

# Duecento and Trecento (Dante)

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## 1 General

It is no coincidence that, in a time of political, social, and cultural upheaval, and amidst a loss of faith in what can only be called the post-Christian West, scholars have begun to return to Dante to ‘make sense of it all’. Numerous books published in 2017 come with a renewed emphasis on theology, semiotics, and rhetoric in Dante. Another feature of the volumes reviewed here is the exploration of Dante’s works by way of individual words—stars, affection, to cry, to translate—whose multiple meanings reflect changed circumstances in different moments of, say, the *Vita nova* or the *Commedia*, a reflection of the poem’s complex architecture and the symmetry and intratextual references found across all three canticles.

One of the most important monographs, Rossana Fenu Barbera, *Dante’s Tears: The Poetics of Weeping from ‘Vita nuova’ to the ‘Commedia’*, Florence, Olschki, 206 pp., traces the role of crying and weeping in Dante’s vernacular works. It is also one of four works in 2017 that take a single word or syntagm—the others consider the nouns *stelle* and *affeziōne* and verbs such as *transmutare*—and use it to illustrate Dante’s poetics across a single work. B.’s monograph also situates itself within the recent emphasis on emotions in literary studies. This reviewer was prepared to be turned off after the mention of psychoanalysis early on in Chapter 1, but the results of B.’s study are illuminating. Here we will limit ourselves to reviewing the first part of the book, which concerns itself with weeping and a revisionist interpretation of the number nine in the *Vita nova*. Chapter 2 treats weeping in *Inferno* v, while Chapter 3 explores diabolic tears in

*Inferno* xx, and Chapters 4 and 5 treat lower *Inferno* (cantos xxxii–xxxiii) and *Purgatory*, respectively. Not unlike Homer, for whom an emotion—wrath—constitutes the very first word in what is considered the beginning of Western literature, the emotion of weeping and the role it plays in poetics is prominent in Dante. In fact, the action of crying appears almost immediately in Dante’s first integral work, the *Vita nova*, where the poet, from the ‘natural spirit’ in his liver, began to weep upon seeing Beatrice. Subsequently, the lord holding Beatrice in Dante’s dream and recounted in the sonnet *A ciascun’alma presa* is said to have begun to cry upon holding her. Even before the first poem in the *Vita nova*, then, the reader encounters four instances of *piangere* or its derivatives (*piangere*, *piangendo*, *pianto*, *piangendo*), and the word also appears in the first poem itself. According to B., *piangere* is the third-most-used word holding semantic weight in the *Vita nova* (4). The real innovation here is that the author diagnoses Dante with melancholy, a disease that figured heavily in medieval literature. (This is not, then, as Marco Grimaldi will warn, the case of a post-hoc diagnosis using modern medical knowledge.) B. grounds her diagnosis of Dante in the contemporary literature, and demonstrates convincingly that Dante’s constant, unrestrained weeping is likely melancholic. Melancholy is linked to Dante’s weeping through its association with sin, represented in the *Vita nova* by his attraction to Beatrice. According to contemporary monastic and theological literature, weeping was a potent weapon against sin. (Melancholy is also associated with the seven deadly sins, as it is connected to *acedia* [sloth] and linked to concupiscence. Interestingly, *acedia* is the central sin in the *Commedia*.) B.’s revision of

Dante's emotional state in the *Vita nova* has profound implications for our understanding of his relationship with Beatrice. In effect, B. argues that, far from being the 'donna angelo', Beatrice was deleterious to his health and the very source of Dante's melancholia. Evidence marshalled in favour of this reading includes a close reading of the passage in which Dante writes that 'di necessitate conviene che la gentilissima Beatrice alcuna volta si muoia' (*Vita nova* XXIII, 11), for which B., comparing the use of *convenire* with a similar usage in *Inferno* III (v. 15: 'Ogne viltà convien che qui sia morta'), demonstrates a likely reading of 'conviene' as 'it would be convenient, it would behoove', as well as a substantial revision to traditional scholarly consensus on the significance of the number nine in Dante. Why, asks B., are we to understand nine as a multiple of the trinitarian three, and so a positive number? Even though 'Dante declares that the number nine is connected in the *Vita nova* with astronomical positive influences' (13), B. explores the medieval conception of time and offers that the *nonas*, the ninth hour, typically thought to occur at 2 or 3 p.m., actually referred to 12 noon. This shift is crucial: B. retraces the emphasis in the Bible and elsewhere on the appearance of the *daemonium meridianum*, the noonday demon (Psalm 91), and notes that Dante's worst melancholic symptoms appear at the ninth hour. Even if we don't accept this revision, it is true that many of Dante's negative thoughts and painful, melancholic symptoms occur at the ninth hour. Along with the diagnosis of melancholia and the revision of the scholarly consensus on the time of the *nonas*, B. also demonstrates weeping's multiple functions. In fact, in the *Vita nova* alone we encounter tears of compassion, sorrow, woe, anguish, and of bitterness. Weeping can fight off concupiscence and sin, and too much of it can attract demons since it produces excess liquid. Throughout the *Vita nova* Dante assigns different functions and causes to his weeping. It is only towards the end of the work that Dante begins to allow for

the Pauline acceptance of weeping found in 11 Corinthians 7:10, the so-called 'gift of tears' that allows 'contrition, penance, and purification of the soul, and [that] can potentially lead one to salvation and to Heaven' (38). B.'s fascinating monograph uses crying to uncover the ineffable—ineffable precisely because Dante spends so much time weeping—in the story between Dante and Beatrice. In the *Commedia*, too, weeping and crying are employed differently for different shades, depending upon where and when Dante meets them. At times, tears are the negative consequence of one's sins, and at others, tears represent penitential purification. The poetics of weeping are revealed, for example, in the scene of the sinners condemned to be with Lucifer, in which the three-headed Satan features an augmented weeping. This monograph, and in particular its early revisionist work on the *Vita nova*, is a significant contribution to the field of Dante Studies.

Sebastiana Nobili, *La consolazione della letteratura. Un itinerario fra Dante e Boccaccio*, Ravenna, Longo, 260 pp., explores the well-trodden theme of *consolatio* in the Italian late Middle Ages by way of historiography, and complements Fanu Barbera's work. In the first half of the book, N. explores the Franciscan theologian and chronicler Salimbene di Adam. The second half begins with 'Lacrime'. Following a brief consideration of the weeping of Boethius in the *Consolation of Philosophy*, N. explores episodes and themes in the *Commedia* (Lucifer, Eden, war and exile). Dante's relationship to consolation is well-known: he was a diligent reader of Boethius and in both the *Vita nova*—in form—and in the *Convivio*—more explicitly in content—Boethius's legacy and the effect of the *Consolation of Philosophy* is evident. Boethius begins the *Consolation* evoking his 'true tears' (*Et veris elegit fletibus ora rigant*). Just as Dante's *Vita nova* opens with his own unstoppable weeping, so, too, does Boethius discuss his fate before the arrival of consolation by way of Lady Philosophy. N. observes that Boethius has to aban-

don poetry in order to be consoled by Philosophy. The author makes a fascinating comparison between Boethius and his father-in-law—members of the ministerial class condemned to death by Theodoric—and Pier della Vigna—another ‘*ministero caduto*’ who ‘non può piangere’. Instead, Pier della Vigna simulates crying by his ‘[versare] sangue’. Other episodes of weeping in the *Inferno* explored by n. include Crete and the ‘statua del vecchio’ that cries, resulting in the infernal rivers (*Inferno* XIV). The tears of the statue can be connected to the ascetic monastic practice, common in the medieval period, of the ‘gift of tears’, the same gift evoked by Fenu Barbera in her study of the *Vita nova*. For n., the tears in *Inferno* XIV are an ‘efficace metafora del pianto come dono, come offerta a Dio della sofferenza consustanziale a chi vive’ (97). Like the veil of Crete, Lucifer is a giant, weeping statue, though in this case he is crying tears, saliva, and the blood of his victims. On the other hand, the episode with Lucifer in *Inferno* XXXIV demonstrates that, unlike the statue of Crete, ‘il diavolo non potrà mai piangere tanto da “non avere più lacrime”’ (99). This erudite monograph on medieval historiography represents another important addition to our understanding of the way in which our interpretation of Dante’s use of an action, a theme, or a syntagm, changes depending on the geography of the *Commedia*.

