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Author

Parker, Deborah

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The Trecento Commentators' Interpretation of Exile in the *Commedia*

DEBORAH PARKER

Critics of the *Commedia* have long regarded with interest the work of Dante's first commentators.¹ Despite their awkwardnesses and various misreadings, the earliest commentaries are valued by critics because we assume that the manner in which the commentators read the poem accurately reflects the philosophical, religious and moral values sustained by Dante. They come closer to capturing what Mazzoni calls "il pensiero genuino" of Dante.² Furthermore, scholars assume that the forms of the language, the significance of the words, and the many political events alluded to were still fresh in these commentators' minds. Lastly, these critics' contributions are valued simply because they were the first readers of the poem. As such, their interpretations present a spontaneity unavailable to subsequent commentators, whose points of view are unavoidably mediated by other readings. Unfortunately, the novelty of their critical task led to many errors: as Karl Witte points out, they "are thrown upon their own limited resources, and exposed to all kinds of individual errors."³

In tracing the exegetical effort of Dante's Italian commentators I have chosen to restrict my investigation to the passages in the poem which contain substantial references to or prophecies of Dante's exile: *Inf.* VI. 64-75; *Inf.* X.79-81; *Inf.* XV.55-78 and *Par.* XVII.46-72. The discussion of exile in the poem has a personal, a religious, a

poetic and a political level. This multivalence serves as a litmus test to varying critical perspectives. Few critics can resist the opportunity to expand on at least one of these levels, and the manner in which they do so gives a unique insight into either their or their generation's critical temper.

Although all of Dante's first readers propose in varying degrees a twofold reading of the text, one which illustrates the poem's literal and allegorical meaning, this practice is effected with less rigour when the subject of Dante's exile is addressed.⁴ Because these passages generally allude to specific historical acts, the commentators concentrate their efforts on determining exactly what incidents Dante may have had in mind when writing his poem. Dante refers to his exile in different terms each time the subject is mentioned. As a result his stylistic choices try the interpretative skills of his commentators in a different way each time they undertake an analysis of the subject. In the first allusion, for example, Ciaccio's prophecy, Dante is alluding to a series of events which take place within the space of approximately three years ("infra tre soli"). Although the wording of Ciaccio's speech shares some of the riddle-like quality of biblical and other literary prophecies, it is not impossibly sybilline. A lucid and informative discussion of the events alluded to depends on the commentator's familiarity with the Black and White party tensions in Pistoia and Florence, which of course included knowledge of the effects produced by the arrival of Charles of Valois in Florence in 1301. The most indeterminate part of Ciaccio's speech is Dante's reference to "giusti son due," since it is unclear whether Dante had two institutions or two people in mind, or whether he merely wished to indicate, as most commentators agree today, that in such a large community the number of just people was extremely small. The early commentators glossed this line either by identifying two institutions or by nominating two people. Graziolo's reading of the line is echoed by both Jacopo della Lana and the author of the *Chiose* edited by Selmi: all three argue that Dante is alluding to two institutions—Reason and Justice. L'Ottimo merely states that the two just entities are not named by Dante and are therefore impossible to divine. Guido da Pisa claims that Dante had in mind two men—himself and Guido Cavalcanti: "Sed nos istos duos iustos intelligere

possumus primum Dantem autorem istius altissime et profundissime Comedie, secundum vero Guidonem de Cavalcantibus; qui duo soli illo tempore, quo civitas Florentie fuit intus et extra bellis conquassata civilibus, iusti et amatores patrie sunt reperti, et rei publice defensores (p. 129).'' This reading is subsequently endorsed and repeated by commentators until the beginning of the Ottocento.

The Trecento commentators' discussion of Brunetto Latini's prophecy also tends to focus on the historical events alluded to in it. As a result, the commentators' analyses of the prophecies of Ciaccio and Brunetto tend to reveal their degree of familiarity with Florentine politics and the particulars of Dante's exile. In this sense their discussions of exile in these two cantos tend to expose little aside from an imprecise familiarity with events.⁵

The Trecento commentators' discussion of these subject in *Inferno* X and *Paradiso* XVII, however, exposes lapses of a different order. The addition of references to elements from pagan literature in these prophecies, along with Dante's subsequent alteration of their context and traditional associations, reveals gaps and omissions attributable to something other than the commentators' familiarity with recent history.

