

Mira Mocan, *L'arca della mente: Riccardo di San Vittore nella 'Commedia' di Dante*, Saggi di 'Lettere Italiane' 68 (Florence: Olschki, 2012). xxii + 315 pp. ISBN 978-88-222-6188-5. €29.00.

Despite the widely recognized importance of Richard's influence on Dante's thought, a monograph entirely devoted to the subject had, until now, still to be written. Mira Mocan fills, then, a significant gap in the scholarship, providing the first systematic study of this important topic. Mocan focuses mainly on the *Commedia* and casts her eye on Dante's other works only when they shed some further light on the problems highlighted in the poem. Apart from some significant remarks on the epistle to Cangrande (authentic, in Mocan's opinion) in chapter I and *passim* and on the so-called 'canzone montanina' in chapter V, then, the book is entirely devoted to the explicit mention of Richard in *Paradiso* X (chapter I) and to the tercets more influenced by his thought: the last cantos of *Purgatorio* (especially XXVII) in chapters II, III, and V, the cantos of the heaven of Saturn in *Paradiso* (chapter VII), and the ones that represent Dante-the-character's vision of the triumph of Christ and of the blessed in the heaven of the Fixed Stars (XXIII) and of God himself in the Empyrean (XXXIII) in chapters VIII and IX.

In the *Commedia* Richard is mentioned as a contemplative and, in the epistle to Cangrande, his authority is quoted to better define the dynamics through which men can contemplate and represent the divine. It is not by chance, then, as Mocan argues through a close analysis of the above-mentioned passages, that Richard's influence in the poem reaches its fullest when Dante tries to represent and define the act of contemplation and the path through which the mind of the contemplative can reach the closest possible contact with the divine. As Mocan shows, in Dante's *Commedia* the interpretation of the biblical characters Leah and Rachel, the use of images taken from the animal world (e.g. goats and birds), as well as the recurring references to the ascent to God as a flight, the presence of the motifs of the ladder of contemplation, and of the *excessus mentis* show significant similarities with the content of Richard's works. Similarly, the passages where Dante is presenting the negative counterpart of the contemplative path to God, such as Ulysses' canto in *Inferno* and the so-called dream of the 'femmina balba' in *Purgatorio*, are deeply influenced by Richard's lexicon and imagery. By doing this, Mocan expands with more details some already well-known allusions to Richard in the *Commedia* and provides the scholarship with new evidence of the importance of his work to Dante.

Mocan does not limit herself to further confirm the role played by Richard's masterpieces (e.g. the *Benjamin maior* and the *minor*), but also suggests the importance of works less considered (so far, at least) in Dante scholarship such as the *De eruditione hominis interioris*. However, what seems to be the most relevant achievement of the present volume is the attempt to locate the analogies between Dante's poem and Richard works within the frame of Dante's adoption of Richard's own reinterpretation of the Augustinian and Dionysian legacy as regards the contemplative process. The allusions to Richard in the *Commedia*

are better understood after Mocan's suggestion to read them as signs of the adoption, in the *Commedia*, of the doctrine of the 'alta fantasia' (to use Dante's own terminology) and of the techniques of the 'visual exegesis' (see chapters IV and VI), that both assure us a higher comprehension not only of the dynamics of Dante-the-character's ascension to God, but also of the ways in which Dante-the-poet could write down in a poem his exceptional journey.

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Merridee L. Bailey, *Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England c.1400–1600* (York: York Medieval Press, 2012). ix + 269 pp. ISBN 978-1-903153-42-0. £50.00.

*Socialising the Child in Late Medieval England* provides an extensive and detailed discussion of the plethora of courtesy and advice books for parents, guardians, and mentors in the years between 1400 and 1600. The broad scope of this book prohibits close analysis of the large number of works mentioned, but many are discussed in some detail in regard to the crucial question of how manners, *courtesy*, related to virtue, a recurrent topic in the book after the first chapter. The great strength of the book is its encyclopedic nature. Merridee Bailey is attentive to the fact that much medieval literature on courtesy and training children is preserved in many contexts and she has been thorough in identifying a wide variety of examples in multiple genres. She outlines her topic and her approach in an introduction that lays out the contents and purposes of the five chapters that comprise the body of the book, a series of investigations that build organically, one leading naturally to the next. The first chapter, 'Courtesy poems', establishes a baseline by discussing late medieval 'elite' texts designed for noble households. The second, 'Readers', examines how the poems discussed in the first chapter were transmitted, varied, and adapted in over 200 manuscripts, touching in passing on how some courtesy poems became associated with non-elite households. The third chapter, 'Virtue and vice' focuses on the impact of print technology on the dissemination of a body of literature originally intended for *gentle* service but subsequently adapted to the needs of bourgeois families, by careful attention to a series of six didactic books Caxton aimed at a young audience and their parents. Chapter 4 reviews the instructional manuals, generally household and parental advice books, printed in the sixteenth century, noting the increasing importance of the family and the role of the father in these books. The fifth and last chapter, 'The school', treats socialization within the school and the influence of precepts in formal education on the world outside the schoolroom.

Bailey's discussion in the later chapters highlights the focus on male children in the extant literature and also highlights the correlative but separate 'clear evidence and persistent preoccupation with (im)moral female behavior' (p. 196) in the courtesy literature of the late medieval and the early modern period, a body of literature that shows 'girls were socialized according to virtue and morality in ways alien and perhaps unnecessary for boys to follow' (p. 197). In