



2022

**'Selve oscure e alberi strani.' Paolo Grillo, ed. Rome: Viella libreria editrice, 2022.**

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**Recommended Citation**

Contreras, Lourdes (2022) "'Selve oscure e alberi strani.' Paolo Grillo, ed. Rome: Viella libreria editrice, 2022.," *Bibliotheca Dantesca: Journal of Dante Studies*: Vol. 5, Article 31.

Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/bibdant/vol5/iss1/31>

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of the *Commedia* have traditionally taken the lion's share, only a handful contributions have been devoted to the investigation of the ethical foundations of Dante's masterpiece. In addition, Corbett shows in a very convincing way the extent of Dante's debt to Guglielmo Peraldo's *De vitiis et virtutibus*, as opposed to Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. He thus supports a partial reorientation of the origin of Dante's ethical discourse in the *Commedia*. The book contributes therefore to three main currents in contemporary Dante scholarship: it provides a reappraisal of Dante's theology, it proposes a new assessment of his intellectual sources, and it promotes a new investigation of the narrative structure of the *Commedia*. Written in a very economical and clear style, *Dante's Christian Ethics* provides a truly original and solid study of the ethical bearings of the *Commedia*.

Tommaso De Robertis, *University of Pennsylvania*

*Selve oscure e alberi strani.*

Paolo Grillo, ed.

Rome: Viella libreria editrice, 2022. 260 pp. \$26.

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*Selve oscure e alberi strani*, edited by Paolo Grillo, presents a collection of chapters dedicated to the representation of the dark wood in the thirteenth through fourteenth century. The book revolves around the context in which Dante's Divine Comedy was written and features a variety of perspectives, ranging from ecological, institutional, economic, and archeological readings of the setting and landscape where Dante enters the dark wood in *Inferno* and departs from *Purgatorio* to *Paradiso*.

Grillo begins the edited volume with an introductory chapter that underlines the interdisciplinary nature of the "selva selvaggia" in the Divine Comedy and the importance of the forest setting in Medieval Italian literature overall. The volume is divided into two sections, the first, *Il bosco narratore, il bosco descritto*, begins with Sandra Carapezza's reading of the various forests in the Comedy, outlining the different lexicon associated with the image of the forest, including, *selva*, *bosco*, and *foresta*. Carapezza notes that in contrast to Guido Guinizelli's *Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore*, Dante's selva is not a place of continual return or a place in which love is binded to the *cuore gentile*; it is instead a place of exile, loss, but eventual elevation. Where the rhymes in the first Dantean Forest allude to darkness (*oscura, dura*) those in Guinizelli's imply a place of color and light (*verdura, natura*). Carapezza notes that the dark wood that begins the Comedy is a "function" rather than a real place, it is a place of departure and arrival towards a new kind of poetry. Carapezza's analysis carries on to the image of the suicide forest in *Inferno* which physically resembles those forests that enclose the area of a *bosco* where boars inhabit. It is, to some extent, the opposite of a domesticated forest, such as the earthly paradise in *Purgatorio*. The *foresta* in the earthly paradise is described as ancient, an antithesis to the suicide forest, domesticated and seemingly maintained, however,

both forests are not presented as sources to be exploited. Lidia Zanetti Domingues similarly regards the forest landscapes as more than merely hostile or passive, but rather a place of introspection, a contrasting reflection of cultivated land or cities that is ultimately unsuitable for human life, as noted in sermons of Dante's age. Zanetti Domingues' analysis of the ecological consciousness of the Church emphasizes that the relationship between Christianity and nature cannot be located or analyzed through generalizations but rather by thoroughly investigating through coeval religious traditions and texts which allow for a reading that does not regard the contemporary belief that forests are only a resource for humanity but a place necessary for wildlife and an indispensable antithesis to cities.