The second reference to Dante's exile is pronounced by the powerful leader of the Florentine Ghibellines, Farinata degli Uberti, who warns Dante:

Ma non cinquanta volte fia raccesa
la faccia de la donna che qui regge,
che tu saprai quanto quell'arte pesa.

Inf. X.79-81

The art to which Farinata refers is the difficult one of returning from exile. As in *Inf.* VI.67-68, these lines foretell how much time will elapse before Dante will himself be exiled. The commentators are unanimous in perceiving this as a reference to fifty cycles of the moon. Where the commentators differ however, is in their explication of the line "La faccia de la donna che qui regge." Generally they tend to cite the moon and/or the goddess Persephone as "la faccia" that "non cinquanta volte fia raccesa," but their exegetical

efforts are less understandable to the modern reader when they discuss the association of Persephone with the moon. Graziolo and the author of the *Chiose* edited by Selmi confine themselves to stating that fifty months will pass because there is a full moon once a month.

It is generally understood that Persephone spent half the year, the spring and summer, with her mother, and the other half, autumn and winter, with her husband. Were the division of her time calculated any other way, it would invalidate all the traditional associations of her with Spring, harvest and plenitude. Ovid's account of Persephone's abduction ends with a description of the pact established between Ceres and Pluto:

At medius fratrisque sui maestaeque sororis
Iuppiter ex aequo volentem dividit *annum* nunc dea, regnorum
numen commune duorum, cum matre est totidem, totidem cum
coniuge menses.⁶

Jacopo della Lana begins his commentary with an extremely lengthy and erratic account of Pluto's abduction of Persephone. He ends his summation of the myth with a discussion of the pact established between Ceres, Pluto and Jove.

All fine [Jove] patteggiò con Plutone, perché la detta Proserpina
avea mangiato per senno di Plutone sette grani di pomo, ch'ella
dovesse lucer mezzo lo tempo in cielo, e l'altro mezzo in inferno.
E questa Proserpina è la luna [my emphasis] che mezzo lo suo tempo,
cioe da ch'ell'ha sette die infine all XXII, luce sovra terra, lo soperchia
luce sotto terra (p. 42).

After having placed the emphasis of the Persephone myth on Pluto's abduction of her, Lana suddenly states "E questa Proserpina è la luna." Although Lana understands that Dante wishes to suggest a time lapse of fifty months, what he has just relayed in no way explains to the modern reader why Persephone is associated with the moon. He calculates Persephone's division of time bimonthly, declaring that she will spend half her time, between the 7th and 22nd of each month, with her mother, and the rest with her husband.

Pietro di Dante also divides Persephone's time between Hell and earth bimonthly; he argues:

Ovidius, vero, in V, videtur dicere quod dicta Proserpina, accipi debet pro luna, ut auctor hic accipit, ut sopra dixi; que, quia XV diebus, quolibet eius mense lucet nobis super terram hic et alijs XV infra terram (Ashburnam, p. 189).

I believe that Pietro's and Lana's somewhat unconventional calculations are the result of their following Latin mythographers' summaries or commentaries to mythical references in classical literature. For example, Servius, a 4th century commentator on Virgil, in his gloss to a line from Bk. 1 of the *Georgics* observes: "Proserpina ipsa est et luna, quae toto anno sex mensibus crescit, sex deficit, scilicet per singulos menses quindenis diebus; ut crescens apud superos, et deficiens apud inferos videatur."⁷ The commentaries of Pietro and Lana reflect precisely such a version of the Persephone myth; their remarks amount to little more than a summary of such accounts.