## 2 *Comedy*

Books on the *Commedia* in 2017 feature the usual range of methodological approaches, but represent a sort of ‘theological turn’, with multiple volumes treating themes such as virtue and vice in Dante and the theological import of co-numerary cantos across the poem’s three canticles. The liberal arts and the medieval conception of rhetoric have also emerged as themes in the books concerning Dante, as have

contemporary receptions and understandings of Dante’s 700-year-old poem.

Marco Grimaldi, *Dante, nostro contemporaneo. Perché leggere ancora la ‘Commedia’?*, Rome, Castelvocchi, 48 pp., begins his answer to the question posed in the title of his pamphlet with the Israeli critic Amos Oz’s observation that ‘before the nineteenth century, almost everyone would have been certain of three things: that they would have spent their whole life where they were born; that they would have earned a living in more or less the same way as their parents; and that, if they had behaved, they would end up in a better world, after death’ (7–8). Since our world no longer, on the whole, believes any of those three things, why does Dante still interest us? Dante’s popularity is, if anything, on the rise, and G. desires to answer to our satisfaction the question posed in the title. Nevertheless, Dante is manifestly not ‘our contemporary’ on a whole host of things: politics, money, religion, sex, science, and poetry. Is Dante, G. asks, ‘still current’ because he anticipated the politicization of all facets of life post-French Revolution? This idea of politics, one all-too-familiar to us in 2018, is too circumscribed, too narrow. ‘In Dante [la politica] è un’idea filosofica’ rooted in Aristotelian thought: man as a civic animal. For Dante, the political is subject to our power, and so to ‘action’, defining itself by its ends, a characteristic ‘*comune a tutta la società umana*’. Like the political, the intellect for Dante, G. continues, is ‘strictly linked’ to practical action. This view reflects Dante’s approach to philosophic wisdom as expressed in the *Convivio*, where ethics, that is, practical political action, is elevated *over* metaphysics. But action is only possible with ‘*pace universale*’, which is guaranteed only by the Emperor, and so this answer for the *why* of Dante’s success is found wanting. G. compares Dante’s imperial aspirations to those of the United States and to ISIS. This Dante, whom we *don’t* like, ‘è in realtà terribilmente attuale’ (15). (This pamphlet is based on a talk predating the rise

of populism in both the United States and Europe, but seems well-timed nevertheless.) G. then discusses usury, about which Dante has much to say in the *Comedy*. Dante's 'Franciscan' and 'charitable' idea of economy, against usury, brings with it too many counter-currents to be 'current'—and, adds G., 'una prospettiva imperiale incompatibile con la nostra idea di democrazia' (19). Thus economically and politically, not to mention theologically, Dante would seem to have nothing to say to us. According to Teodolinda Barolini, in his time Dante was 'heterodox', and his heterodoxy is underappreciated. G. counters that Dante's opposition to certain aspects of the institutional Church were well-known, and that Dante was both *guelfo* (aligned with the Church) and *ghibellino* (a heterodox opponent). Despite this bipolarity, G. argues that Dante 'voleva essere ortodosso' and that he wasn't 'contro l'istituzione, ma era contro le persone concrete che l'avevano deviata dalla retta via' (21–22). The author concludes sensibly that Dante's political and religious dispositions are irreducible to today's categories. Another area in which today's readers of Dante attempt to graft anachronically ahistorical concepts is that of gender, about which medieval poetry was, for evident reasons, silent. G. should be given great credit for writing truth: 'it is not legitimate to apply this notion [that sexual identities are multiple and interchangeable] to Dante' (24). In Dante's time there existed a rigid classification of sins relative to sex, though such sins were not, in and of themselves, the most grave. However, Dante was not intent on overturning hierarchies and roles related to Man and Woman; rather, he maintained because, as G. writes, 'l'esaltazione della donna era possibile solo all'interno di quei ruoli' (25). Beyond politics, religion, and sex, even modern applications of the scientific method fall short when applied haphazardly to a reading of the *Commedia*. G. illustrates this failing by discussing recent attempts to diagnose Dante as a narcoleptic, and comments that 'Dante non diventa

più attuale se riusciamo ad attribuirgli una sindrome descritta solo dalla scienza medica contemporanea' (30). Above all, Dante is *not* our contemporary because of the way in which we now understand literature and especially poetry. In contrast to Dante, G. cites Bob Dylan and his reluctance to be depicted as someone with a message. Dante, on the other hand, has a message, expressed in the *Letter to Cangrande*, and that message is to bring people from unhappiness to happiness. Poetry 'ha una fine' and 'Dante è un uomo con un messaggio' (35). Despite all these differences, G. acknowledges we still read Dante today. The ultimate answer given by G. as to *why* we continue to read the great poet is found in Kantian postulates regarding the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, and free will. G. argues that while for Kant these postulates are merely practical, Dante puts them into action, they are metaphysical realities. The immortality of the soul makes possible the existence of the three realms of the *Commedia*; the postulate of free will is unfurled in the existence of the damned, the beatified, and the penitents, as well as in Dante's own uncertainty. In the end, G. writes that man's propensity to believe in a system of rewards and punishments—expressed previously through the Christian idea of a Just God and his counterpart—is a *biological imperative*. The message of the *Commedia* 'è un messaggio che riusciamo ad ascoltare, anche senza fede, anche senza certezze' (44). Biological man is thus elevated over *homo religiosus*. Though G.'s conclusion falls short in the eyes of this reviewer, the essay raises some important questions regarding contemporary understandings of Dante's poem.

Piero Boitani, *Dante e le stelle*, pref. Massimo Arcangeli, Rome, Castelveccchi, 48 pp., uses Dante's *stelle* ('stars') rather than tears and weeping as an entry into science, myth, and poetry, and as a method of understanding the multiplicity of ways in which Dante uses the stars. B. begins by noting the bipartite structure of the Dantean universe, concretely Aris-

totetian in the first seven heavens, and immaterially metaphysical in the *Primum Mobile*, the Empyrean, and, finally, God. In Dante 'l'universo della scienza' and 'l'universo metafisico' are not mutually exclusive. This reminder about Dante's mythopoesis is always necessary. Analogously, Dante's stars occupy a space astride these two universes, just as, argues B., the *selva oscura* is both allegory and a real, physical space (24). The *stelle* are present at the beginning (*Inferno* 1) and the end of the *Commedia*, but Dante does not treat of the stars only in the *Commedia*, nor only at the beginning and the end of the poem. B. cites Ulysses' journey and the 'stelle già de l'altro polo veda la notte' (*Inferno* xxvi v. 127). Unfortunately, many of B.'s examples of *stelle* in Dante are superficial—perhaps out of necessity given the format of the publication. For example, he writes only that Dante, in describing the meeting between St Thomas Aquinas and St Bonaventure, 'paragona la loro danza alle stelle' (32), and that's it. Further on, in *Paradiso* xiv, Dante is enraptured by music coming from spirits resembling stars, a perfect springboard to *Paradiso* xv and the arrival of his ancestor Cacciaguada, who is compared to a falling star. According to B., Dante uses the stars as an iconographic model for his poetry, which he then 'eleva al sublime' (38), especially in *Paradiso* xxiii when Dante will again evoke the 'ninfe eterne'. *Dante e le stelle* works well insofar as it points the reader to a few key moments in the *Commedia* where Dante uses *stelle* in different poetic and theological contexts.

