

not about him. Giving color to the collection, Barański uses the introduction to recount the ‘cominciamento’ of his love for Dante, which occurred when, at the age of fifteen, he first read what he then knew as the *Divina Commedia*. Barański recalls with fondness his ‘eclectic upbringing’ which combined ‘Polish nationalism, Italian left-wing radicalism, (Irish) Catholicism, a rejection of prejudice and authoritarianism, [and] an unshakeable naive veneration for ‘high culture’ (4). Just as we can all identify with D’Annunzio’s belief, quoted in the review below, that to say something new about Dante was a desperate undertaking, many of us can recognize Barański’s initial reaction upon reading Dante for the first time: ‘perplexed, in awe, and deeply satisfied’ (4). The Introduction is valuable also for its insight into Barański’s *forma mentis*—his early infatuation with Dante and thus Italian being nurtured as an undergraduate at Hull and its outstanding Italian program; his brief stint at Oxford, followed by his return to Hull and his first professorship at Reading; his method of research and his discovery that, ‘literary criticism had been very much alive in the Middle Ages’ (9). This discovery led to Barański’s immersion in ‘the study of Dante’s relationship to medieval literary theory and criticism and his highly original reworkings of both traditions’ (9). Barański sees himself in a similar fashion: as someone who questioned long-held critical consensus by asking questions such as, ‘Why did Dante call a *canto* a “canto”?’ Barański’s recent scholarship has been dedicated to the question of Dante’s intellectual formation, and in particular to the question of Dante’s sources. It is not enough to say that ‘Dante non poteva che conoscere’ a certain text; it must be demonstrated to the extent possibility how and when Dante would have been able to access a text that is a purported influence. To do anything different would be to treat Dante as an ‘ahistorical exceptionality’ (13).

4 Fortuna

Perhaps no other area of Dante’s fortune has been more felicitous than book history and reception studies. Laura Melosi, *D’Annunzio e l’edizione 1911 della ‘Commedia’*, Turin, Olschki, 107 pp, makes an important contribution to both fields, as well as to editorial history. In 1911, on the idea of *Dantista* Giuseppe Lando Passerini, Turin-based publisher Leo Olschki prepared a sumptuous edition of Dante’s *Commedia*. It was timed to the 50th anniversary of Italy’s unification, and was meant to celebrate Dante as the national poet of united Italy. In honour of this task, the edition was truly monumental. It evoked Cristoforo Landino’s 1491 edition, and its characters were typeset by hand, as one would have done when print was in its infancy. Only 300 numbered exem-

plars were made, of which 200 were bound. As was the practice then, copies of the edition had to be sold first, and the appeal featured some well-known names and institutions. Among the first adoptees were the 'Queen Mother' in Rome and Harvard College Library in Cambridge, as well as wealthy New York collector Henry Walters and then Prime Minister of Italy, Sidney Sonnino. A copy of the edition was even gifted to the Italian Navy ship 'Dante Alighieri' (3). Indicative of the international reach of the proposed edition, also included among the first 200 subscribers was a lone Texan, one Daniel G. Folan (n. 122), a bookseller from way down in Beaumont, Texas! Melosi retraces the genesis of the project, Dantist Passerini's invitation to D'Annunzio to collaborate, and the interplay among Passerini, D'Annunzio and Olschki. The 1911 edition endured many travails—including the blowing up of its timeline and tension between D'Annunzio and Passerini—but finally saw the light. The slim volume is also supplemented by rich photographs of the edition's frontispiece, illustrations, and text. Chapter 2 reports Passerini's initial letter to Olschki. Without Passerini, writes Melosi, D'Annunzio would not have been involved in the project. Melosi also does much to reconstruct meticulously D'Annunzio's role in the edition and dismantles the D'Annunzio-friendly account—not supported by any documentary evidence—given by his faithful *amanuensis* Tom Antongini in his *Vita segreta di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (1938). The correction of the record comes when Melosi examines the volume's manuscript pages and an original composition of the proem that contained D'Annunzio's corrections (70–71). The intervening years between D'Annunzio's initial promise to write a *Vita di Dante*—first for Hoepli and then Olschki—are a chronicle of the poet's evasiveness. Passerini's almost comical attempts to run down D'Annunzio and to pin him down take on the air of desperation. At one point, after D'Annunzio has already blown the initial deadline by more than a year—and when he had already confided to his French lover that he had 'not written a single word'—Passerini, writing on behalf of Olschki, tells the Vate that, while the space saved for his *Vita di Dante* is between 8–12 pages, 'even two pages is great, don't worry about the space' (52). In innumerable telegraphs, letters, and even in-person meetings, Olschki and Passerini all but beg D'Annunzio to send along his promised *Vita*, emphasizing its importance to the King of Italy. D'Annunzio's signal contribution to Olschki's and Passerini's 'monumental Dante', however, goes from a substantial *Vita* to a meditation on Dante in *terza rima* to, what exactly, they weren't sure, but something, anything, really. Indeed, by May 1911 Passerini and Olschki have given up hope that D'Annunzio will write the *Vita* (54). When the day finally arrives—*mirabile dictu*—in which D'Annunzio sends the *Vita-cum-Vita* in *terza rima*-cum Proem, the poet doesn't make any excuses for his delay. Which *dantista* among us, however, wouldn't identify with D'Annunzio

when he writes in the letter to Olschki 'scrivere di Dante dicendo cose nuove con modi potenti è impresa disperata' (67)? Melosi's archival research shows, through the furious exchange of letters between Passerini and D'Annunzio in late summer 1911, the degree to which D'Annunzio was involved with some of the typographical decisions regarding the 'monument.' Finally, this useful volume reprints D'Annunzio's introduction, which in the Decadent poet's inimitable style reads less like a typical proem and more like a melodramatic prose-poem.