Like Lana and Pietro, l'Ottimo also begins his analysis of this passage by discussing its mythological aspects. Overall, however, his remarks are somewhat convoluted. Despite this, he is to be credited for being the first commentator to cite a related passage in Virgil's *Aeneid*, thereby initiating a tradition among the commentators of quoting this Virgilian line as a means of explaining Dante's imagery. Guido da Pisa, too, refers to this line in Virgil's *Aeneid* in his discussion of this passage. Guido is considerably clearer than l'Ottimo, but this is partially because, I believe, he has repeated what Servius had written earlier on this Virgilian line. Guido proposes that the three realms over which the moon has power are 1) heaven, where in its capacity of "luminare minus" it lights the sky at night 2) earth, in the woods, "ideo dicitur Dyana, idest duana, eo quod die et nocte luceat" and lastly 3) Inferno, where ". . . ideo dicitur Proserpina." Virtually everything he claims is taken verbatim from Servius's commentary to *Aeneid*. IV.511—the very line cited by Guido exemplifying a Virgilian personification of the moon. Servius declares:

TRIA VIRGINIS ORA DIANAЕ iteratio est: Lunae, Dianae, Proserpinae et cum super terra est, creditur esse Luna; cum in terris, Diana; cum sub terris, Proserpina. quibusdam ideo triplicem placet, quia luna tres figuras habet, prima tamquam ☾, sequens tamquam ☾, quinta decima tamquam ○. non nulli eandem Lucinam, Dianam,

Hecaten appellat, ideo, quia uni deae tres adsignant potestates nascendi lucinam deam esse dicunt, valendi Dianam, morendi Hecaten: ob quam triplicem potestatem tiformena eam triplicemque finxerunt, cuius in triviis templa ideo struxerunt.⁸

Servius' discussion of Persephone's association with the moon not only explains the Trecento commentators' equation of the two entities, but also clarifies Dante's manipulation of the image. His commentary to Virgil's line clearly inspired Dante's ingenious way of alluding to the passing of fifty months. Dante inherits from Servius's commentary a connection between the moon and Persephone. In writing Farinata's prophecy, he decides to emphasize the infernal aspects of this mythical complex, not the positive aspects of the Persephone myth (return of spring, harvest, etc.,—and its *yearly*, not monthly cycle of return). Only by equating Persephone with the moon can one establish a monthly time frame.

What interests the earliest commentators about Dante's allusions to myths is his inclusion of them, not how he shapes them to his own poetic purposes. This results in a lengthy summary of the myths, not an analysis of Dante's use of them. These commentators are fascinated with these stories, and they clearly relish retelling them. At times this zest for storytelling becomes an end unto itself, and the gap between the *Commedia* and commentary momentarily widens. In Farinata's speech, for example, Persephone's infernal and lunar aspects are stressed over the more common associations of her with the Spring and harvest.

In *Paradiso* XVII, in the Heaven of Mars, Dante's great great grandfather Cacciaguida glosses the meaning of all the "parole grave" concerning the pilgrim's future voiced earlier in the poem. Among the early commentaries, only those of Jacopo della Lana, l'Ottimo, Pietro Alighieri and the anonymous author of the *Codice Cassinese* reach the *Paradiso*. Although Dante's future forms the subject of much of this canto, my analysis of the commentators' glosses will be confined to their interpretation of lines 46–69; it is this part of Cacciaguida's speech which responds most directly to the Infernal and Purgatorial auguries.

Jacopo della Lana was the first commentator to undertake an analysis of the *Paradiso*. His account of the events which lead to

Dante's banishment reveals but a hazy and erratic familiarity with the subject. His impressions of these incidents are described in the *proemio* to the canto.

