both Florence and Italy. Boccaccio's works that bear the most on political thought, his *Consolatory Letter* to Pino de' Rossi and his *De casibus virorum illustrium*, were both penned in the aftermath of his self-exile in Certaldo in the late 1350s. This followed the failure of

the aristocratic coup in Florence, in which a group of malcontents, including Boccaccio himself, attempted to overthrow the popular regime. From outside the political arena, Boccaccio starts thinking about politics from a more theoretical, non-partisan perspective, thus resembling his mentor Petrarch. Like him, Boccaccio called for a total reform of the true *materia prima* of politics, that is human nature. In the prologue of his *De casibus*, dedicated to his beloved friend Mainardo Cavalcanti, a Florentine ennobled by his public service, Boccaccio makes it clear that “no republic would ever be sound without morally sound men to govern it” (p. 198). Like Petrarch, and like many other humanist political thinkers that would follow, Boccaccio sees the achievement of virtuous politics not as a question of which particular constitution to choose, but as a question of how to best rebuild the moral character of the ruler. Boccaccio’s views of virtue politics offer a vantage from which to observe the “modernity” of Boccaccio’s political thought – an aspect, as Hankins points out at the beginning of the chapter, which has been traditionally questioned by scholars. This does not mean, of course, that there are no features in his political thought that are “backward looking” – as Hankins puts it (p. 215). These seem to be mainly two: first, the notion that the power of kings is derived from and limited by the express consent of the people; and second, the general pessimism suffusing Boccaccio’s accounts of the exercise of political power, and his way of looking at it as intrinsically dangerous and corrupting to the health of men’s souls.

Virtue Politics has a twofold merit: to make new materials available to scholars, and to pose the “old ones” new questions. The author handles a vast and often heterogeneous set of texts and authors, one with which scholars of political thought are hardly at ease. Hankins finds an intelligent thread to unify different kinds of literary works, and to make good sense of what may at first sight appear as an un-systematic cultural movement. More than that, this book gives Renaissance political thought the place it deserves within the history of Western political thought.

Tommaso De Robertis, *University of Pennsylvania*

The Marriage of Philology and Scepticism: Uncertainty and Conjecture in Early Modern Scholarship and Thought.

Gian Mario Cao, Anthony Grafton and Jill Kraye, eds.

Warburg Institute Colloquia. London: Warburg Institute, 2019. 256 pp. \$54.50.

This set of essays results from a conference at the Warburg Institute, organized to investigate the connections and conflicts in humanist scholarship between the philological tools they used to establish correct texts of their sources on the one hand, and the contents of some of those texts on the other. In this case, the particular content of interest is philosophical scepticism. Sceptical texts and thought generated both interest and controversy among Renaissance and early modern scholars, and

have attracted their share of recent scholarly attention as well. Scepticism would also seem to present conflicts to those scholars who might have wished both to adopt sceptical principles and also to undertake manuscript studies, especially the editing of works recovered in highly imperfect versions or with very complex traditions.

The participants took a variety of approaches in framing their questions. Glenn Most begins with ancient sceptics themselves by examining the writings of Sextus Empiricus and his own treatment of the works of his predecessors. He finds that Sextus Empiricus seems not to have dwelled on the accuracy of the copies of earlier sources at his disposal. His interest in earlier texts was philosophical, that is, in the contents of their arguments as presented.

Jan Ziolkowski raises a number of methodological issues before turning to those that relate especially to the Middle Ages. Philosophy and philology would seem to be two very different approaches to texts in any historical era. And when the focus turns to a particular philosophical school such as scepticism, different ways of framing the question lead to different results. One might seek to identify in a given text some features commonly associated with sceptical attitudes broadly construed. Or one might trace the reception of ancient sceptical texts, which in medieval Latin Europe meant primarily some works of Cicero and Augustine. Ziolkowski cites Lupus of Ferrières and John of Salisbury's writings among the few that treated explicitly philological concerns. His thoughtful essay demonstrates that this topic is most relevant for Renaissance and early modern thinkers.