*Dante and the Seven Deadly Sins*, ed. John C. Barnes and Daragh O'Connell, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 359 pp., is made up of a dozen essays whose origins lie in the Dante Series at University College Dublin in 2009 and 2010. Though the seven deadly sins (pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, lust) are most obvious in the *Comedy's* second canticle, *Purgatory*, the opening essay by Christian Moevs, 'Triform Love: The Seven Deadly Sins and the Structure of the *Commedia*' (11–46), argues

that the structure of the entire poem—*Inferno*, *Purgatory*, *Paradise*—depends on the number seven and especially on the pattern 3 + 1 + 3 evidenced by the seven sins. Using Charles Singleton's observation that the central canto of the central canticle, *Purgatorio* xvii, is framed by three cantos on either side whose tripartite flanks end in a canto numbering 151 lines, a number whose constituent parts (1 + 5 + 1) themselves equal 7, M. posits that seven might be the organizing mechanism of the entire poem. Again from the centre canto of the centre canticle, M. notes, following Singleton, that counting out 75 lines on either side of *Purgatorio* xvii one finds the only two instances of the expression *libero arbitrio*. Thus, the numerological framing of the canticle most associated with the seven deadly sins is undergirded throughout by iterations of the number 7. M. then sketches a similar underlying 3 + 1 + 3 pattern for *Paradiso*, an order rooted in the heavens and with Saturn at its centre. Each canticle, then, is based on 'seven stages corresponding to degrees of ego or pride' (45). Hanna Skodak, 'Anger in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*' (125–149), touches on the sin of anger and the difference between anger as a sin or vice and anger as a multi-valent emotion capable of being righteous, just, or unjust. S. makes the case that anger, though not the 'lead' sin, which is pride, is perhaps the most recurring sin, since it accompanies a whole host of other vices and missteps, shadowing, as it were, the entire *poema* and in particular the first two canticles. She first reminds us of the many ways in which Dante's contemporaries—Dino Compagni and others—and authors with whom Dante was familiar—Aquinas, Cicero, Augustine, Aristotle—treated anger, and reviews these authors' views on how, for how long, and when one should be angry, followed by an extended study of the relationship between unjust anger, the law, and language. Following Cicero, and incorporating theories of rhetoric by Isidore of Seville and Giles of Rome, S. observes that reason is necessary to give force

to rhetoric in the law, in a Ciceronian acceptation, and that Dante's figures such as Plutus in *Inferno* VII and Nimrod in *Inferno* XXXI exhibit the link between anger, language, and law. Their unjust, unrestrained anger causes them to lose language and the ability to reason through properly ordered and balanced rhetoric. Hence the unintelligible uttering that only resembles facsimiles of speech. s. demonstrates that even the coherent rhetoric of Pope Nicholas III in *Inferno* XIX descends into 'inarticulacy' (143), and he is reduced to gesticulating in response to Dante. (This essay, especially the section on inarticulacy, would be read profitably with Heather Webb's recent *Dante's Persons: An Ethics of the Transhuman*, OUP, 2016, 223 pp., particularly its chapter on gesture in the *Commedia*.) Another episode cited by s. is Vanni Fucci in *Inferno* XXIV, as she labels the types of anger catalogued in the first canticle: incontinent anger, malicious anger, and fraudulent anger. For s., these categories of anger reach their illustrative apogee in *Purgatorio* XVIII. As 'captain' of all sin, as Dante's contemporary Bono Giamboni put it in his *Libro de' Vizî e delle virtudi*, pride is the subject of two essays in this volume. Angelo Maria Mangini, 'Pride and Friendship: On Cavalcanti's Role in the *Commedia*' (48–71), explores Dante's most famous literary relationship, that with fellow exile Guido Cavalcanti. m. rightly notes that there has been no more consequential literary relationship for Italy, and even for the entire Romance Middle Ages, than the one between Dante and his *primo amico*. Like past efforts to 'uncover' Dante's hidden debt, in the *Commedia*, to poet Monte Andrea da Firenze, Mangini sets out to 'unravel' the Guido-Dante axis in the *Commedia*, and argues that 'the role of an "uninterrupted dialogue" with Guido in shaping some essential features of the very structure of the *Commedia* might have been more important than has hitherto been suspected' (48). m.'s essay identifies as his starting point a passage from Gianfranco Contini's well-known essay *Cavalcanti in Dante* (1966),

and expresses consternation at the ambiguities contained in Contini's evaluation of the axis Guido-Dante. Nevertheless, Contini's ruminations lead m. to the thesis that the very *structure* (italics his) of the *Commedia* can be traced to Dante's poetic relationship to Cavalcanti. m.'s analysis gets off to a good start; he notes, again correctly, that the very beginning of the *Commedia* rests on a number of Cavalcantian rhyme-words from his *canzone-manifesto* 'Donna mi prega': *-ita*, *-ura*, *-orte*, *-ai*, *-unto*. Anyone who is familiar with medieval rhetorical and poetic principles understands that such a high incidence of rhyme-words could not have been a coincidence; the end of the verse is the most visible place to show a literary debt. The rhyme-word coincidence is not limited to the poem's incipit. m. notes the presence in Cavalcanti of an allusion to the lover's moral death due to his focus on a 'non formato loco', that is the Greek *hyle*, often translated, as in Isidore of Seville, as *silva*. Further, in the famous passage from *Inferno* X in which Cavalcanti's father enquires about the whereabouts of his son, there are, as identified by m., many more rhymes and rhyme-words than has been previously noted. The *why*, that is, why 'Donna mi prega', however, is never sufficiently answered. m. theorizes, based only on a reference to Cicero's *On Friendship*, that the crisis mentioned by Dante in *Convivio* 11.12.3–4 was two-fold: the loss of his beloved and the loss of a friend. Further, m. appears to state that the *Vita nova* was published subsequent to the *Convivio*, when the commonly accepted chronology dates the integral work of *prosimetrum* to 1293–1294 and the philosophical treatise ten years later between 1304 and 1307. m. is right to say that Dante was faced with a binary choice: Cavalcantian or Beatrician, but that the *Convivio* foreshadowed this in any way is not possible. m. is again on more solid ground in arguing that Dante's pre-Hell remembrance is full of solitude and loneliness, that he is 'missing a friend' (57–58). More plausible is m.'s observation that Dante feels com-

pelled to explain at some length to Cavalcante why Guido is not accompanying him on his journey, precisely because his presence should have been a given. The pride at the centre of M.'s contribution is Cavalcanti's intellectual pride as represented by his *sdegno* and his concomitant unsuitability for Dante's theological exposition. Finally, M. seems to argue—against other readers—that the 'Guido' of *Purgatorio* XI is in fact Guido Cavalcanti; his focus on Dante's peculiar 'Our Father' is apt, for it emphasizes the relationship of the rhyme-word *degno* to the *sdegno* describing Cavalcanti in *Inferno* X. M. also characterizes the usurpation of Cimabue by Giotto and Guinizzelli by Cavalcanti and then of both by Dante as a form of pride. John Took, 'Dante, Pride and the Gentle Dialectic of Love' (73–90), seeks to understand why, if, as Dante has it, the ultimate end of the human life is towards God, we nevertheless lose focus due to our propensity to love. God is not only man's 'first and final cause of his presence in the world as man, but its efficient cause' (79). T.'s departure point is Dante's observation in *Purgatorio* XVIII (vv. 19–21): 'L'animo, ch'è creato ad amar presto, / ad ogni cosa è mobile che piace, / tosto che dal piacere in atto è desto'. How, then, to gain our ultimate end if we are distracted in our moral lives? According to T., for Dante the entire project of the *Commedia* is about the overlapping/intertwining of the human and the divine, but this end is not foreshadowed in the beginning of the poem: 'he [man] starts out, not in piety, but in pride' (84). How to resolve man-centredness and God-centredness in the poem? Dante's poem is an exercise in self-discipline. But not only. Man discards pride by having the 'soul contemplate an alternative way of seeing and understanding its relationship both with self and with the world beyond self' (86). When the soul is in the presence of exemplary piety, it is transformed. Like Mangini, Took includes a reflection on the 'Our Father' in *Purgatorio* XI. T. writes that the *Pater-nostro* is an example of the gentle dialectic of

