

REVIEWS

Atti degli incontri sulle opere di Dante I. Vita Nova – Fiore – Epistola XIII. Manuele Gagnolati, Luca Carlo Rossi, Paola Allegretti, Natascia Tonelli and Alberto Casadei, eds.

Florence: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018. X + 432 pp. €58.

Since 2013, the Società Dantesca Italiana has undertaken a series of workshops dedicated to Dante's works, destined to culminate with the celebration of the 700th anniversary of Dante's death in 2021. These workshops—titled *Iopere seguite*, from *Paradiso* XXIV “la prova che ‘l ver dischiude / son l'opere seguite,” which is also the motto of the society—aim to renew the discussion of Dante's texts, seen not as immutable monoliths, but as living and breathing works of literature, still capable of new interpretations and meanings. This volume publishes the workshop proceedings on three of Dante's works, namely the *Vita Nova*, the *Fiore*, and the *Epistola XIII* to Can Grande della Scala. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the book is divided into three sections, one dedicated to each work, and features several contributions by well-recognized scholars.

As can be expected, the *Vita Nova* plays the lion's share, due to its complexity and relevance in Dante's oeuvre and the fact that the SDI has dedicated two different workshops to this text, coordinated respectively by Manuele Gagnolati and Luca Carlo Rossi. The essays dedicated to the *Vita Nova* cover a multitude of different subjects: among others, Erminia Ardissino deals with Dante's theories of love; Gagnolati himself focuses on strategies of self-exegesis; Elena Lombardi considers the ways in which this early work sketches some elements of Dante's theory of language; Roberto Rea studies the relationship with Cavalcanti; while Natascia Tonelli analyzes the relationship between prose and poetry. The choice of not addressing one single theme, but rather stimulating a varied discussion, allows the different contributors to shed light on diverse issues related to the *Vita Nova*, rightfully considered fundamental to understand Dante's *Weltanschauung* and his beginnings as a poet.

The second and third sections of the book dedicated to the *Fiore* and the *Epistola a Can Grande* are quite different from the one on the *Vita Nova*, since these two works, unlike the *Vita Nova*, are subject to discussions of authorship. Paola Allegretti opens and closes the section on the *Fiore* with two essays that organize and frame the entire discussion. Her first essay focuses on the *Fiore* by first considering Contini's opinion, a position that even nowadays represents a fundamental interlocutor on the matter. She then pivots to the history of a quatrain from the *Fiore* which seems to imply this poem was in circulation much earlier than its publication in the 19th century. Allegretti's second essay addresses the materiality of the manuscript in which the *Fiore* is recorded and its physical description.

Even though the issue of authorship is not the specific subject of any of the essays, it was impossible for the authors to ignore the elephant in the room, especially owing to the presence of different and sometimes antithetical opinions among the contributors. Both Luciano Formisano and Pasquale Stoppelli, although focusing on other issues, do not refrain from showing their different opinions on authorship. Formisano, who declares himself in support of Dante's attribution—although with some doubts—discusses some of the most relevant issues related to the attribution and different views in the scholarship; for this reason, he expresses his disagreement with Stoppelli on the francophone texture of the language. Stoppelli, meanwhile, considers how to create a critical edition of the *Fiore* that would be most academically honest (something that he has already discussed in his book, *Dante e la paternità del "Fiore"*). A good critical edition of the *Fiore* and the *Detto d'amore* should not use Dante's poetical habits as a guide for emendation, Stoppelli argues, because this would obviously invalidate any discussion both regarding the author and the value of the work itself. The final essay of this section belongs to Luca Carlo Rossi, who in his own edition of the *Fiore* attributed the work to Dante Alighieri. His contribution is particularly apt because he discusses his own criteria for this edition, the intended readership of the poem, and the reasons behind some of his editorial choices. In the end, more than an extensive study on the *Fiore* as a text, both the workshop and these subsequent essays aim to cultivate a discussion about the text's main problems, the different approaches of scholarship, and how to reconcile a complex balance.

Not so different is the issue of the *Epistle to Can Grande*, insofar as both deal with an uncertain attribution. Alberto Casadei's chapter, "Situazione dell'Epistola a Cangrande: una sintesi," immediately illustrates the debates about whether this letter should be attributed to Dante and to what degree. The issue, however, is very different from the discussion involving the *Fiore*, because at stake here is the possibility that someone pretended to be Dante Alighieri and as such made claims that do not necessarily agree with Dante's intention. It is a delicate matter, because it might change the way the *Commedia* (and especially the *Paradiso*) is read and interpreted. Casadei's article, then, focuses on two recent studies by Saverio Bellomo and Luca Azzetta—both of whom support Dante's authorship of the letter—and argues why he believes these studies are not convincing enough and why Dante's authorship should be dismissed. Paolo De Ventura, on the other hand, argues that it is very hard to reject the attribution to Dante and he reviews some of the scholarly works on the matter, especially by his co-contributor Casadei. Moreover, he focuses on one example—the title of the *Commedia*—and how the question is intertwined with the status of the letter and its exegesis. Giuseppe Indizio shares similar beliefs about Dante's authorship, but does so from another angle, namely the tradition of the letter in the first few centuries, and its direct or indirect presence in commentaries and other works. Finally, Marco Veglia tackles the intention of the letter, which is the Dantean attempt to save a friendship in difficulty in view of *Paradiso* XVII.

What we are reading is a book of great complexity, that aims at giving an overview of the *Vita Nova*, the *Fiore*, and the *Epistola XIII*, focusing especially on the tradition of the scholarship about these texts and the explanations of their main issues. Even though it is not intended as a manual, it is clearly a collection of essays

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.

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Italo Bertelli.

Studi sul Due e Trecento. Analisi e letture da Giacomo da Lentini a Dante.
Pisa-Roma: 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.