The picture shifts to legal scholars and theologians of the sixteenth century, both Catholic and Protestant, in Ian Maclean's contribution. He discusses how these university-trained professionals sought to determine the meaning of texts, including those points in which faith played a role, and how they wrote about the process and its importance. Both lawyers and theologians saw doubt as a problem to be resolved, not as a desirable or necessary philosophical state. Anthony Grafton turns directly to the problems humanists faced as they sought to edit and to understand the texts of classical authors, in particular how to resolve manuscript errors and related issues in dealing with problematic passages. He focuses on *divinatio*, a term that developed with both positive and negative connotations for conjectural emendations, and includes a valuable digression on the more literal uses of the term for making determinations with superhuman assistance. Here too, sceptical philosophy played only a limited role, though use of the term *divinatio* itself recognized the limits of fully evidence-based certainty in the actual production of printed editions from imperfect manuscripts.

Jill Krayer examines the editors of Seneca, a Latin author who engaged with sceptical philosophy. A series of scholars, including Erasmus, Matteus Fortunatus, Pincianus, Marc-Antoine Muret, and others, not only edited Senecan texts but also produced remarks and comments on their varying levels of confidence, certainty, or doubt about variant readings and their own best determinations. David Butterfield takes on the Lambinus edition of Lucretius, whose Epicurean text found controversy as well as eager readers. Lambinus strove to distinguish what was and was not genuinely Lucretian by identifying textual interpolation. Given the limited number of surviving Lucretian manuscripts, Butterfield is able to examine in detail Lambinus's use of manuscripts as well as previous editions.

The editing of Biblical texts brought high stakes in the desire for accuracy and certainty in establishing a text. Scott Mandelbrote examines editions of the Septuagint. His winding narrative begins with the Roman edition of 1588 and continues with the appearance in 1628 of a new manuscript, referred to as the Codex Alexandrinus. Its variants held political implications for English scholars in the century's middle decades, and it contributed to ongoing, confessionally laden controversies across Europe about the relationship between the Septuagint and the Vulgate. The possibility that the Vulgate was a witness to a lost Hebrew version offered support to its high esteem among Catholics. He concludes with Philadelphian James Logan and his library, which included the Aldine Septuagint and the London Polyglot. The implications of biblical textual scholarship thus ran wide through early modern thought.

Gian Mario Cao brings the volume up to the era of the Enlightenment and the links between biblical scholarship and freethinking. He discusses Anthony Collins's work on freethinking (1712) and responses by Richard Bentley and by Girolamo Maria Allegri. The latter related to the book's inclusion on the Index of Forbidden Books. This lengthy controversy genuinely did involve questions of philology and doubt; Bentley argued, against Collins, that the existence of so many variant biblical manuscript readings does not destroy trust in the text; it is merely a condition of all manuscript transmission.

Not surprisingly given the topic, the authors have avoided drawing broad conclusions. They have nonetheless produced a set of valuable insights about the points of connection and intersection as well as points of divergence between the recovery of ancient texts on the one hand, and the philosophical contents of those texts on the other.

Ann E. Moyer, *University of Pennsylvania*

Alberto Casadei.

Dante. Storia avventurosa della Divina Commedia dalla selva oscura alla realtà aumentata.

Milan: il Saggiatore, 2020. 195 pp. €18.

Alberto Casadei's latest book, published by Il Saggiatore in August 2020, arrives at a particularly poignant moment: in fact, this contribution is surely one of the first volumes about Dante that will be written and published in light of the upcoming Dantean centenary (2021); in addition, it was also completed during Italy's first lockdown for the Covid-19 pandemic. This double peculiarity makes *Dante. Storia avventurosa della Divina Commedia dalla selva oscura alla realtà aumentata* a rather compelling and interesting read. Casadei, Professor in Italian Philology at the University of Pisa, is by no means new to Dante studies; as a matter of fact, some of his previous books (*Dante oltre la Commedia* (2013), *Dante: altri accertamenti e punti critici* (2019), to cite the most recent ones) deal precisely with the *Sommo poeta*

and the reception of his works. What makes his latest a most welcome addition to his *corpus* – and to Dante studies at large – are several features arising precisely from the current historical convergence: a compactness that does not allow many digressions, an attention both to the academic and to the general public, an interest in Dante's modernity, and the narrativity in its pace.