love of the essay's title, of a 'sweet coerciveness' and 'love-persuasiveness', that 'renews the soul' (90). Beyond pride, there is a perceptive essay on envy. Daragh O'Connell, "'Whorish eyes": Envy at the Court of Vice' (91–123), begins by distinguishing between modern notions of envy—that being 'envied' is, generally speaking, a good thing—and the conception of the sin of envy in Dante's time—when to be envied was undesirable, and when envy itself was 'doubly destructive, in that it recoils and strikes at the envious themselves, not just at their prey' (92). O.C. situates the vice of envy as a political one present in the medieval courts (see, for example, *Purgatorio* XIV), and argues that it is responsible for and present in the political divisions in Italy (*Inferno* I), in Florence (*Inferno* VI, *Inferno* XV), and in the Empire. Envy is relational—like anger, it accompanies and 'instigates' other vices. Envy is engendered by a *lack* in the person who does the envying, and is, in the end, a 'love of hatred' (93) or, in the words of John of Damascus quoted by Aquinas, 'discontent of another's good'. Like pride, envy does not merit a specific place in Hell, if only because it is always there, accompanying and aggravating other sins. Interestingly, Dante of the *Convivio* (III.8.10) lists envy as 'one of the six emotions proper to the human soul' (99). O.C. does not explain the discrepancy, but does note that Dante associates the emotion with the eyes. But how does Dante convey the sin of envy in the *Commedia*? Sin is perverted love; it is evil, and man directs this perverted love to those who are close to him. Envy, in *Purgatorio* XVII is defined as 'chi podere, grazia, onore e fama / teme di perder perch'altri sormonti, / onde s'attrista sí che'l contrario ama' (vv. 118–120). In Italian, *invidia* is etymologically related to a 'distortion of sight' and the verb *invidere*, and so 'seeing' and 'gazing' have an outsized role in the sin of envy. The noun *occhio*, notes O.C., is by far the most common noun in the *Commedia*, occurring 263 times in the poem. Medieval, Christianized depictions of envy owed much to Ovid's

characterization of it in the *Metamorphoses* (11), and O.C. rightly cites Giotto's contemporary depiction of envy in the Scrovegni Chapel as another example of envy's leitmotifs—the serpent and the eyes. Moreover, the sin-virtue pairing chosen by Dante is envy-charity. In *Purgatorio* XIII (vv. 38–75), O.C. registers the high incidence of terms relating to the penitents that focus on verbs or nouns related to the eyes (106). In the terrace of the envious, moreover, the penitents are made to sew their eyelids shut with iron wire. Ultimately, though, O.C. argues that envy is most present and malicious in *Inferno* XIII, where its nature is less evident, and where the relationship between politics, envy, and the eyes is sealed, so to speak. There Emperor Frederick II's chancellor Pier della Vigna reveals that he fell victim to a 'courtly vice' ('delle corti vizio'), and in this passage we find references to the eyes ('occhi putti') and to the woman ('meretrice') traditionally representing envy. The final line of Pier della Vigna's speech is, tellingly, 'nvidia'. Finally, John C. Barnes, 'Deadly Sins in Dante's Autobiography' (319–341), explores sin in Dante through autobiography, that is, through 'self-expressive' and autobiographical elements in his work other than the *Vita nova*. To this reviewer the essay suffers from one very large defect: it conflates Dante the poet, Dante the man, and Dante the *personaggio*, and doesn't heed Contini's advice from *Dante poeta-personaggio*. B. begins by noting Dante's admission that he has been envious, though, as Dante (the character?) tells us, his purgation of this sin will be minor: 'Li occhi ... mi sieno ancora qui tolti, / ma picciol tempo' (*Purgatorio* XIII, vv. 133–134) ('My eyes will yet be taken from me, but for a short time'). On the other hand, the evidence offered by Dante the poet that Dante the character was prideful is, as B. observes, more widely available. For instance, he lowers himself to talk with the doubled-over Oderisi in the terrace of the proud; he is elliptically prideful with Guido del Duca (*Purgatorio* XIV); he is proud of his lineage when speak-

ing with Cacciaguida (*Paradiso* XVI); again in the terrace of the proud Dante notes how nascent pride (swelling) was quelled by Oderisi's words (*Purgatorio* XI, vv. 118–119); and the 'P' removed from Dante's forehead had weighed mightily on him (*Purgatorio* XII, vv. 115–120). Finally, though the word itself is absent, there is ample evidence of pride, envy, and even anger also in Dante's minor works, his epistles and the *De vulgari eloquentia*. Thus envy and pride are, according to B., the only sins of which Dante (again the *personaggio*) will accuse himself. Further, B. observes that Dante cannot rightly be accused of gluttony, avarice, or sloth, and that only anger and lust are sins for which a plausible case can be made for Dante's guilt. Dante is no doubt angry throughout the *Commedia*, but it is unmeasured and disordered sin or simply, as Skodak noted above, emotion or righteous anger? Finally, B. considers lust, the sin for which we have the most textual evidence that Dante (the *personaggio*?) is guilty. He turns, sensibly, to Dante's remarks in the Circle of the Lustful and his observations in the wake of Francesca's recounting of her adultery with Paolo. Dante's dalliance with lust could have come personally (Beatrice or others) or in his inducement of others to lust via his poetry, akin to the manner in which Paolo and Francesca found themselves in each other's embrace while reading Lancelot. B. makes recourse to Dante's *Rime* to show that Dante may have been guilty of a loss of reason spurred on by passion, a consequence that is not, however, ineluctable, as proved by *Purgatorio* XVIII (vv. 49–63). Interestingly, B. does not focus on Dante's *pietade* (mercy, pity) and instead focuses on the fainting. Other essays are by Marco Dorigatti, 'The Acid Test of Faith: Dante and the Capital Sin of *Accidia* (Sloth)' (152–178), Robert Black, 'Dante and Avarice: Some Historical Contexts' (179–198), Margaret More O'Ferrall, 'Dante, Avarice and the Roman Dimension' (199–224), Guyda Armstrong, 'Dante's Gluttons: Materiality, Corporeality and the Book' (225–270), Tristan

Kay, 'Dante's Ambivalence towards the Lustful' (271–302), and George Ferzoco, 'The "Sin" and "Sinners" of *Inferno* III' (303–318).