Tornati i Buondelmonti e sua parte, e predendo pie' e signoria, comincioli a dispiacere la signoria del popolo, e secretamente mandonno a corte di papa esponendo come Firenze era a parte d'imperio più che di Chiesa, e portava pregiudizio a parte di chiesa tale essere, imperquello che Fiorenza la mastra porta di Toscana e terra, e che se a ciò non si provvedeva, si potea dire la parte di Chiesa morta in Toscana, e se in la Toscana, per tutta Italia; inteso questo lo papa e lo suo consiglio provvideno che Carlo Senzattera venisse per vicario de chiesa in Toscana, lo quale era lo secondo fratello dello re di Francia, ed eralì detto Senzattera, imperquello che nulla ereditava del patrimonio, con ciò sia che succedeano in reggimento li maggior fratelli. Venne costui a Firenze con meno di CC cavalieri franceschi, fue in la terra, domandò la signoria della terra da parte di Chiesa si come vicario; fulli data incontanente. Quelli mezzani che reggevano, perdenno lo vigore; Buondelmonti, Donati, Frescobaldi, e tali arrabbiati casati di parte guelfa presono lo freno in mano, e abbassonno quelli popolari ch'aveano luogo, altri cacciorono, e altri furono spezzati in pezzi, altri rimasono nella terra, ma convennero stare guatti come topo in farina; delli quali cacciati fue Dante, ch'era di quelli mezzani, che reggeano la terra, ed amava troppo lo bene comune (p. 412).

This account is riddled with imprecision, error and confusion. After describing various skirmishes between the Uberti and Buondelmonti, Lana suddenly switches to a discussion of the arrival of Charles of Valois in Florence in 1301. No mention is made of the fact that at least 34 years separate the return of the Guelf party to Florence after their defeat of the Ghibellines at the battle of Benevento in 1266 and the arrival of Valois in Florence in 1301.

The gretest error in Lana's account is his claim that Dante was exiled in the midst of the pandemonium which ensued upon Charles of Valois's arrival. Most critics agree with Dino Compagni's testimony that Dante at this time was probably in Siena on his return from Rome where he had been sent as part of a Florentine embassy.⁹ The purpose of the mission was to seek the Pope's aid in stabilizing the increasingly violent and frequent outbreaks between the Blacks and

Whites. Lana's account reveals little or no attempt to research or confirm the facts of an event so central to the poem.

Jacopo della Lana's discussion of the analogies between the exiles of Hippolytus and Dante suffers from the same imprecision which pervades his account of historical notices. Instead of commencing his discussion with an examination of the incidents in the Hippolytus myth which bear most on Dante's exile, Lana focuses his attention on irrelevant details—choosing for example to list various highlights from the career of Hippolytus' father, Theseus (p. 414). Lana explains that Dante's purpose in comparing his own exile to that of Hippolytus' is "a dimostrare che si come molto volte le persone vogliono essere sedotte a fare uno vizio, e se non si piegano a volerlo, lo seduttore li adovra male secondo sua possanza, ed essere già portato di grandi ardui, ma infine lo benivolo creatore restituisce tali incontinenti in grazia" (p. 414). Lana never specifies who the "seduttore" is with respect to Dante's situation, nor does he state what wrongs were perpetrated. Rather, he simply extracts a very general moral from the myth without ever examining what bearing this particular myth has on what Dante is attempting to portray in this canto.

L'Ottimo's reading of Cacciaguida's speech is considerably clearer. He points out that Phaedra's perfidious accusations clearly resemble the unjust charges levelled against Dante. Just as Hippolytus was forced to leave Athens, Dante "per simil modo fia la tua partita di Firenze; ponendo che li Fiorentini li fossono matrigna, secondo quello detto di Ser Brunetto" (p. 396). The vindication that Dante will one day see "fia testimonio al ver che la dispensa"; God's justice will ultimately expose the real offenders. Cacciaguida tells Dante that he will be vindicated as well as recompensed for the suffering he has undergone: "La colpa seguirà la parte offensa/ in grido, come suol; ma la vendetta/ fia testimonio al ver che la dispensa." Both Lana and L'Ottimo contend that Dante will be vindicated morally, not avenged by a specific act.

