Dante on View

The Reception of Dante in the Visual and Performing Arts

Antonella Braida and **Luisa Calè**

DANTE ON VIEW

We wish to dedicate this volume to the memory of Peter Armour,
'maestro di color che sanno'.

Dante on View
The Reception of Dante in the Visual and Performing Arts

ANTONELLA BRAIDA AND LUISA CALÈ
University of Durham, UK and Birkbeck College, University of London, UK

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Notes on Contributors

Peter Armour was Research Professor at Royal Holloway (University of London) until his death in 2002. He is the author of *The Door of Purgatory* (Oxford, 1983), *Dante's Griffin and the History of the World* (Oxford, 1989) and articles on Dante's *Commedia*, especially the *Purgatorio*, and on Michelangelo's art and poetry.

Antonella Braida teaches at the Université de Franche-Comté, Besançon (France) and is an Honorary Senior Lecturer in Italian at the University of Durham. She completed her doctorate at the University of Oxford with a thesis on Henry Francis Cary's translation of the *Divine Comedy*, which formed the basis of her book *Dante and the Romantics* (Palgrave, 2004). Her research focuses on Anglo-Italian relations and in particular on the reception of Dante in eighteenth-century Britain, word and image and translation studies. She is co-editor of *Image and Word: Reflections of Art and Literature from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Oxford: Legenda, 2003).

Luisa Calè is Lecturer in the School of English and Humanities of Birkbeck College (University of London). She studied at Rome 'La Sapienza', Genoa and Oxford. Her main research area is on literature, adaptation and visual culture in the Romantic period. She has published *Visione e Cosmo: La Prospettiva nel Paradise Lost* (Rome, 1997) and *Fuseli's Milton Gallery: 'Turning Readers into Spectators'* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

Alex Cooper is a graduate of University College London and holds an MA from Oxford.

Richard Cooper is a Tutorial Fellow at Brasenose College and a Professor of French at the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages of the University of Oxford. His research interests are French Renaissance literature, the relations between France and Italy in the Renaissance, Court Festivals, Renaissance antiquarians, Renaissance manuscript painting. His publications include *Rabelais et l'Italie*, Etudes rabelaisiennes 24 (Geneva: Droz, 1991); *Litteræ in tempore belli: Etudes sur les relations littéraires italo-françaises pendant les guerres d'Italie* (Geneva: Droz, 1997); and an edition of Maurice Scève's *The Entry of Henri II into Lyon, September 1548* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997).

Jane E. Everson is Professor of Italian Literature at Royal Holloway (University of London). She is the author of *The Italian Romance Epic in the Age of Humanism: The Matter of Italy and the World of Rome* (Oxford University Press, 2001) and *Bibliografia del Mambriano di Francesco Cieco da Ferrara* (Alessandria, 1994). She has co-

edited *Writers and Performers in Italian Drama from the Time of Dante to Pirandello* (Lewiston and Lampeter, 1991), *Scenes of Change: Studies in Cultural Transition* (Pisa, 1996) and *Culture in Crisis: Italy in the 1490s* (Oxford, Legenda, 2000).

Nick Havely is Professor of English and Related Literature at the University of York. His main interests are in late medieval literature (Dante, Boccaccio, Chaucer and fourteenth-century Italian, French and English literature) and in English–Italian literary relations. He has produced scholarly editions and studies of Chaucer, including *Chaucer's Boccaccio: Sources for Troilus and the Knight's and Franklin's Tales* (1980; reissued 1992). His work on Italian literature includes *Dante's Modern Afterlife: Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney* (1998) and a monograph on *Dante and the Franciscans: Poverty and the Papacy in the 'Commedia'* (2004). His current work includes the *Dante* volume in the Blackwell 'Guides to Literature' (2007) and a study of *Dante in the English-speaking World from the Fourteenth Century to the Present*.

Amilcare A. Iannucci is Professor of Comparative Literature at the Centre for Medieval Studies, and Director of the Humanities Centre at Toronto University. He is the author of *Forma ed evento nella Divina Commedia* (1984) and more than 80 scholarly articles. He is one of the founding editors of the journal *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, the editor of the 'Major Italian Authors' series at the University of Toronto Press, and one of the associate editors of the *Dante Encyclopedia* (2000). He has also edited the following books: *McLuhan e la metamorfosi dell'uomo* (1984), *Dante Today* (1989), *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle* (1990), *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (1992), *Dante e la 'bella scola' della poesia: autorità e sfida poetica* (1993), *Italian Studies in North America* (1994), *Dante: Contemporary Perspectives* (1997) and *Dante, Cinema and Television* (2004).