*Vertical Readings in Dante's 'Comedy'*, ed. George Corbett and Heather Webb, Cambridge, Open Source Publishers, 247 pp., the third and final volume in the series of readings with the goal of reading Dante's *Commedia* vertically, between and among canticles, gathers the by now familiar co-numerary readings of Dante's poem from cantos 23 to cantos 33 and 34, with the final set of cantos presenting a problem not dissimilar from that posed by the first set, that is, how to deal with the uneven number of cantos in each canticle and whether to treat *Inferno* 1 as a 'prologue'. In their Introduction, the editors note the 'turn [...] to a renewed sense of Dante's *Comedy* as theological poem' (2). This theological renewal ought not to be determined only by the critical moment, but also by a grounding in the way in which Dante's contemporaries understood the great poet. In some ways, the 'turn to theology' constitutes an attempt to remedy what Grimaldi claims is the biggest gulf between us and pre-modern readers of Dante. Upon Dante's death in 1321, his sometime-correspondent Giovanni del Virgilio eulogized him as 'Theologus Dantes nullius dogmatis expert' ('Dante, a theologian skilled in every branch of knowledge'), and in his *Vita di Dante* (c. 1357) Boccaccio noted Dante's capacious intellectual abilities and the admiration earned by contemporaries, many of whom called him 'poet', others 'philosopher', and many 'theologian'. Given this critical juncture and the increasingly complex theological nature of the final cantos of the canticle *Paradise*, the essays in this volume, according to the editors, are all contributed by academics who have an interest in Dante, in theology, or both. The essays include Peter S. Hawkins, 'Our Bodies, Our Selves: Crucified, Famished, and Nourished' (11–30), Janet Soskice, 'True Desire, True Being, and Truly Being a Poet' (31–50), Elena Lombardi, 'The Poetics of Trespassing' (71–89),

Ronald L. Martinez, 'Containers and Things Contained' (89–110), Theodore J. Cachey Jr., 'Cosmographic Cartography of the "Perfect" Twenty-Eights' (111–138), John Took, 'Truth, Untruth and the Moment of Indwelling' (139–154), Piero Boitani, 'Brooks, Melting Snow, River of Light' (155–172), Catherine Pitstock, 'Beauty and the Beast' (173–196), David F. Ford, 'Particular Surprises: Faces, Cries and Transfiguration' (197–216), and Rowan Williams, 'Ice, Fire and Holy Water' (217–228). Of particular interest is George Ferzoco, 'Changes' (51–70), who, like Moevs in the opening essay of *Dante and the Seven Deadly Sins*, holds closely to numerology by focusing on the significance of the number 25 in the context of Dante's time. The number 25 is replete with resonances to both the liturgical and secular calendars, and has a special relationship to the act of creation and fertility. This is crucial especially for *Purgatory* 25, part of the triptych of canti having to do with poetic and biological creation. F. reminds us that it was the date of the Immaculate Conception and thus the Feast of the Annunciation; it was the first day of the calendar (25 March) in Florence and elsewhere; it is the date of Jesus's birth; and it is the date (25 January) on which St Paul's conversion is celebrated. In Florence, 25 March, the first day of the new year, citizens were encouraged to eat bread to augment fertility. It may have been the day in which Adam was created and on which Abraham sacrificed Isaac. Furthermore, according to Dante in the *Convivio*, his philosophical treatise, the stages of man were also bookended by 25-year periods [*Convivio* 4, xxiv, 4]. For F., the division of the ages of man into periods of 25 years may be a result of Beatrice's death in 1290, which would have put Dante at just 25 at the time of her passing. The age of 25 was also the age at which one could take religious orders and the age at which one became a Roman citizen in full under the law. According to F., the significance of the number 25 is sealed in *Paradiso* xxxiii, when Dante writes that 'Un punto solo m'è maggior letargo / che venticinque secoli a

la 'mpresa / che fé Nettuno ammirar l'ombra d'Argo' (vv. 94–96). As F. glosses this passage, Dante 'has forgotten more of what he perceived in that fleeting instant [...] than what all of humanity has forgotten since the enterprise of the Argo, twenty-five hundred years ago' (67).

Donato Massaro, *Una Commedia che riguarda tutti: Sopra i versi di Dante. I—Inferno*, Florence, Masso delle Fate, 220 pp., observes that '[e]gli parla della cristianità e dell'umanità. E parla alla cristianità e all'umanità'. For M., many modern readers of Dante are like St Thomas: we doubt the existence of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, and would prefer that these be explained by way of the Light of Reason. M. undertakes a reading of the first canticle of the *Commedia*, and considers Dante's 'attualità', his contemporaneity (9). M. hazards that Dante might know more, on a whole range of topics, than us; this is true even of the things that pertain to our age, the 'Evoincorso'. This is not necessarily an 'academic' work, but it is not without an erudite substratum. The prose style is informal and chatty. Though M.'s glosses are at times stream-of-consciousness, he is able to put his finger on some defining features of our time in opposition to Dante's: nowadays, he writes, 'non ci scandalizza più niente: forse questo è lo scandalo' (45). In the end, Massaro reads the *Commedia* as a result both of the failure of Reason and Faith in Dante's time.

*Lectura Dantis Bononiensis*, ed. Emilio Pasquini and Carlo Galli, Bologna U.P., 200 pp., is a collection of essays covering *Paradiso* XI–XVIII, and features contributions by Sergio Cristaldi (5–38), Mira Mocan, 'Il livore dell'invidia e la luce della Sapienza' (57–84), Alfredo Cottignoli (85–100), Simon Gilson (101–116), Paola Nasti (117–142), Erminia Ardisino (143–166), and Paolo Falzone (167–184) on cantos XI–XVIII, respectively. Of particular interest is Nicolò Maldina, 'Purgatorio XII' (39–56), who begins by noting the close relationship of his canto with the preceding one, echoing Marcello Ciccuto's emphasis on the interrelated

nature of *Purgatorio* X–XII, and arguing that such a relationship 'non è artificio della critica moderna, ma una scelta dantesca' (39). Among M.'s insights into canto XII we list his citing of the nautical metaphor and sin as a 'navigation' as being related to penitential books of the 13th and 14th cs and the coincidence of a syntagm ('con l'ali e coi remi') with two other moments in the *Commedia* that are crucial to the sin of pride in Dante (*Purg.* x, v. 26 and *Inferno* xxvi, v. 25). A good portion of M.'s reading then moves to the significance of Virgil as 'pedagogo' instead of 'maestro', with the conclusion that Dante, in order to get beyond Pride, requires the sort of sustained instruction necessary for a young boy. It, along with other aspects of the canto, is an index of the theme of *Purgatorio* XII: Humility (43). In the context of Virgil's suggestion that Dante walk over the purgatorial bas-reliefs with his eyes down, M. cites with great profit contemporary theological works such as the *Summa de virtutibus* by the Dominican Guglielmo Peraldo, who suggested that penitents look at the ground while walking. M. observes the 'complessa architettura retorica' present in the *exempla* of the prideful in *Purgatorio* XII. The 'sermons' on each are inspired by the *sermo modernus* and feature three parts and four *distinctiones* (48). M. demonstrates that this particular section of the canto contains many similarities to contemporary homiletic practice. Among these features are the use of illustrative verbs such as 'vedere' and 'mostrare', as well as an *inrepatio* typical of the medieval sermon. It is with the *inrepatio* that M. writes that Dante, as soon as the sin of pride is expurgated, is able to correct others, passing from sinner to corrector of sins, and assumes the same tone that Oderisi had used on Dante himself in *Purgatorio* x. M. concludes by noting the differences in the cantos that make up the triptych *Purgatorio* X–XII, this despite their apparent unity.

Fortunato Trione, *La poetica dell'affetto. Estetica religiosa nella 'Divina Commedia'*, Ravenna, Longo, 320 pp., turns to the theological

implications of Dante's poem. T. takes on another emotion, *affezione/affectus/affection*, its role in the *Commedia*, and its origins in St Thomas Aquinas and St Bernard. Like Raffaele Giglio's *Il lettore innamorato*, T. reads Dante's *Commedia* for its beauty and for its authentic nature as a spiritual exercise. *La poetica dell'affetto* is a commentary on the final canticle *Paradiso*, a canticle he calls Dante's 'opera di sintesi' (61), and takes its inspiration from St Bernard's call to Dante the pilgrim and to all readers to follow him 'con l'affezione' (*Paradiso* XXXII, v. 149) to receive God's grace. T. explores what Dante means by 'affezione', and why there is a difference between 'affezione' and 'ragione'. Perhaps most fundamental to T.'s study is Part One and its discussion of St Bernard and Aquinas as Dante's guides to *affectus* and its necessity for opening up the 'esperienza divina' (58). For example, in Aquinas, reason exists to reveal the presence of God. But reason isn't enough to know God, since he is beyond reason. However, the human person can have a different relationship with God, a relationship characterized by charity and that is arrived at only with affection: *per affectum facit nos appropinquare Deo caritas* (93). T.'s study of affection in Dante is much too learned and well-articulated to be summarized here, but *La poesia dell'affetto* constitutes a wonderful thematic study of Dante 'between monastic and scholastic theology' and ought to be read by all those interested in Dante's theology and its application to the poem.

