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While the second chapter gives a general yet well-documented overview of Benvenuto's successful commentary on Valerius Maximus, the third chapter connects a systematic philological analysis with an historical one. In chapter three, Rossi discusses the prefaces of the three works in which Benvenuto strongly associates his name with the d'Este family. These consist of the two commentaries (on Dante and on Valerius Maximus) and the *Libellus Augustalis*. It is with these three works that Benvenuto ties himself to Niccolò II d'Este, the most preeminent patron in this phase of his career.

The next two chapters then focus on the two greatest writers of Benvenuto's age: Boccaccio and Petrarch, with whom Benvenuto had first-hand communication. Benvenuto's commentary on Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen* becomes an experiment, a way of dealing with a writing style that was very different from Dante's and from Benvenuto's own interests. This explains Benvenuto's approach to this kind of commentary, as both a movement towards Virgil and the classical poets, and by comparison with Dante Alighieri.

In conclusion, this book is a very useful resource for readers seeking a comprehensive study on Benvenuto da Imola. His famous commentary on the *Commedia* is not the specific analysis of any of the essays, yet it is constantly and necessarily referred to in the papers. The result of Rossi's careful analysis of Benvenuto's fortune is the description of a complex and rich figure, and his relationship with other scholars and writers of his time, especially Petrarch and Boccaccio. Luca Carlo Rossi, whose studies have greatly enhanced modern scholarship on Italian literature, gives an important overview of the studies on Benvenuto, many the fruit of his own writings, and then contributes a necessary update to the state of the field on this writer. The outcome is a book that is strongly tailored to scholars of the entire Trecento, but that could be appreciated also by other specialists thanks to rigorous study and vibrant research.

Mario Sassi, *University of Pennsylvania*

Ottimo Commento alla 'Commedia.'

Giovanni Battista Boccardo, Massimiliano Corrado, and Vittorio Celotto, eds.

Chiose sopra la 'Comedia.'

Ciro Perna, ed.

Edizione Nazionale dei Commenti Danteschi, 16. Rome: Salerno, 2018. 3+1 vols. 2800 pp. €290.

Twenty years ago, a group of Italian philologists led by Enrico Malato and Andrea Mazzucchi began a project of crucial importance for modern Dante studies: the complete edition of the ancient commentaries of the *Commedia* ('Edizione Nazionale dei Commenti Danteschi'). Since 2001, philological editions of many texts devoted to explaining Dante's poem have been published, such as the 'Commenti'

by Cristoforo Landino, Alessandro Vellutello, Iacomo della Lana and Andrea Lancia. The Salerno publishing house has now published in three volumes, the work that is traditionally known as the *Ottimo Commento* [the ‘Excellent Commentary’], a name assigned by the Accademia della Crusca in 1612 to highlight the enormous prestige of this ancient text (1334ca.).

The first (and so far, only) printed edition of the *Ottimo* was published in Pisa between 1827–29 by Niccolò Capurro and edited by the Veronese scholar Alessandro Torri. Unfortunately, the text edited by Torri was based only on a single witness, a copy of a manuscript housed at the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence compiled in 1816 by the priest Bartolomeo Follini. Consequently, Torri’s edition was full of transcription errors and interpretive oversights.

This new version of the *Ottimo*, edited by three young Italian philologists—Giovanni Battista Boccardo, Massimiliano Corrado, and Vittorio Celotto, represents the first critical edition of the most important fourteenth-century Florentine commentary of the *Commedia*, based on the analysis of 49 manuscripts. As pointed out by the curators in the Introduction, the *Ottimo* is a work that is characterized by constant comparison with all the previous exegetic traditions relating to Dante’s poem. In many parts of the text, the anonymous author explicitly compares the interpretations of several previous commentaries: the notes to the *Inferno* by Jacopo Alighieri (1322ca.), the vernacular commentary by Iacomo della Lana, the Latin *expositio* of the *Inferno* by Graziolo Bambaglioli (1324), the *Chiose Palatine* (before 1333), etc. This characteristic makes the *Ottimo* a global work, which seeks to take stock of the situation over a young but already established literary genre such as the commentaries on the *Commedia*.