Rachel Owen completed a Ph.D. at Royal Holloway researching Dante's reception by illustrators of the *Commedia*. She teaches history of art and Dante studies on programmes for visiting students at Oxford University. She also works as a fine-art printmaker, exhibiting her work in galleries across the UK and in Europe.

Giuliana Pieri is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Italian at Royal Holloway (University of London). A graduate from Pavia University, Giuliana Pieri went on to take an MA in History and Theory of Art at the University of Kent and a D.Phil. in Italian Literature at the University of Oxford on the Pre-Raphaelites' influence on D'Annunzio's writings. Her research interests are the interrelationship between art and literature in the nineteenth and twentieth century, Anglo-Italian cultural and artistic relations and Italian crime fiction. She has published on the reception of the Pre-Raphaelites and Aestheticism and is the author of the monograph *The Influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Fin-de-Siècle Italy: Art, Beauty and Culture*, MHRA Texts and Dissertations, 65 (Oxford: MHRA Texts, 2007).

Maria Ann Roglieri is Professor of Foreign Languages at St Aquinas College, Sparkill, NY. She holds an A.M. and a Ph.D., both from Harvard University, and an A.B. from Columbia University. She is a violinist and the author of several articles on

Dante and music as well as the monograph *Dante and Music: Musical Adaptations of the Commedia from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (Ashgate, 2001).

Ilaria Schiaffini is a tenured Research Fellow in the Art History Department at the 'Gabriele D'Annunzio' University at Chieti. She holds degrees from the Universities of Rome 'La Sapienza', Siena and Padua. She has published articles on Paul Klee, Salvador Dalí and Italian Futurism, and the monograph *Umberto Boccioni: Stati d'Animo. Teoria e Pittura* (Milan, 2002). She teaches history of photography and history of contemporary art theories. Besides her academic interests, she is the founder of the co-operative 'Informadarte', which brings contemporary art into secondary schools and organises museum visits and workshops with contemporary artists. In addition, Schiaffini is a video artist specialised in installations for contemporary music concerts.

Christopher Wagstaff is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Italian Studies at the University of Reading. His interests include Futurist art and literature, and the media in twentieth-century Italy. His principal area of expertise is the cinema industry in Italy, on which he has lectured and published extensively, both in this country and abroad. He is at present working on a study of post-war Italian cinema.

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Throughout the volume, Dante's *Commedia* is quoted from *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi (Milan: Mondadori, 1966–67). Where not otherwise stated, all translations from Dante are taken from *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, trans. by John D. Sinclair (London: Bodley Head, 1948).

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Introduction

Antonella Braida and Luisa Calè

> This divine work is not plastic, not picturesque, not musical, but all of these at once and in accordant harmony. It is not dramatic, not epic, not lyric, but a peculiar, unique, and unexampled mingling of all these.
>
> F. W. J. Schelling (1802–03)

Discussion of the mixed genres of Dante's *Commedia* is as old as the *Commedia* itself, ranging from Dante's own statements about its language, style and 'polysemous' mode of signification to Renaissance debates informed by the revival of Aristotle's *Poetics*.[1] In Friedrich Schlegel's Jena journal *Athenäum* (1798) Dante appears with Shakespeare and Goethe as the centre of Romantic art, a 'progressive universal poetry' which reunites all genres. What makes Dante the first of the moderns or the first 'Romantic' is the fact that the *Commedia* embodies 'the work of art as an organic process and structure', a medium that reflects upon its process of production, a poem in the making as much as a finished product, at once poetry and *poiesis*.[2] In the *Athenäum* fragments Dante became a source of inspiration for an avant-garde group aiming to fuse criticism and art practice. In another issue of the journal Schlegel reviewed John Flaxman's illustrations of Dante.[3] Much as the reception of Dante in the *Athenäum* went beyond the boundaries of literary form, so too did F. W. J. Schelling perceive Dante's poem as plastic, picturesque, musical and dramatic. His critical response was therefore as much a response to the poem's form as to its actual and potential adaptations into other media. Readings, adaptations and re-creations of Dante in and through other media are the subject of this book.