### 3 Minor Works

Though many volumes appeared in 2017 that treated any one of a number of Dante's minor works—the *Vita nova*, the *De vulgari eloquentia*, the *Quaestio*, his *Rime*—very few monographs were devoted entirely to works other than the *Commedia*.

Enrico Fenzi, *Le canzoni di Dante. Interpretazioni e letture*, Florence, Le Lettere, 712 pp.,

represents an important contribution to the study of Dante's *rime*. To F.'s already prolific output of studies on medieval Italian literature, we can add this carefully structured collection of readings of Dante's canzoni. The focus on a single genre—though not without consideration of Dante's other output—has the virtue of drawing our attention to the multiplicity of ways that Dante approached the genre of the canzone based on particular moments in time, political contexts, and his public. This approach, one that focuses on the canzoni, is particularly welcome because of the attention and respect that Dante himself had for the genre. In the *De vulgari eloquentia*, for example, Dante accords to the canzone the status as the most noble of the poetic genres, writing that 'cantiones nobilissime sunt' (Book Two, III, 7; Book Two, III, 8); in the *Vita nova* it is for the first canzone in the work of *prosimetrum* that Dante expresses, in his *divisioni* and gloss, the greatest compunction about 'opening up' its meaning to too many people; in the *Convivio*, the three poems treated by Dante are of course all canzoni; and, of course, Dante cites his own canzoni in key places in the *Commedia*. *Le canzoni di Dante* gathers 16 essays by F., most previously published but some of them brand-new for this volume, and includes a wonderful bibliography of studies regarding Dante's canzoni. F. takes up the canzoni of the *Vita nova*, as well as those of the *Convivio*, not to mention Dante's so-called allegorical canzoni and other 'problematic' poems (*Poscia ch'Amor, Amor che movi, Io sento sì d'Amor, rime petrose, Io son venuto, Tre donne intorno al cor, Doglia mi reca, Amor, da che conviene*.) F. is always worth reading, and the essays here are no exception.

Dante Alighieri, *Questio de aqua et terra*, ed. Stefano Caroti, E-Theca Online Open Access Edizioni, 62 pp., is a heterodox edition of a heterodox work, whose attribution to Dante has long been disputed. In the Introduction, c. retraces some of the centuries-long debate about the authorship of the *tractatus* (as he calls it), and observes that one of the

points in favour of Dante's paternity—his son Pietro's mention of it in his *Comentum* to the *Commedia*—appears only in the third redaction and not the first two. Moreover, c. registers an anomaly with the *Questio*: the debate took place at Mantua but the resolution (*determinatio*) was in Verona. This would have been contrary to the practice regarding university disputes, but perhaps it unfolded thus because of Dante's exile. In any case, writes c., to be of the opinion that we can never determine the authenticity of a given work if we were not present at its creation is folly. Nevertheless, the editor does not agree with asseverative pronouncements, such as Francesco Mazzoni's in his edition of the *Questio* for Ricciardi's series of Dante's *opere minori*, that 'la paternità dantesca della *Questio* [è ormai dimostrata], e quindi definitivamente risolto' (11). c. describes his approach to this edition of the *Questio*, and he follows modern editions (from 1842) and their tripartite division. Like the *De vulgari eloquentia*, the *Questio*—and maybe this is a point in favour of attributing it to Dante—does not have 'un solo genere letterario di riferimento [...] si tratta di una contaminazione di stili che costituisce una patente deroga a quello del genere letterario' (18). As for the base text, the *editio princeps* (and *unicus*) of the *Questio* is the 1508 edition by Giovan Benedetto Moncetti, and c. does not propose a new edition or text. Rather, he uses the anastatic text published by the Società Dantesca Italiana and edited by Ermenegildo Pisteli in 1960. Given that this is not a new edition and that there is sparse commentary, the most useful aspects are the Introduction and its resumé of the question of Dante's authorship, and the bibliography on the *Questio de aqua et terra*.

#### 4 Fortuna

In 2017 there appeared a number of rather unusual volumes on the fortune of Dante and of the *Commedia*.

Maiko Favaro, *Dante da una prospettiva friulana. Sulla fortuna della 'Divina Commedia' in Friuli dal Risorgimento ad oggi*, Udine, Forum, 167 pp., explores post-unification applications of the *Commedia* in the northern Italian region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. F. begins by noting the paradox of Dante being associated with Italy and Italians the world over: his arch-association with Italy belies the sense of estrangement that he felt all his adult life, after 1302. Why Friuli, and why Dante during the Risorgimento? We know that during the entire long span of the Italian movement for Unification Dante, along with other literary figures, was called in to service to be the poetic representative of a new, united Italy. F. notes that Friuli, given its geographic location along disputed borders with Austria and the former Habsburg Empire, had a lengthy experience with the process of unification. The second reason for a study of Dante and Friuli (Pordenone, Udine) is the seeming paradox of the Friulian perspective—peculiar, alien—of the national poet Dante, 'simbolo di "italianità"'. Interestingly, the only mention of Friuli in Dante's works comes in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, when Dante writes apropos of the search for the *vulgare illustre* that Friulian is to be discarded immediately: 'Aquilegienses et Ystrianos cribremus, qui *Ces fas-tu?* Crudeliter accentuando eructant.' Despite Dante's negative judgement of the Friulian language, writes, F., 'i friuliani hanno ben chiaro che Dante non è solo il maggiore poeta italiano, ma è anche un simbolo dell'Italia nel suo complesso' (11), an Italy of which Friuli would become a definitive part only in the 1950s. In the bulk of this book that is best categorized as Reception Studies, F. considers a whole range of interesting intersections between Friuli and Dante, from the cycle of 20th-c. paintings by the artist known as Anzil and the early back-and-forth of Tuscan merchants between Tuscany and Friuli, to the earliest manuscripts of the *Commedia* in Friuli (1402, and so nearly 70 years after the earliest surviving Florentine manuscript

[1335]), and other (random) intersections such as Dante's role in Pordenone-linked humanist Gian Francesco Fortunio's 1516 *Regole grammaticali della volgar lingua*. F.'s case study of Dante and Friuli is divided into two parts. The first covers 'La *Commedia* e il Risorgimento in Friuli', while the second considers what might be called Friulian applications of the *Commedia* and includes translations into Friulian of the *Commedia* and artistic adaptations of the *Commedia* by artists from Friuli. General readers will be most interested in the first part, especially where F. puts forward a number of case-studies on the appearance of Dante in the period known as the *Risorgimento*, including the celebrations of the sixth centenary of Dante's birth in 1865, while the second part and its Friuli-specific chapters will better hold the attention of specialists.

Marco Maggi, *Walter Benjamin e Dante. Una costellazione nello spazioso delle immagini*, Roma, Donzelli, 176 pp., is a fascinating study of Walter Benjamin's later career and on the role that Dante played in his essays ranging from Goethe to Baudelaire to History itself. A heterodox contribution to the heretofore unappreciated consistency and duration of the German critic's relationship to Dante, M.'s ruminations on Benjamin and Dante depart from a revision that Benjamin himself made while working on the French translation of his *Concept of History*. According to M., in his fifth thesis, Benjamin added a citation of Dante that had not been there previously. It is this little kernel that propels M. to reconsider Dante's thought in Benjamin throughout the German's career.