The lengthy summary of the Hippolytus myth accompanying Lana's and L'Ottimo's glosses to these lines clearly testifies to their interest in Dante's allusion to it. The subtleties involved in the poet's choice of this particular myth, however, is not examined by

either of these commentators. Dante's comparison of his own exile to Hippolytus' in *Paradiso* XVII emphasizes similarities in the hardships endured by both: the innocence of the victims, the perfidy of the accusers and the groundlessness of their charges. Hippolytus was also reborn as Virbius, because the gods pitied the persecution he suffered, and as a result, gave him a new life, appearance and identity. He thus successfully transcended the hardships he had endured as Hippolytus, just as Dante, too, gains a victory over his accusers. What constitutes commentary to them is a refabulation of the myth. Dante's manipulation, rearrangement, and choice of material is never questioned. At times the commentators rely heavily on information gleaned from other sources—as, for example, in Lana's, l'Ottimo's, Guido's, and Pietro's repetition of what Servius had to say about the queen of Hell in Virgil.

Although the poetic purpose involved in Dante's selection of particular myths is rarely questioned by his first readers, they are sensitive to other stylistic aspects of the poem. l'Ottimo notes that "la colpa seguirà la parte offensa," linguistically recalling the use of a similar expression in *Inf.* VI.66: "cacerà l'altra con molta offensione." l'Ottimo argues that Dante's word choice is deliberate: the poet "non disse vendetta, ma offensione: e così si prende qui offensa ingiuria" (III, p. 397). Doubtless this observation must have been inspired by the considerable impression Dante's words must have made when he told l'Ottimo that his word choice was never forced for reasons of rhyme: "Io scrittore udii dire a Dante, che mai rima nol trasse a dire altro che quello ch'avea inuo proponimento; ma ch'elli molte spesse volte facea li vocaboli dire nell sue rime altro che quello, ch'erano appo gli altri dicatori usati di sprimere" (I, p. 183).

Dante's banishment, l'Ottimo argues, is the result of the alliance between Charles of Valois and Pope Boniface, through whose machinations "il detto messer Corso ritorno in Firenze, e caccionne L'Autore e li Bianchi. O vuole dire Dante, ch'ell fosse richiesto dalla parte nera (essendo in istato da poterlo fare) d'alcuna grande e disonesta cosa, perch'elli non volle assentire, sì lo giudicarono nemico del senato di Firenze" (III, p. 393). l'Ottimo's considerably better informed description of these affairs reveals the degree to which Lana

was ill-apprieved of the situation. Lana refers to Dante's accusers as the "barattori del tuo comune." Surely there were some barrators among those who desired Dante's banishment, but it is misleading of Lana to single out this one group of persons as the poet's only accusers. Since Dante was accused of barratry, Lana may have confused what Dante was accused of with his accusers.

Lana's ignorance of the circumstances surrounding Dante's exile is also revealed in his interpretation of line 58, "tu proverai come sa di sale," which he argues signifies that Dante "diverr[ai] cortigiano" (p. 415). This interpretation is shaky but plausible if one equates Dante's being a "cortigiano" with his being the dependent guest of such persons as the Malaspina and Cangrande della Scala who offered the poet refuge during his exile. Lana then claims that it is Dante's excellence as a courtier which causes a falling out between the "compagnia malvagia e scempia" with whom he finds himself: "li altri cortigiani, li quali adovteranno contra te invidiose insidie o pugne, ma infine elle seranno cognosciute, onde tu n'avrai onore ed elli disonore." Such an assessment of the wicked and senseless company from which Dante ultimately separated himself is inaccurate and misleading. L'Ottimo correctly points out that lines 61-63 refer more precisely to Dante's having to abandon all that was dear to him: family, home, friends, etc., and that the "compagnia malvagia e scempia" refers to the other exiled Whites and Ghibellines with whom Dante first found himself, but with whom he also quickly broke, after having learned of his sentence of exile.