As for the book's compactness, it is made apparent even at first sight: the volume is divided into six brief chapters and an introduction, in which Casadei states the book's intent in argument and audience. His interest lies not only in presenting Dante's life journey with a linearity in which real life facts are intertwined with the genesis and contents of Dante's works, but he also offers his own interpretations to perennial *vexatae quaestiones* which have been topical in Dante studies for centuries. In his introduction, Casadei is also adamant about making this book accessible even to non-specialists by adopting a style which is not academic but more narrative. Without oversimplifying the subject matter – indeed, he offers food for thought even for Dantean *aficionados* – Casadei's detailed attention to Dante's reception and modernity functions as a bridge between academics and general readers.

The first chapter covers the years 1265–1292; Casadei presents a thorough overview of Dante's socio-political climate at the time of his birth and offers a useful insight on the dynamics of the *comune* in terms of class and political structure. The author intertwines general information regarding historical events with Dante's own intellectual education and his first literary works, especially the *Vita Nuova*. On this matter, he stresses the revolutionary features of Dante's prosimeter and details the manner in which Dante's literary relationship with Beatrice evolves within the *Vita Nuova*, and how her death ultimately paved the way for his subsequent writings.

The second chapter deals with the years 1293–1302, when Dante turned to politics and engaged in various literary experimentations (the *tenzone*, the *rime petrose*). Casadei's valuable input is most apparent when he deals with the first years of Dante's exile and the genesis of the *Commedia*: here, the author embraces the theory that first four *canti* of the poem (and not the first seven, as usually speculated) were written when Dante was still living in Florence, citing a considerable difference in style, tone and allegorization from the first four to the subsequent ones. In the third chapter, before delving into the last decades of Dante's life and the proper drafting of the *Commedia*, Casadei aptly follows Dante's whereabouts after his exile; the reader is offered a succinct but detailed map of Dante's stays in those years, while also dealing with the writing of the *Convivio*, *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *canzone montanina*. The latter appears to be a consequence of a proper erotic turmoil experienced in Casentino around 1307 that, according to Casadei, led Dante to abandon his previous unfinished works and focus solely on the *sacrato poema*.

Chapters four and five are focused, then, on the writing of the *Commedia*. Casadei remains true to his *modus scrivendi* and not only offers an overview of the poem's content, structure and unique features, but also sheds light on the historical contingences of the time in which Dante was composing the *cantiche*. Even here, Casadei presents his own interpretation to some critical issues: he not only reinforces the idea that the first four cantos were composed before Dante's exile, but he also makes some suggestions regarding the circulation of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* (especially in the case of the *Infèrno*, Casadei seems convinced that the *cantica* was

modified later on in order to add Pope Clement V in the 19th *canto*, following the pope's betrayal of Emperor Henry VII). When dealing with the *Paradiso*, Casadei also dismisses the much debated *Epistola a Cangrande*, stating that it almost certainly was not authored by Dante. In addition, anticipating the following – and final – chapter, the author brilliantly links the last ten cantos of the *Paradiso* to what nowadays would be associated with “augmented reality”, due to their retelling of a complete immersion in a reality both enhanced and foreign.

Dante's reception through the centuries – and the relevance that the *Commedia* still has in our time – is the subject matter of the sixth and last chapter of the book. From the early commentators to Dante's rediscovery in the 19th and 20th centuries, Casadei paints a detailed picture of the reasons why Dante has remained a source of inspiration for not only for Italian, but also international, artists across a range of mediums. The author aptly distinguishes between an *intentio auctoris*, prerogative of philological studies, and an *intentio lectoris*, which is exemplified in the numerous adaptations and rewritings of such an iconic work of literature; due to its ties with contemporary narrative forms and the never-ending appeal of its metaphorizations, the *Commedia* remains to this day both the ultimate classic and contemporary work. By outlining an impressive amount of historical facts, tied with his own philological takes on many Dantean issues, Casadei offers a solid tool both for Dante specialists and the general public, demonstrating that Dante and his *poema sacro* can be appreciated by everyone, everywhere, and at any time.