Vincenzo Salerno, *Dante. Tradizione, traduzione, intertestualità*, Modena, Stem Mucchi, 80 pp., is a brief study of Dante the theorist of poetry, of that 'consapevolezza teorica del comporre poesia' (7) that, paraphrasing Ignazio Baldelli, collapses his religious, poetic, and sentimental necessities into the confines of poetry. Dante's theorizing is on evidence in the presence of Latin forebears whose words he incorporates, translating them, into his own ver-

nacular works. Thus s. would like to interrogate Dante's relationship to translation, and more specifically the poet's use of a language that is explicitly translational, beginning with the Dantean *transmutare*. There are brief chapters on Dante's education and his library, and two others on the concept of translation that depart from Dante's own use of *transmutare*. s. is working at the nexus of Dante's own pronouncements on translation—the *Commedia* (*Paradiso* 1, v. 72) and the *De vulgari eloquentia* ('fictio rethorica musicaque poita' [I, 3])—all of which, in one way or another, buttress Dante's own claim in the *Convivio* that 'nulla cosa per legame musaico armonizzata si può [...] transmutare' (I, vii, 14). How to explain the discrepancy between Dante the theorist, in whose prose works the untranslatability of poetry is consistent, and Dante the poet and the prose writer, who often did just that? According to s., following Gianfranco Folena, Italian medieval culture was more receptive to translation from the beginning due to educative models, such as the *ars dictandi*, that prized the written imitation of the Ancients. Thus the *artes dictaminis* were 'common referents' for Dante the prose-writer, an observation confirmed by the permeable boundaries between the formal elements and even terminology with which Dante writes of poetry and prose. (Think of his definition, in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, of the *canzone* as a 'long letter', *dictamine magno* [Book 2, xii, 7].) s. observes that for both religious and lay educations, the exercise of the technique of translation moved from Latin, both classical and of the medieval Bible. The study of Latin, and especially the practice of translation from its text, was Dante's entry, though only possible through the vernacular in the first place into the world of the written word and of knowledge (*Convivio* 1, xiii, 5). Dante's earliest educational formation would have been secular, Latin, and it likely would have involved the translation of the *Salterio*, the *Disticha Catonis*, and the *Liber Aesopi*. Subsequent studies and interests, as well as pas-

sages from the *Vita nova* and the *De vulgari eloquentia*, tell us that Dante's educational formation was part of a constant study that saw the Ancients as a logical bridge to his contemporary 'bella scuola' (22). As is now more or less the critical consensus, s. notes that Dante's philosophical formation continued in the Florentine *studia*. s. also argues for Florence's status as the 'epicentro di volgarizzamenti letterari' (27), and that this, along with Dante's youthful formation translating the Ancients, forms the basis for Dante's cultural initiation, one thus undergirded by the practice of translation in its many forms. s. rightly cites the presence of Brunetto Latini, well-versed in the art of translation as evidenced by his own *Rettorica*. s. observes Brunetto use of 'ritrarre' ('lo quale è ritratto in vulgare') to describe his translation of Cicero's *De inventione*. For s., Brunetto's choice of the verb is not casual, but a conscious theoretical choice expressing the *art* of translation, a cultural component of which Dante is 'debitore' (32). Chapter Two considers Dante's 'virtual' library, and is derivative of especially Luciano Gargan's efforts of the past few years. Giorgio Petrocchi considered Dante's personal library to be limited for economic reasons, while Gargan hypothesizes a larger holding. In Chapter Three, 'Transmutare', s. considers Felicina Groppi's three typologies of translation: from prose to prose; from prose to poetry; and from poetry to poetry. Just as for Brunetto and the verb 'ritrarre', s. sees Dante's choice of terminology (*transmutare* instead of *traslatare* or *volgarizzare*) as indicative of a *forma mentis*. Even *transmutare* and its morphological derivatives have 'molteplici differenze di significato nel *Convivio* e nella *Commedia*' (42). The physical transmutations of Dante—particularly the face—the poet in the *Vita nova* (*Li occhi dolenti per pietà del core*) and in the *Convivio* (*Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete*) reflect the same poet's spiritual transformations. At the end of the chapter, s. finally circles back to his contention, made in the introduction, that Dante's conception of translation (*trans-*

*mutare*) implicates a more profound theoretical acceptance that is cultural, religious, and literary. He cites *De vulgari eloquentia* II, 4 and notes that *imitatio* of the Latin poets is necessary so that vernacular poets ascend to their heights. Just as for the Latin authors *mutatio* meant the 'mutation' of the authoritative language (Greek) into Latin, for Dante *transmutatio* intended the passage from Latin to the vernacular, 'con nuova veste nella lingua d'arrivo' (57). The continuation of tradition, of the 'stylistic patrimony', *depends* on translation (68). In the final chapter, 'Trasumanar significar per verba non si poria', s. considers Dante's desire to reach a 'costante letteraria [...] per garantire il passaggio' from the language of knowledge (Latin) to the language of poetry (Italian).

Francesco Mazzoni, *Con Dante per Dante. Saggi di filosofia ed ermeneutica dantesca. V. Pio Rajna e la genesi del dantismo contemporaneo*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini et al., Rome, ESL, 248 pp., is a wonderful collection of essays by the late Francesco Mazzoni, who was trained in a scholarly line begun under Pio Rajna and occupied the first-ever Chair in Dante Philology at the University of Florence, not to mention the presidency of the Società Dantesca italiana for nearly four decades. This volume of essays demonstrates the incredible continuity in the study of Dante that spanned the beginning of Rajna's scholarly efforts in the third quarter of the 19th c. to Mazzoni's death in 2008. M.'s identification of Rajna as the *svolta decisiva* in the modern study of Dante philology in the *bel paese*. The collection includes three essays on Pio Rajna *dantista*, as well as remembrances of Michele Barbi and others, and epistolary correspondence to Rajna from Gabriele D'Annunzio, Domenico Comparetti and Luigi Schiaparelli.

Raffaele Giglio, *Il lettore Innamorato. Studi danteschi*, ed. Daniela De Lisio, Naples, Paolo Loffredo, 624 pp., is a compendium of essays written over the author's more than 40-year career, some of which touch exclusively on the

*Commedia* or its reception. The title of the collection is refreshing in and of itself, and true to form G.'s essays exude a love for his subject. In an era when we see more and more 'scientific' criticism, the unabashed admiration for Dante and the *Commedia* is welcome to this reviewer. The essays contained here span the breadth of G.'s scholarly work, and are subdivided into 'Lecture [of the *Commedia*]', 'Dante e la scienza', 'Note' on Dante and the Bible, Geryon, Virgil, Terence, and Cicero, and 'Lettori [of the *Commedia*]'. G.'s essay 'La simmetria come elemento ermeneutico. "Con segni e con parole ornate": l'amore venduto e tradito (*If XVIII*)' (67–90), uses a methodology similar to that of *Vertical Readings of Dante's 'Comedy'* and treats rhetoric and language in a manner complementary to Luca Marcozzi, *Dante e la retorica*, reviewed below. 'Verso le "prime stelle"' (171–190) can be read with Boitani's *Dante e le stelle*. In 'La simmetria come elemento ermeneutico. "Con segni e con parole ornate": l'amore venduto e tradito (*If XVIII*)' (67–90), G. posits that *Inferno XVIII*, in its contents, its structure, its material form, and its narrative, is the perfect example of Dante's artistic laboratory (67). The same can be said for the author, whose laboratory and *modus operandi* are revealed in this essay. G. writes with clarity and playfulness, as evidenced by his confession that he can't bring 'novità interpretative' resolving all hermeneutic doubt, before going on to write that the only announcement that would interest contemporary *dantisti* would be the discovery of the poet's autograph, and that, unfortunately, he is unable to satisfy this desire. In this essay, G. presents the 'geometrica costruzione' of the canto, one that reflects the symmetry inside of individual cantos and between and among canticles in the *Commedia*. *Inferno XVIII* presents a two-by-two pattern: two seducers, two adulterers; two contemporaries, two Ancients; two sinners presented by two, and two by Virgil, two who speak, and two who are mute. G. uses the symmetrical unity to propose an alternative reading to the

critical consensus that 'falsità' links seducers and adulterers. What links the two classes of sinners is the 'segni e parole ornate' (v. 91) and their role in selling female love: 'una vendita perpetrata con inganno' (81) by way of rhetoric, the 'parole ornate'.