Of Dante's whereabouts during the first few years of his exile little is known for certain. In 1302 he was at San Godenzo in the Mugello at a meeting of the Bianchi and the next year at Forlì, where he served at one point as an aid to Scarpetta degli Ordellaffi. On July 20, 1304, the exiled Whites made an unsuccessful attempt to force their re-entry into Florence but Dante held himself aloof from this enterprise. By this time he had left his fellow exiles, having come to hold them in the bitter disesteem which his verses reflect.¹⁰

What is most unexpected in the exegetical efforts of Dante's first critics are the factual errors committed by persons writing relatively close to Dante in time. Rocca has noted, however, that among the critics who wrote within the first thirty-five years of Dante's death,

only l'Ottimo and Pietro di Dante were aware of the existence of Giovanni Villani's *Cronica*. Even so, their familiarity was limited to knowledge of only selected passages. L'Ottimo's account of historical events is the most consistently accurate. His principle source of information was a Florentine history dubbed *Gesta florentinorum* by a chronicler named Tolomeo da Lucca.¹¹ Many of Dante's first critics probably worked from memory and in the case of someone whose attitude toward collating facts was as casual as Jacopo della Lana's, possibly from hearsay. The very fact that the majority of the early commentators deemed it necessary to gloss the allusions to historical events reveals that they were not familiar to everyone.

Pietro di Dante's discussion of his father's exile presents a radical departure from Lana and l'Ottimo's interpretations. Pietro's treatment of the subject of exile is *literary* rather than historical. The historical fact of Dante's exile is never discussed; instead Pietro emphasizes its thematic links to the works of various Classical authors, specifically Ovid and Horace, both of whom had written of the bitter experience of exile:

In quo exilio dixit quod primo auctor dimittet id quod sibi magis est delectabile, scilicet patriam. Unde Ovidius de Ponto:

"Dulcis amor patriae . . . allicit omnes.

Item

Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos Ducit, et immemores non sinit esse sui . . .

Felicem dicas quem sua terra tenet

Item Horatius:

O caenae notesque Deum, quibus ipse, meique,
Ante larem proprium vescor, etc.

(Nannucci, p. 668).

As he had done in previous discussions of Dante's exile, Pietro favours establishing the classical sources of the poem. He feels that the examination of these *fontes* will clarify Dante's use of them and ultimately the meaning of the poem. Pietro's reading of this passage can be attributed to his considerable familiarity with the great Latin masterpieces. His commentary exhibits the influence of two different cultural and intellectual backgrounds. One is of a strictly philosophical and scholastic order; it is this background which defines Pietro's

primary critical objective which, as Rocca notes, is to “mostrare come le dottrine sparse nel poema dantesco si trovino in perfetto accordo colla Sacra Scrittura, colle dottrine ecclesiastiche.”¹² In fact, Pietro’s commentary was the chief source of the theological implications of the poem for the Quattrocento commentators. The other important cultural influence on Pietro was his exposure to the humanist ideals which prevailed in the Veneto in the late 1300s. Pietro’s assimilation and straddling of these two intellectual currents leads both Rocca and Mazzoni to proclaim him as “un precursore, o forse un anello intermediario tra gli scolastici d’una parte e gli umanisti dall’altra.”¹³ Pietro’s acknowledgement that the *Commedia* belongs to the poetic tradition established by the Latin classics is directly opposed to Guido’s assertion that the poem’s links are to mystical literature.

Despite the fact that both commentators acknowledge the influence of classical texts on the *Commedia*, each presents a reading of the poem which stands in direct opposition to the other’s. In the proem to his commentary, Guido alone among Dante’s first readers argued that the journey recounted by Dante is the poet’s transcription of a divinely inspired experience. This is, naturally, not to be confused with the fact that in the poem the pilgrim’s journey is a providential one. Guido declares:

Re vera, potest ipse [scil. Dante] dicere verbum prophete dicentis: “Deus dedit michi linguam eruditam; “et illud: “Lingua mea calamus scribe velociter scribentis.” Ipse enim fuit calamus Spiritus Sancti, cum quo calamo ipse Spiritus Sanctus velociter scripsit nobis et penas damnatorum et gloriam beatorum. Ipse etiam Spiritus Sanctus per istum aperte redarguit scelera prelatorum et regum et principum orbis terre” (p. 4)

Read in this key, the *Commedia* assumes the status of a “revealed” text.

