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**Laura Melosi. *D'Annunzio e l'edizione 1911 della Commedia*.
Olschki, 2019. Pp. 108.**

In 1910 the Leo S. Olschki publishing house in Florence decided to publish a new edition of Dante's *La commedia* and they asked Gabriele D'Annunzio—who had always wanted to collaborate on a new edition of Dante—to contribute a short commentary. In this micro-history on a little-known reissue of *The Comedy*, Laura Melosi suggests that it was an important moment in D'Annunzio's life, in the life of Dante's poem, and in Italian literary history. In fact, Melosi manages to insert humor and intrigue into a relatively minor event in the history of Dante's *Comedy*. Given that the publisher of the book under review was also the original publisher of the 1911 edition of *The Comedy*, the author was granted unfettered access to the necessary archives, which enhances the material experience of reading this research. For the scholar who deals with the history of publishing houses, with D'Annunzio, or with the publications of Dante's *Comedy*, this study is a valuable resource and provides novel insights into D'Annunzio's life and his interaction with various figures in the publishing world.

The Olschki publishing house viewed the reissuing of Dante's *Comedy* as a way to celebrate the forty-year anniversary of Italy's unification in 1870 and to reignite interest in the poet. The edition was edited by Giuseppe Lando Passerini, who was the director of the *Giornale Dantesco*; inside was a preface by D'Annunzio, which is included in Melosi's book as an appendix. The edition was also illustrated, but rather than commissioning a contemporary artist, Leo Olschki, the founder of the publishing house, used illustrations done in the form of woodcuts, which he took from a 1491 edition published in Venice.

Despite the age of the original work and the use of Renaissance-era illustrations, Passerini and Olschki wanted the volume to inspire the idea of modernity. They insisted that their new edition would be a praiseworthy publication in terms of its artistic and typographic qualities; and including D'Annunzio in this edition would add a further sense of modernity to Dante. According to Melosi, D'Annunzio's collaboration was an important episode in his biography. For instance, Olschki's correspondence with D'Annunzio betrays the tardiness of the commissioned preface. He had been asked to write it in July 1909, promised it by Spring 1910, but was not ready until Autumn 1910. When Olschki pressed D'Annunzio to submit his work, D'Annunzio responded in a telegram with few words: "Fumida collera non si addice sereno umanista" (23). Olschki could not help but laugh at this response. Melosi suggests that D'Annunzio and Olschki had a much better relationship than what this episode recounts through letters alone; in fact, D'Annunzio had great confidence in Olschki.

Perhaps the strongest reason for why this episode is important for studies on D'Annunzio is that D'Annunzio was struggling to find the proper way to introduce Dante to a new Italian audience, as he had not found the narrative thread for his commentary. In 1910 D'Annunzio was quoted in an article in *La Stampa* saying: "Da gran tempo avevo in animo di scrivere una vita breve di Dante: compito difficilissimo. Spero di trovare l'ora di grazia" (29). Even though the working title of the preface began as "Vita Dantis," D'Annunzio chose to ignore biography to inform the narrative of his commentary. Melosi explains that "D'Annunzio fa appello all'immortalità e all'universalità di Dante per dichiararsi libero dall'obbligo di parlarne in termini umani, di raccontarne la vita. La *Divina Commedia* è 'il Libro del canone italico' e tanto basta" (79). Understanding Dante was not about biography, D'Annunzio argued, because Dante's words were universal and he was immortally enshrined in Italian history. Therefore, ignoring Dante's life would be D'Annunzio's approach to "De Comoedia Dantis," the preface's revised title.

The 1911 edition of Dante's *Comedy* was expensive to print and carried a hefty sale-price (3,000 lire for the membranous copies, 500 lire for leather-bound, and 250 lire for Bodonian [paper] binding). In the end, the edition hardly made any money out of the 114 copies sold. Aside from the actual research into the pre-publication episode, Melosi's book contains many beautiful scans of the original letters, documents, and title page of the 1911 edition. Having a more tangible relationship to the materials with which Melosi worked gives the reader an intimate knowledge of fascinating details like D'Annunzio's handwriting style, the budgeting of publishing houses, and the protracted correspondence that went into this single publication. Included with the scans of the 1911 edition is also the first page of *Inferno Canto 1*. From this scan we see how beautiful the edition was, especially when looking at the vibrant colors of the text and etchings that border the pages. An interesting feature of the edition is that Passerini's commentary is placed side-by-side with Dante's words in approximately the same font size; priority is given equally to both authors. This choice by the publisher undoubtedly aimed to highlight the importance of commentaries on Dante's words throughout Italy's literary history as much as Dante's words themselves. In effect, Leo Olschki was playing into the Risorgimento ideal that the existence and analysis of Dante's poetry was a fundamental element for the linguistic and cultural unity of Italy. The inclusion of D'Annunzio's preface also gestures to his own enshrinement in the Italian language and in modern Italy.

ANDREW ROBBINS
Rutgers University