

publication at the urging of his parents, and it is a labor of love. Used as a catalogue of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century staged musical entertainments that are related to Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, this is a valuable resource. The analyses, however, as well as the first chapter on sixteenth-century musical settings of excerpts from Ariosto's epic, suffer from the author's inexperience.

Because the text was published posthumously, it has not received the rigorous review process typical of scholarly publications—a process that is particularly necessary when, as here, a scholar is writing outside his chosen field. Music genres are routinely misidentified, and the critique of musicological literature shows a superficial understanding of the field. A rigorous review might have purged the text of petulance, as shown in a lengthy diatribe against feminist scholarship that is followed by an unfortunate chapter subheading regarding “unauthorized pastoral penetration” (97–100). Sixteenth-century Italian terms that are discussed at length in the musicological literature are poorly used, as is the term *pletro*. While Ariosto's conception of a *miglior pletro* may indeed refer to another poet's superior pen or to a plectrum used to pluck the strings of a lute, the author translates this term alternately as a lyre, a piece of tortoise shell, or a poet (61–63). The text meanders, with material that should be relegated to footnotes appearing in the body of the text, and it indulges in needless hyperbole.

The accompanying CD-ROM contains transcriptions of twenty-eight entertainments, most of which are more readily available on the <http://corago.unibo.it> website, although the three works transcribed from manuscript are a welcome addition to the scholarly literature. As indicated in the transcriptions' editorial guidelines, the word “opera” in the book's title should be understood to include all manner of spectacles that include some element of music, including *intermedi*, tournaments, jousts, and dances. It is unclear why the editors chose to print the second volume of this work as a PDF file located on a CD tucked into the back cover of the printed book, which is not identified as the first volume of a two-volume set. While the PDF file does enable full-text searches using the browser's search command, this utility is counterbalanced by the difficulty posed by the general absence of CD-ROM drives in today's computers.

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*Dante's Tears: The Poetics of Weeping from “Vita nuova” to the “Commedia.”*

Rossana Fenu Barbera.

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Tears can indicate almost any kind of emotion—grief, joy, regret, penitence, pity, fear—and they are everywhere to be found in Dante. The *Vita nuova* is fairly drenched in

belabored weeping; in the *Commedia*, Dante weeps alongside the shades, who sometimes recount tears they shed in life. In *Purgatorio* V, Buonconte da Montefeltro famously describes his last-minute reprieve through the shedding of a single *lagrimetta* (“little tear”) as he lay on the battlefield at Campaldino, suspended between life and death. We even hear about the shades’ living relatives and the power their tears wield in the afterlife. In *Purgatorio* 23, as the pilgrim has nearly completed his journey up the mountain, he is surprised to come across a poetic rival, Forese Donati, who has been dead four years, but is just two terraces down from the earthly paradise. Donati explains that it is all thanks to his widow Nella, who has tirelessly negotiated his journey toward heaven with her persistent display of “unbroken weeping.” Nella’s tearfulness contrasts starkly with the neglect by Buonconte’s wife Giovanna, who, he laments, has forgotten him. Thus he lies stranded outside of heaven.

The essential nature of tears in Dante, then, is not to be underestimated. With the scholarly turn toward the history of emotions, and the exceptional scholarship on grief and mourning in Dante by scholars such as Teodolinda Barolini and Ronald L. Martinez, it seems time for a book focused on weeping in Dante’s work. In *Dante’s Tears*, Rossana Fenu Barbera offers just such a study. As she reminds us, “weeping is indispensable to save oneself from Hell before death, to fight temptations that are still active at the time of their purgative process, and to ensure a complete purification in Purgatory after death” (xvii). Yet she argues that there is even more to the function of tears than this practical application, exploring numerous other ways tears are deployed in Dante’s work.

Barbera organizes her book into five chapters, first arguing for the establishment of a poetics of tears in the *Vita nuova*, then analyzing the shift in this poetics from the *Vita nuova* to *Inferno*, the “deceptive” weeping in hell, frozen tears of the sinners at the bottom of hell, and, finally, weeping in purgatory. The division is effective, allowing her to cover much of Dante’s trajectory as both poet and pilgrim, while also analyzing the myriad uses of tears in medieval theology and Dante’s connection to this broader tradition.

Indeed, Barbera’s project is at its best when considering Dante’s relationship to medieval notions of tears, and how Church Fathers sought to regulate expression. Barbera connects this doctrinal control to how, she argues, Dante sought to legitimize his erotic love for Beatrice in the *Vita nuova*, as well as how tears—false and real, productive and performative—are used to drive the narrative of the *Commedia* and communicate lessons to his readers. How do we know what sincere contrition is? Is there a difference in efficacy for those who shed sincere tears, and those who shed false ones? She makes the point that weeping essentially ceases by the time we hit *Paradiso*—there is, after all, little use for grief and contrition there.

It might have been useful, however, for Barbera to engage more with the near absence of tears in heaven, which is certainly a significant one; the book instead leaves us stranded in purgatory, tears exiled from the pantheon of emotions in *Paradiso* rather than in productive dialogue with them. The author could also have incorporated recent

important developments in the history of emotions, especially as there has been so much important work on the centrality of emotional expression in broader medieval scholarship of late by Barbara Rosenwein and others. I would also have liked to see the volume speak more fully to long-standing discussions of mourning in Dante studies, especially by Martinez and Jacoff, as Barbera's analysis would only be richer were it to unfold in conversation with that work. Despite these unexplored avenues of inquiry, her study offers a meaningful contribution to scholarship for any student of Dante who wants to think more about his persistent weeping.

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*Dante's Philosophical Life: Politics and Human Wisdom in "Purgatorio."*

Paul Stern.

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Paul Stern's *Dante's Philosophical Life: Politics and Human Wisdom in "Purgatorio"* aspires to explore the prominence and philosophic significance of politics in the *Commedia*, especially in spite of the countervailing impact of Christian and Neoplatonic thought in shaping the intellectual context of the poem's composition (1). Positioning his approach in contrast to the theologizing hermeneutics of traditional Dante scholarship, Stern proposes to expound on "the vindication of rational inquiry into the human good" (1) through a political philosophical lens.

The volume is presented in a series of seven chapters that follow Dante's itinerary through Mount Purgatory. Where the first two chapters of the volume offer an introduction and examine ante-purgatory, chapters 3, 4, and 5 traverse the terraces of penance. Chapter 6 is devoted to the terrestrial paradise, and the final chapter offers the volume's comprehensive conclusion. Save for the seventh, each chapter is structured into sections that present its thematic topic, focus analysis on specific individual characters, and finally articulate the author's assessment of the chapter's thesis.

A student of classical political philosophy, Stern is curious about how Dante uses his imaginative power for political ends in "a poem about the Christian afterlife" (1). The proposed topic is promising and, conceptually, Stern's perspective on *Purgatorio* is often provocative, especially since his chosen approach is to frame the characters in terms of their failings rather than their aspirations. In his zeal to sustain these characterizations, Stern chooses not to consider the *Commedia* as a whole, reading *Purgatorio* in a manner that consistently divests Dante's poetry of its comprehensive context and disregards the figurative rhetorical function of its poetic language.