## 5 Acta

*Dante e la retorica*, ed. Luca Marcozzi, Ravenna, Longo, 276 pp., the proceedings of a 2016 Rome conference, is a timely volume of essays, situating itself within the renewed emphasis on the nature of Dante's formal and informal education, and the results of that education in his poetry and prose works. Recent years have seen efforts by scholars such as Luciano Gargan, Paolo Pellegrini, Zygmunt Barański, and others to reconstruct Dante's virtual library, and with it his experience with the medieval trivium and quadrivium. This volume on rhetoric, one of the three principal branches of the liberal arts trivium, is a welcome addition to our ever-growing library devoted to Dante's education and formation. All the more so because Dante's poetry and prose was so carefully cultivated to reflect—at times explicitly—his training in the liberal arts and especially the *trivium*, as he details in the *Convivio* (II, II, 9). This rich volume includes essays by Veronica Albi, 'Dante e Goffredo di Vinsauf: per un primo bilancio' (11–28), Giuseppe Crimi, "'Proverbia" e "sententiae" in Dante: a proposito di *De vulgari eloquentia*' 1, 7, 2 e di altri casi' (43–56), Franziska Meier, 'Dante alle prese con i "colori rettorici". Un aspetto della riflessione metapoetologica fra la *Vita Nova* e il *Convivio*' (57–70), Sonia Gentili, 'Poesia e verità in Dante: una questione retorica?' (89–106), Theodore J. Cachey Jr., 'Appunti su alcuni aspetti metaletterari della *Commedia* di Dante' (107–116), Luca Marcozzi, "'Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura": declinazioni dantesche dell'"horresco referens" virgiliano (*Aen.*, II 204)' (117–138), Andrea Battistini, 'La reto-

rica del peccato nei primi canti dell'*Inferno*' (139–150), Marcello Ciccuto, "Saxa loquuntur". Aspetti dell'*evidentia* nella retorica visiva di Dante' (151–167), Paolo Rigo, 'Dante e la retorica della nobiltà' (167–184), Mario Paolo Tassone, 'Metafore e immagini della corte celeste nella *Commedia*' (185–210), Paolo Falzone and Luca Fiorentini, 'Note sul discorso politico dantesco tra le cancellerie imperiali di Federico II e di Enrico VII' (211–246), and Nicolò Maldina, 'Le similitudini dantesche tra letteratura e predicazione. Il ruolo delle *artes*' (247–260). Of particular interest to this reviewer is Johannes Bartuschat, 'Appunti sulla concezione della Retorica in Brunetto Latini e in Dante' (29–41), an important contribution to understanding the literary relationship between Dante's *maestro* and the poet. Though there are important differences between the pair's understanding of the medieval art of rhetoric, B. demonstrates that Dante, like Brunetto, understood the art of rhetoric as applied to poetry to be a persuasive one. Brunetto was among the first to transfer the rhetorical precepts of oratory to the written word, while at the same time he acknowledged the possibility that those same precepts could also migrate from the epistolary genre to poetry. On the other hand, argues B., Dante's *Convivio* illustrates the inverse of the Brunettian property: he uses poetry to argue for the importance of rhetoric. Important for both conceptions of rhetoric is the etymology of the adjective *soave*, which B. rightly highlights is inspired by Ugucione da Pisa's *Derivationes* and the relationship between 'soave' and 'persuasività' ('persuasiveness'). Thus Rhetoric is a medieval art of persuasion at home in poetry and in the *artes dictaminis*. Giuseppe Ledda, 'La "fabbrica del rettorico" e l'ineffabilità nel *Convivio*' (71–88), explores the double nature of ineffability, which he writes is both 'poetica e teologica'. The 'fabbrica' of the rhetorician calls to mind both the 'miglior fabbro' of the *Commedia*'s Arnaut Daniel and the 'ergasterium' ('workshop') of the *De vulgari eloquentia*. The author touches on the topic of ineffability in

the first two canzoni glossed in Dante's *Convivio*, with ample references to the *Vita nova* and to the *poesia siciliana*. L. begins with Dante's use of the adjective *ineffabile* in the poet's self-commentary on vv. 24–25 of *Voi ch'intendendo il terzo ciel movete*. According to L., this is the first attestation of the adjective in the vernacular, and it is in reference to the eyes of the lady, eyes that are an allegory of Philosophy. Dante does not insist on ineffability in the text of the canzone, but does allude to it, and later on in his commentary he reiterates his inability to tell others of his experience. L. compares the verse in *Voi ch'intendendo* ('ch'io nol so dire altrui, si mi par novo') with the sonnet *Tanto gentile e onesta mi pare* from the *Vita nova* ('che 'ntender no-lla può chi no-lla prova', 17, 7; vv. 9–11), and emphasizes its mystical element, while allowing that Dante prizes *novitas* over ineffability. Ineffability is much more present in the second canzone, *Amore che nella mente mi ragiona*, where the poet writes of his lady's speech that 'E certo e' mi convien lasciare in pria, / s'io vo' trattar di quel ch'odo di lei, / ciò che lo mio intelletto non comprende; / e di quel che s'intende / gran parte perché dirlo non savrei' (v. 13). L. might also have made reference to the *Commedia*, specifically to *Inferno* xxxiv and the episode with Satan.

*Dante dei moderni. La 'Commedia' dall'Ottocento a oggi*, ed. Joanna Szymanowska and Izabela Napiórkowska, Warsaw U.P.—Vicchio (Fi), LoGisma, 408 pp., is based on a 2015 conference at the University of Warsaw sponsored by the Accademia della Crusca. The volume is intended to explore the reception of Dante from the 19th c. until today, in a variety of media—literature, language, visual arts, and popular culture—and in a multiplicity of countries, in Italy and abroad. In the 'Prefazione', the editors note the multiplicity of Dante's reception(s), from the 'politico-patriottici' elements dear to the early Ottocento and the Romantics' embrace of the *Commedia* as 'un repertorio d'eccellenza da cui è possibile attingere con rinnovata vitalità modelli esemplari' (9), to

countries such as England, where he has long been read, and other countries who have begun to read him with fervour only more recently, such as the Czech Republic and Arab countries. This wide-ranging collection includes contributions on Dante, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and England; the reception of the *Commedia* among the Romantics and in France; Dante in Poland, Hungary, and Russia; Dante and Italian luminaries ranging from Leopardi and Pasolini to Levi, Verga, Morante, Malatesta, Foscolo, Monti, and Merini; Dante in the Italian schools; and Dante and world war. The breadth of the volume is refreshing, especially the coverage given to Dante's reception in countries such as Hungary and Poland, although perhaps paradoxically his popularity as a 'national poet' in countries other than Italy should not be all that surprising. After all, to cite just one epis-

ode, the international committee for the erection of a statue in honour of Giordano Bruno in the late 19th c. featured multiple signatories from the countries of the east. A number of the essays can be read alongside other volumes noted in this survey: Cristina Fenu (Biblioteca civica Attilio Hortis di Trieste), '1865: i 600 anni di Dante, la *Raccolta Patria* di Trieste e la *Commedia* secondo Filippo Zamboni' (99–116), should be read in relation to Maiko Favaro's monograph on Dante and Friuli reviewed above, all the more so because F. devotes part of his book to 'Le celebrazioni dantesche del 1865 e del 1921 a Gorizia e a Udine' (73–98). In addition to the discovery of Dante's reception in surprising places in Eastern Europe, the section on diverse authors and in diverse genres of the 19th and 20th cs. makes a useful contribution to reception studies.