Julia Caterina Hartley, *Reading Dante and Proust by Analogy*, Oxford, Legenda, 143 pp, is an audacious monograph that brings together two authors who might otherwise have been deemed unassimilable, even if one believes, with Jacob Burckhardt, that Dante served as the boundary stone (*Markstein*) between the Middle Ages and the modern age. Hartley takes as inspiration for her study Gianfranco Contini's seminal 1976 essay 'Dante come personaggio-poeta della *Commedia*', in which the dean of Italian philologists mentions in passing the relationship between Proust and Dante: 'Marcel Proust serve di metafora per un discorso non del tutto elementare su Dante' (2). The project also takes its cues from other critics that have read the medieval Italian and the *belle époque* Frenchman together. *Reading Dante and Proust by Analogy* differs from previous contributions that have read the two together in that those previous efforts often used the one to read the other, rather than a sincere effort to read them in dialogue, or made only 'passing reference' to Proust or Dante. Thus, a critic will use Proust to read Dante but give short shrift to the former, and vice versa. What's more, Hartley does not pursue a strategy of treating the two authors in alternate chapters, but reads them together throughout the monograph. As a result, the similarities between the two are put in sharp relief. What is it exactly that recommends reading the two together? If great literature is truly universal, argues Hartley, then we ought to be able to read Dante even divorced from his immediate Florentine context: 'if we read the *Commedia* as a work of literature among others, then it follows that we should be able to read it alongside works that came after it' (5). In both Dante and Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Hartley identifies points of contact such as the first-person narrator who becomes a writer (Chapter 1); the use of journey metaphors (Chapter 2); the relationships of the narrator-protagonists to guide figures (Chapter 3); and, finally, in Chapter 4, the connection between art and belief, namely that in Proust art *does not* replace religion, and that in Dante artistic and poetic genius must be subordinated and relinquished to the 'greater privilege of encountering God' (7).

Memoria poetica: questioni filologiche e problemi del metodo, ed. Giuseppe Alvino, Marco Berisso, and Irene Fallini, Genoa, Genoa U.P., 279 pp, contains a

pair of essays on Dante. The first, Andrea Beretta, ‘*Yrsuta vocaula* tra Guittone e Dante’ (23–58), carves out a ‘quarta pista’, a ‘fourth path’ for understanding Dante’s relationship to Guittone. If the first three are Dante’s attacks on Guittone as a practitioner of the *ars amandi*, the accusation of ignorance on the part of Guittone, and attacks on his style, one that remained ‘plebeian’, in the *Commedia* and the *De vulgari eloquentia*, respectively, Beretta proposes that Dante draws direct inspiration from Guittone’s ‘trovato duro e aspro’ for the infernal design of the first canticle, thus ‘dannando indelibilmente [...] anche la memoria letteraria dell’illustre, e a lui invisio, predecessore’; the second, Paolo Rigo, ‘Ingegno, disdegno e ruberie: memorabilità di un noto passo dantesco’ (53–64), investigates the fortune of Dante’s memorable description of Cavalcanti in *Inferno* x, vv. 58–63 (‘piangendo disse: “Se per questo cieco / [...] / forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno”’)—which features a trio of Cavalcantian rhyme-words—by way of its reception/fortune in two sonnets addressed to Guido Cavalcanti by Cino da Pistoia and Mulo da Siena, as well as in a poem from Petrarch’s *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Yet two more essays touch on the reception of Dante in some manner, Giulia Ravera, ‘Riuso e reinterpretazione dei modelli trobadorico e dantesco nella canzone *Verdi panni* (Rvf 29)’ (65–74), and Sara Ferrilli, ‘I modelli letterari del *De honore mulierum* di Benedetto da Cesena prima e oltre la *Commedia*’ (93–104).

5 Acta

Dante in Svizzera, ed. Johannes Bartuschat and Stefano Prandi, Ravenna, Longo, 155 pp, is another volume that explores the reception of Dante outside of Italy. On the heels of recent collections such as *Dante oltre i confini: la ricezione dell’opera dantesca nelle letterature altre* (2018), on French, Russian, German, and Spanish instances of Dante’s ‘re-use’, this volume aims to trace the history of Dante in Helvetic culture beginning in the Settecento. Unlike some other cultures, editors Johannes Bartuschat and Stefano Prandi note that the reception of Dante comes amidst ‘un quadro di generale incompiensione della sua poesia, che si evidenzia particolarmente in rapporto alla *Commedia*, troppo distante per allegorismo, pluristilismo, mescolanza dei generi ai principi razionalistici dettati in prima istanza dal classicismo francese’ (7). Essays are in either German or Italian, and feature topics such as Elene Polledri, ‘Le traduzioni tedesche di Dante in Svizzera’ (11–28), Anett Lutteken, ‘Kein Wunder; dab er nur wenigen, und dem groben Haufen nicht, gefällt. Facetten und Funktionen der Dante-Lektüren Johann Jacob Bodmers’ (29–48), Mario Zanucchi, ‘Das Unwissen der Poesie. Johann Bernhard Merians Dante-Studie in seinen Ber-