Despite this clear compilatory tendency, the *Ottimo Comento* remains an original work, and its author frequently states his opinion on specific interpretations and disagrees with other commentators. In this regard, it may be useful to look at the example of the commentary of *Inf.* 13.91–108 (p. 218), in which the anonymous commentator denigrates Graziolo Bambaglioli’s interpretation of the punishment of suicides after the universal judgment, which he defines as useless. However, the *Ottimo* does not comment on the verses of the *Commedia* only with regard to the exegetical tradition. In many cases, the author displays great familiarity with Dante’s works. He is familiar both with a not easily accessible treatise such as the *Convivio* and with the text of the *Vita nuova*. For example, in the comments of *Inf.* 7.73–80 and 9.91–93, the author quotes the *canzone* ‘Voi che ’ntendendo il terzo ciel movete’ (pp. 174, 217), while in the glossa on *Inf.* 1.91–105 he transcribes the verses 70–72 of *Tre donne intorno al cor mi venute* (p. 32).

In addition to the genuinely extraordinary knowledge about Dante’s writings and his commentators, the author of the *Ottimo* indicates that he also enjoyed a privileged relationship with the *exul immeritus*. Indeed, in two passages of the commentary, he claims to have spoken directly with the poet. Specifically, in the glossa of *Inf.* 10.85–87 he states that he heard Dante affirm that the use of the word in rhyme *tempio* in place of *chiesa* was not a choice dictated by reasons of a metrical order but a selection involving a precise metaphorical intent. Similarly, the author claims to have learned from Dante’s voice the legend that circulated in Florence about the statue of Mars, the ancient protector of the city, mentioned in *Inf.* 13.146–47 (p. 322).

Precisely where and when the author of the *Ottimo* met Dante is difficult to establish, since every reference in the commentary refers to Dante speaking about the *Commedia*. Since the poet never returned to Florence after his conviction, in 1302, the two likely met in Northern Italy during Dante's exile. What is certain is that the author of the *Ottimo* belonged to that group of Florentine devotees of Dante who, in the first half of the fourteenth century, gave rise to an exegetical movement aimed at spreading and promoting the work of their illustrious fellow citizen. Thanks to the work of these researchers, today we can read in a genuinely *ottima* and philologically impeccable version one of the most exceptional texts of the Dantean exegetical tradition. This monumental work is also accompanied by the edition of a supplemental commentary, the so-called *Amico dell'Ottimo* ['The Friend of the *Ottimo*'], beautifully edited by Ciro Perna, who based his edition on the analysis of four manuscripts.

The publication of these two works is an event to be welcomed with great enthusiasm. Both the critical editions not only contribute to the reconstruction of the extraordinary exegetical tradition of the *Commedia* in the years following Dante's death, but also remind us of the need to have philologically accurate editions of the texts linked to this tradition, especially in an age like ours, rich in new ideas on the interpretation of Dante's work.

Natale Vacalebre, *University of Pennsylvania*

Nicolò Maldina.

In pro del mondo. Dante, la predicazione e i generi della letteratura religiosa medievale.

La Navicella dell'ingegno, 6. Rome: Salerno, 2017. 260 pp. €24.

The main goal of Maldina's book is to offer an introductory study of the relationship between Dante's *Commedia* and the homiletic genre of Medieval preaching. The main issue for such research lies in the substantial impossibility of tracing precise textual references which go beyond generic consonances. As the author himself stresses, it is not possible to point at any precise text because, on the one hand, the manuscripts containing sermons were probably off limits to laymen during the Middle Ages, and, on the other hand, the sermons were written in Latin but planned for vernacular homiletic preaching, as if they were a sort of outline for the friars. Despite these issues at the basis of the research, Maldina attempts a reconstruction of echoes, stylistic devices which are the common traits which can link Dante's *Commedia* to the homiletic genre. In this sense, the most evident relation is the parenthetic finality of both Dante's poem and the sermons offered by preachers.

The book is organized in four chapters which treat different but intertwined topics. The first chapter, *Dante, la predicazione e la crisi del genere visionario* reconstructs the history of religious literature between eleventh and twelfth centuries. Maldina suggests how, in Dante's time, the particular genre of the otherworldly