

The book is divided into four main chapters, each of which explores different and very specific dramatic conventions and theatrical cultures. Through these case studies Van Pelt strives to illustrate how “certain plays and *topoi* were used throughout Europe, and that they found themselves reevaluated or reinvented, at times repressed or attacked, so that alternative forms arose that replaced, or existed alongside, their predecessors” (4). The first chapter discusses religious plays and pageants from late medieval Italy, France, and the Low Countries that depicted the desecration of a consecrated Host. The second centers on the figure of Mary Magdalene as represented not only in lesser-known works from the Czech Republic, Germany, and Cyprus but also in plays written by blockbuster dramatists, such as Baroque Spain’s Lope de Vega. The third focuses on two different archer-hero characters, England’s Robin Hood and Switzerland’s Wilhelm Tell, presented as exemplars of elite appropriation of popular and subversive figures across early Renaissance Europe. Finally, the fourth chapter explores a series of civic street performances that took place in 1607 in Wells, England, by examining them in their wider European social and cultural contexts.

Clearly the breadth of this book’s scope and subject matter is remarkable, especially when considering its length (144 pages). It is much to Van Pelt’s credit that she manages to bind these wide-ranging chapters closely together and make them read as a monographic study. Such cohesion rests on the selection of performances that share an underlying element of strategic thinking: as she explains, all the plays discussed in the book “stage a cross-over between the world of the play and the world outside the play” (126), and in doing so attempt to exercise some form of leverage in real life through the medium of performance. Also connecting these chapters is the author’s pervasive commitment to transnational reading, abetted by her dexterity and fluency in various languages and cultures. Accompanying its readers across an impressive range of geographic, temporal, or linguistic boundaries, *Drama in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* guides them toward a better understanding of the common ground on which the theatrical cultures of medieval and early modern Europe were built.

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*Dizionario dei sogni nel Medioevo: Il “Somniale Danielis” in manoscritti letterari.*  
Valerio Cappozzo.

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Florence: Olschki, 2018. xii + 404 pp. €35.

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The fascinating converging of different traditions—Latin, Arab, vernacular—makes this medieval dream book, the *Somniale Danielis*, incredibly interesting and multiculturally contemporary, and judging from the many reviews of this new edition in academic

journals and Italian newspapers since its publication in 2018, a surprise modern best seller. But, after all, the *Somniale Danielis*, of which more than two hundred manuscripts in Latin and vernacular languages survive, was a best seller in its own day. It was the most widespread handbook of oneiromancy in medieval Europe, evidence of the everlasting attraction of humankind to the mystery of dreams. Even today, when science inclines to consider them mainly as physiological phenomena, we still cannot answer the question: “Why do we dream?” Yet we have certainly tried through the “common thread of dream interpretation from Ancient Egypt to the Neapolitan *Smorfia*, to today’s web pages” (6).

As Valerio Cappelletto writes at the beginning of his introduction, one of the most prominent users of the *Somniale* was Leonardo, who famously used it to explain his childhood dream of a kite flying over his cradle, striking him on his mouth with its tail. One cannot help recalling Freud’s essay on Leonardo’s dream, an association Cappelletto effectively uses to trace a brief history of medieval theories of dreams (starting with Artemidorus Daldianus’s *Onirocriticon*), from the external notion that considered them as premonitions or prophecies, to the internal, psychoanalytical interpretation of symbols referring to personal history.

The *Somniale* is traditionally ascribed to the biblical prophet Daniel, interpreter of Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams in the sixth century BCE. However, because his name is often omitted from the incipit of the manuscripts to avoid censorship from the church, for which oneiromancy was considered superstitious and therefore forbidden, the attribution of the *Somniale* is difficult. Scholars speculate that all versions originated from a seventh-century Latin translation of a fourth-century Greek original, now lost.

The *Somniale* presented in this book is the result of the scrutiny of Latin and vernacular manuscripts from the ninth to the end of the fifteenth century, and includes the first printed editions from 1475 to 1550. This new edition offers for the first time the tradition in Italian vernacular, mainly in literary miscellany, with its six versions contained in manuscripts Riccardiano 859, Martelli 12, Vaticano Rossiano 947, Laurenziano Tempi 2, Ashburnham 1724, and Riccardiano 1258. It includes 615 dreams alphabetically arranged, followed by very concise and syntactically simple interpretations—“if followed by dogs: will be followed by enemies” (243)—one of the possible reasons, argues Cappelletto, for the success of the *Somniale*. Probably its single most appealing quality is that it has the luminance and saturation of a Brueghel painting. As Cappelletto points out, we are suddenly transported to a daily reality made of houses, castles, and churches, populated by lakes, woods, animals, flowers, and rocks. Men, women, and monks feed on cheese and fava beans; drink water, absinthe, and wine; and raise horses, oxen, and goats, while swallows and eagles fly over their head. They use sticks, chairs, and keys, go to the well and to the granary near the square, where there is the main church. There are streets, several shops, and a cemetery.

After a short general foreword, Cappozzo describes the manuscripts first in his introductory essay and then again in great and absorbing detail in the chapter “Manuscripts’ Description and Transcription,” before the actual dictionary. Using MS Riccardiano 859, uniquely and entirely dedicated to the interpretation of dreams, as his methodological tool to decipher literary dreams in medieval Italian literature, Cappozzo convincingly applies dream interpretation theories to Dante’s purgatory dreams and the three symbolic dreams in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. Furthermore, strengthening the connection between popular and high culture, four of the manuscripts examined by Cappozzo contain literary texts. Martelli 12 contains poems from Dante’s *Vita Nova*; Vaticano Rossiano 947 novelle from the *Decameron*; Laurenziano Tempi 2—whose copyist is the poet and author of *cantari*, Antonio Pucci—various texts with citations from Dante, Petrarch, and Andrea Cappellano; Ashburnham 1724, an exchange of sonnets between Petrarch and Antonio Beccari. A rich bibliography concludes the *Dizionario dei sogni*, allowing the curious reader to find their way through the mysterious world of dream interpretation.

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*Purgatorio e Antipurgatorio: Un’indagine dantesca*. Gennaro Sasso.  
I libri di Viella 307. Rome: Viella, 2019. 198 pp. €25.

As promised by the title, Gennaro Sasso’s volume comprises two essays primarily investigating the distinction between purgatory and ante-purgatory in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Through a theoretical analysis, Sasso examines the ambiguous nature of the liminal space that precedes the entrance to purgatory proper, and that, after Benvenuto da Imola’s commentary, has been termed ante-purgatory. In the first essay, “Purgatorio e Antipurgatorio: Questioni di struttura,” which constitutes more than two-thirds of the volume, the author raises a number of essential questions for the study of the *Comedy* and deals with some of the cruxes of the second canticle: what makes ante-purgatory different from purgatory? Is waiting in ante-purgatory part of the atonement for each sinner? What role does negligence play in the system of sin and expiation laid out in *Purgatorio*? Leaving the issues regarding the topographical aspects in the background, Sasso explores the distinction of the spaces before and after purgatory’s gates from a moral, penitential, and theological point of view. Sasso rejects what he calls the “exegetical myth” (24) of the division of ante-purgatory in three circles, proposed by a number of commentators and scholars, which would imply that the whole island is divided into ten sections and thus shares a symmetrical structure with hell and paradise. Sasso denies this partitioning because the souls met by Dante the pilgrim before the gates of purgatory are always moving from one