Pietro di Dante strongly opposes such a reading; each successive *redazione* of his *Commentarium* assumes an increasingly polemical stance against Guido’s overview of the poem. For Pietro, the *Commedia* belongs in the canon of literature of “imitazione delle opere classiche, in specie dall’*Eneide*.”¹⁴ The pilgrim’s voyage is not the result of a “visio per somnium” but the result of an intellectual operation—the work of a poetic creation. The author’s descent into

Inferno is achieved "per phantasiam intellectualiter, non personaliter prout fecit" (Nannucci, p. 8). Furthermore, the antecedents of such a voyage can be found in the works of the pagan poets. He argues in his *proemio*: "Item Aeneas descendit ad hunc infernum, idest ad cognitionem terrenorum, ut videret genitorem suum, idest cognosceret Deum . . . similiter et auctor noster ad hunc talem infernum scilicet ad cognitionem terrenorum, fingit nunc se discindesse per modum istum, ut talia per modum demonstrationis alliciat" (Nannucci, p. 15). Pietro's continual attempts to trace the classical allusions in the poem are a constant reminder to the reader of how his reading differs from Guido da Pisa's.

What Dante's first readers bring to the text and what they perceive in it changes remarkably from Jacopo to Pietro di Dante: from Jacopo di Dante's relentless search for allegory, to Graziolo de Bambaglioli's focus on the literal meaning, to Jacopo della Lana's and l'Ottimo's perception of the poem as a *summa* of doctrine, to Guido da Pisa's hybrid blend of the traditions of literature and dream vision, to Pietro di Dante's attempts to place the *Commedia* despite his theological emphasis, firmly in the tradition of the *Aeneid*.

Dante's first critics, however, were most impressed with the poem's doctrine; their intellectual formation was grounded in a scholastic/theological background rather than a cultural/literary one. The ample discussion allotted this aspect of the poem underscores the fact that for Dante's first readers the function of the commentator was to unfold the moral message which lay beneath the ingenuity of Dante's vision.

Harvard University

Notes

1. Jacopo di Dante, *Chiose alla cantica dell'Inferno di Dante Allighieri attribuite a Jacopo suo figlio*, edite a cura di Lord Vernon (Firenze: Tipografia Tommaso Baracchi, 1848).

Graziolo Bambaglioli, *Comento alla Cantica dell'Inferno di Dante Allighieri di autore anonimo*, a cura di Lord Vernon (Firenze: Tipografia di Tommaso Baracchi, 1848).

Jacopo della Lana, *Comedia di Dante degli Allagherii col commento di Jacopo della Lana*, a cura di Luciano Scarabelli (Bologna: Tipografia regia, 1866).

L'Ottimo commento della Divina Commedia, a cura di Alessandro Torri (Pisa: Niccolò Capurro, 1827) Tomi 3.

Francesco Selmi, ed. *Chiose anonime alla prima cantica della Divina Commedia di un contemporaneo del poeta, pubblicato per la prima volta . . . da Francesco Selmi, con riscontri di altri antichi commenti editi ed inediti, e note filologiche*, Torino: 1865.

Pietro di Dante, *Petri Allegherii super Dantis ipsius genitoris Comoediam Commentarium*. Curante Vincentio Nannucci (Florence: Angelum Garinei, 1845).

Pietro di Dante, *Il "Commentarium" di Pietro Alighieri nelle redazioni ashburnhamiana e ottoboniana*, Trascrizione a cura di Roberto della Vedova e Maria Teresa Silvotti (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1978).

Guido da Pisa, *Expositiones et Glose super Comoediam Dantis or Commentary on Dante's Inferno*, Ed. with notes and an Introduction by Vincenzo Cioffari (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1974).

Il Codice Cassinese della Divina Commedia per la prima volta letteralmente messo a stampa per cura dei monaci benedettini della badia di Monte Cassino (Tipografia di Monte Cassino, 1865).