Giulio Genovese, *University of Pennsylvania*

Marco Martinelli.

Nel nome di Dante. Diventare grandi con la Divina Commedia.

Milan: Ponte alle Grazie, 2019. 155 pp. €14.

In his latest book, the Italian playwright Marco Martinelli (1956) examines Dante's *Commedia* with a view to discussing his own life and that of mankind, assuming that Dante wrote his book for each one of us.

In the first chapter, called “Il racconto che apre al giorno”, Marco Martinelli recounts that his father, Vincenzo, had a particular habit of sitting next to his bed while telling him stories, including the ones in the *Divina commedia*. In the second chapter, titled “Dante adolescente”, the author rebuilds the history of Dante when the poet was a teenager. Dante likely saw destructions in his city, caused by the battles between Guelphs and Ghibellines. However, from his days nothing changed, and after seven centuries, we can still see the same destruction around the world: “il pianeta è ancora arrossato del sangue dei fratelli” (17). At the end of the chapter, Martinelli maintains that he wrote this book so that his young Italian readers may be fascinated by the *Commedia*, as he was in his teenage years, a credit he owed to his father. In chapter three (“I maiali e la grammatica”) Martinelli tells the story of his father Vincenzo and of his many success as a young student of classics. He later

met his future wife, Luciana Gherpelli, whom he married in 1954. In the following chapter (“Bianchi, rossi e neri”), Martinelli recounts how Vincenzo, who worked in Ravenna for the local section of the *Democrazia Cristiana*, used to describe to him the politics at the time of Dante, when Florence was divided into Guelphs and Ghibellines. After the battle of Campaldino (1289), the winning Guelphs split into the *Bianchi* and the *Neri*. For Vincenzo, in his times, the *democristiani* were the Guelphs and the *comunisti* (or, the *Rossi*) the Ghibellines. The fifth chapter (“Il poeta in politica”) deals with Dante as a politician and with the topic of the exile, while in chapter six (“Il corpo nella Renault rossa”) Martinelli tells us about the 1970s, characterized by violence and extremism. In 1977, Marco married Ermanna, and they began to work in theater. In the spring of 1978 Aldo Moro, president of the *Democrazia Cristiana*, was kidnapped and murdered. For Martinelli’s father, this event symbolized the end of politics. Chapter seven (“Il profugo”) deals with the first years of Dante’s exile and Martinelli comments on two works that Dante composed during these years: the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Convivio*, while chapter eight (“L’ultimo rifugio”) deals with Dante in Ravenna and the end of the poet’s life.

From chapter nine (“E cielo e terra”) Martinelli deals specifically with Dante as the author of the *Commedia*, a poem that he describes as a “grande teatro” (98), in which more than 500 characters appear. In the final chapters, the author concludes his father’s “Dantean” biography, recounting the episodes concerning Vincenzo’s commitment to Ravenna’s cultural politics and his son’s first attempts at theatrical writing. In the chapter titled “Epilogo. La selva oscura”, Martinelli wonders why Dante’s *Commedia* continues to move us. According to him, it is because this work is a great, sincere and real protest against injustice. At the end of the chapter, Martinelli tells us about the death of Vincenzo, which occurred on January 21, 2009, as a result of heart failure. The last chapter, called “Theatrum mundi”, describes Martinelli’s recent projects with the *Commedia*, a work which he and his wife are currently playing around the world.

With a fluid style that keeps the reader keen to know more about the topic of the book, Martinelli is able to highlight that the *Sommo Poeta*’s existence and the content of the *Divine Comedy* can refer to any human life, through his exploration and comparison of his own life and Dante’s. Because of its basic but accurate information about Dante’s life and works, Martinelli’s book also turns out to be a precious tool for both the beginner and the scholar.

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