Within the first section of the volume, Ilda Vagge and Maddalena Moglia center their writing in a botanical reading of the forests in the *Divine Comedy*. Vagge notes that plants and vegetation were seen as living beings without sensitivity, movement, or ability to communicate. Vagge takes note of Dante's reference to the morphology of certain plants, the geographic location and climate needed for certain plants to thrive, as well as a mention of agronomy of certain fruit trees which are noted by Pietro de Crescenzi, as underlined by Moglia. Both writers note that plants were studied during the period in large part for their medicinal uses. Although these medieval studies were mostly conducted by men, Vagge notes that women of the period were known to readily find the correct plants for illnesses which later fed into the belief that they could create potions and become witches, which is also alluded to by Dante in *Inferno XX*. Moglia expands on the botanical and horticultural perspective by providing an analysis of Pietro de Crescenzi's *Opus Ruralium Commodorum*, underlining the spiritual value he allots to trees and gardens as a remedy for the soul. He does not assess value to trees solely through their economic worth but rather the pleasure they can bring when in a garden, this was assessed through the fragrance and physical beauty of a tree. However, gardens belonging to lords as opposed to bourgeois or middle class which were classified differently according to their modesty. Moglia concludes by explaining an additional view, Dante's context was not one that merely viewed forests as opposed to the human sphere but, rational; the forest is a place that must be conserved because of its abundance of uses. This anthropocentric reading considers the ecosystem of Medieval Italy as dependent on the balance between plants, moons, microclimates, and land.

Matteo Ferrari underlines the image of the individual tree in which legal and judicial procedures were organized in the Early Medieval context. The practice was solidified at the end of the eleventh and the middle of the twelfth century and lasted until the modern age. Within the context of the *Comedy*, the tree was regarded as noble material, especially those that had strong distinguishing qualities and provided a reference point within a landscape, established boundaries, or proved useful in some way. Under these noble plants, typically elms or oak trees, courts gathered, decisions were made, and oaths were taken. Ferrari's chapter can point to various implications in terms of the trees represented in the *Divine Comedy*.

The second part of the volume, *Il bosco vissuto, il bosco utilizzato*, is dedicated to the use of forest and lagoon surrounding areas in Medieval Venice, Florence, Pavia, and Swiss Valleys. Dario Canzian discusses the humid lagoon forest areas of Venezia and their transformation and importance through the Medieval period while Erica Castelli writes on the status of chestnuts as a good of high value.

Similarly, Phillipe Lefeuvre outlines the collective uses of the forests in and around Florence in the eleventh through thirteenth century. The Appenine forest domains, for example, served as the location for prestigious monastic institutions while other surrounding wooded areas had alimentary and commercial uses. Wood, mushrooms, and berries were just some of the yields that sustained the city. Lefeuvre also notes that the mention of these forests in statutes of rural and urban communes indicates their importance in the Early Medieval period, while this kind of documentation was not as traceable in the pivotal years of the Middle Ages. Lefeuvre notes that the woods of great aristocratic endowment and uncultivated lands of the notarial formulas have little to do with the chestnut and oak woods which more pronounced documentation begins to show at the end of the XI century and in the subsequent centuries. Lefeuvre notes that from the start of the eleventh century until the latter years of the thirteenth century, the progress of a domesticated forest, of woods, becomes increasingly notable. The woods that the notarial deeds show with great lucidity are well-defined and highly desired spaces.

The second part of the volume ends with a study on the archeobotanical and palynological data known from Dante's period. Barbara Proserpio and Mauro Rotoli explain the history of cultivated and uncultivated land and the anthropic effects of deforestation that occurred in different times and in different ways overall.

*Selve oscure e alberi strani* underlines pertinent information on forests through various lenses and brings together contemporary Medieval perspectives of the dark wood and its cultural, economic, and social significance within Dante's time. The edited volume provides a historical, archeological, and literary reading of the *selva* and *foresta* Dante embeds as an entry point and exit in his journey towards *Paradiso*.

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Armando Antonelli.

*Fabbricare e trasmettere la storia nel Medioevo. Cronachistica, memoria documentaria e identità cittadina nel Trecento italiano.*

Pisa-Rome: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2021. 123 pp. €38.

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In the thirty-second canto of the *Inferno* Dante finds himself in the Antenora, among the traitors to their countries. Here he meets Bocca degli Abati, the Florentine Guelph who at the Battle of Montaperti chopped off the hand of the Florentine flag-bearer, causing his fellow citizens to flee and lose the battle. Bocca informs Dante of the other sinners who, like him, are immersed in ice with their faces turned up: “tu hai da lato quel di Beccheria, / di cui segò Fiorenza la gorgiera. / Gianni de' Soldanier credo che sia / più là con Ganello e Tebaldello, / che aprì Faenza quando si dormìa” (*Inf.* XXXII, vv. 191-123). The last character is Tebaldello degli Zambrasi (1230/40-1282), a Ghibelline nobleman from Faenza linked to the Lambertazzi, an illustrious Ghibelline Bolognese family. On the night of