2. Francesco Mazzoni, "Per la storia della critica dantesca I: Jacopo Alighieri e Graziolo Bambaglioli," *Studi danteschi*, XXX, 1951, p. 288.

3. Karl Witte, *Essays on Dante*, trans. and ed. by C. Mabel Lawrence and Philip H. Wicksteed (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1898), p. 312.

For more details regarding the Trecento commentators see also:

Giosuè Carducci, *Edizione nazionale delle opere*, vol. 10: Dante (Bologna, 1939);

Elisabetta Cavallari, *La Fortuna di Dante nel Trecento* (Firenze, 1921);

Luigi Rocca, *Di alcuni commenti della Divina commedia composti nei vent'anni dopo la morte di Dante* (Firenze, 1891);

F. P. Luiso, "Per la varia fortuna di Dante nel secolo XIV, primo saggio, l'Epistola a Cangrande non è l'opera dell'Alighieri, *GD*, X (1902), pp. 83-97.

F. P. Luiso, "Per la varia fortuna di Dante nel secolo XIV, Secondo saggio. I concetti generici dell'ermeneutica dantesca nel secolo XIV e l'Epistola a Cangrande, *GD*, XI (1903), p. 20-6, 60-9.

Francesco Mazzoni, "L'Epistola a Cangrande," in *Studi in onore di Angelo Monteverdi*, Modena, 1959.

_____ "Guido da Pisa interprete di Dante e la sua fortuna presso il Boccaccio," *Studi danteschi*, XXXV, 1958.

_____ "Pietro Alighieri interprete di Dante," *Studi danteschi*, XL, 1963.

_____ "La critica dantesca del secolo XIV," in *Cultura e Scuola* 13-14, 1965.

4. Dante Della Terza, "Inferno V: Tradition and Exegesis," *Dante Studies* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1981). Mazzoni suggests that if one is interested in learning more about the Trecento commentators overview of the poem to look at their examinations of the following: 1) their treatment of Virgil 2) their treatment

of Beatrice 3) how the letter to Cangrande is interpreted 4) their interpretation of *Inferno* 1 and 2.

5. One exception is Pietro di Dante's account of the Fiesolan/Roman foundations of Florence. All the other Trecento commentators discuss the lines "Ma quello ingrato popolo maligno/ che discese di Fiesole *ab* antico/ e tiene ancor del monte e del macigno," *Inf.* XV. 61-63, by relaying the flight of Catiline to Fiesole. After defeating Catiline some of the Romans decided to settle nearby in what is now Florence. According to this legend, their descendants, the Florentines, are believed to manifest the characteristics of both these peoples: the commoners are considered descendants of the hard Fiesolans, and the nobility considered the issue of the "sementa santa" of the Romans. Pietro, however, seeks to explain the harshness of the Fiesolans by noting that there is a classical myth which accounts for why men might be considered hard as stone—he recounts the myth of Pyrrha and Deucalion from Ovid.

6. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 276.

7. See for example George Henry Bode, ed. *Scriptores rerum mythicarum latini tres Romae nuper reperti: ad fidem codicum MSS. Guelerbytanorum, gottingensis, Gothani et Parisiensis*, vol. 1 (Cellis: E. H. C. Schulze, 1834).

8. Servius, *Servii grammatici qui fervuntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii*, ed. George Thili and Hermann Hagen, vol. 1 (Lipsiae: B. G. Teubneri, 1881), p. 557.

9. See also G. L. Passerini, *Le Vite di Dante scritte da Giovanni e Filippo Villani, da Giovanni Boccaccio, Leonardo Bruni e Giannozzo Manetti*, con introduzione e con note (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1917), from Leonardo Bruni, *Della vita, studi e costumi di Dante*, p. 216.

10. Singleton, *Commentary to the Paradiso*, p. 294.

11. Rocca, "Di alcuni commenti," p. 195.

12. Rocca, "Del Commento di Pietro," p. 370.

13. Rocca, "Del Commento di Pietro," p. 369.

14. F. Mazzoni, "Pietro Alighieri," p. 297.