Dante and Comparative Studies

In *A Defence of Poetry* (1821) Percy Bysshe Shelley argued that Dante 'unites the modern and the ancient world' and is 'the first awakener of entranced Europe'.[4] Dante's *Commedia* is central to the emergence of comparative studies, from the early Romantic formulation of a 'universal education', 'universal poetry' or *Weltliteratur*

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[1] On the reception of *Commedia* during Dante's lifetime, see Michael Caesar, ed., *Dante: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 89–108; on the role of Aristotle's *Poetics*, see Caesar's introduction in ibid., pp. 279–92; for F. W. J. Schelling's 1802–03 lecture 'Dante in philosophischer Beziehung', trans. by H. W. Longfellow and published in *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri* (Boston, 1867), see p. 419.

[2] 'Fragmente', nos 116, 238, 247, *Athenäum* (1798), in Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 31–2, 50–51, 52.

[3] [Friedrich Schlegel], 'Über Zeichnungen zu Gedichten und John Flaxmans Umrisse', *Athenäum*, 2 (1799), 193–246.

[4] P. B. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), in *Dante: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 469–70.

to the birth of Comparative Literature as a discipline. In the absence of a German nation, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe thought that German authors would find a collective identity in *Weltliteratur*, which for him was nothing other than European literature, going from Homer through Dante and Shakespeare to Goethe himself.[5] Admittedly, Dante's use of the vulgar tongue was due to the political choice of a more local audience as opposed to the more cosmopolitan pan-European Latin. In the nineteenth century, the choice of a linguistic community that anticipated national unification was crucial to the ideological uses of Dante in the Italian Risorgimento. While locally Dante functioned as a national icon, his work could also appeal as the artistic symbol needed to rise above and against national interest. For instance, Goethe's cosmopolitan ideal resurfaced as a model which could help restore European culture reduced to ruins after the world wars. Ernst Robert Curtius argued for a European citizenship of the republic of letters: 'Europe is merely a name, "a geographical term" (as Metternich said of Italy), if it is not a historical entity in our perception'. Yet the cultural unity which Curtius identified in Dante and the Latin Middle Ages needed to be reclaimed from the national traditions and national curricula, which had 'dismembered' Europe into 'geographical fragments', for 'European literature is an "intelligible unit", which disappears from view when it is cut into pieces'.[6]

Recent studies on Dante's reception still tend to geographical fragmentation, for they limit their focus to the transfer of Dante's text into target national cultures.[7] But the circulation of Dante cuts across neat geographical and linguistic boundaries. Indeed, the forms of transmission and adaptation of Dante's *Commedia* have much to do with movements and encounters of texts and people within and beyond Italy as well as with cosmopolitan communities, disciplines and practices. The essays in this volume locate Dante's poem in the vernacular traditions of thirteenth-century Italian

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[5] J. W. Goethe's statements on *Weltliteratur* (1827–30) are anthologised in Fritz Strich, *Goethe und die Weltliteratur* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1946), pp. 397–400.

[6] E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by W. R. Trask (New York: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 6, 12, 14, first published in German in 1948 and translated into English in 1953.

[7] Paget Toynbee, 'Dante in English Art', *Times Literary Supplement*, 873 (10 October 1918), pp. 483–4; id., *Dante in English Art*, thirty-eighth annual report of the Dante Society (Boston: Dante Society, 1921); Steve Ellis, *Dante and English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Ralph Pite, *The Circle of Our Vision: Dante's Presence in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Alison Milbank, *Dante and the Victorians* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Antonella Braida, *Dante and the Romantics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004), Eric Griffiths and Matthew Reynolds, eds, *Dante in English* (London: Penguin, 2005). The collected volumes *Dante Metamorphoses: Episodes in a Literary Afterlife* (ed. by Eric Haywood [Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003]) and *Dante's Modern Afterlife* (ed. by Nick Havely [Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998]) focus on episodes in the Italian and English language reception. For the French reception, see Michael Pitwood, *Dante and the French Romantics* (Geneva: Droz, 1985), and Marc Scialom, 'Le thème du livre dans les adaptations théâtrales de Dante en France au XIXe siècle', in *Les Innovations théâtrales et musicales italiennes en Europe aux XVIII et XIX siècles*, Actes du 3 Congrès International Paris, C.N.R.S. – Sorbonne, 28–31 May 1986 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), pp. 237–51.

cities (Peter Armour, Rachel Owen), and then show how Dante's text is translated into a cosmopolitan idiom developed by foreign artists in Rome and brought back to France, England, Germany and Scotland (Nick Havely). Richard Cooper, Giuliana Pieri and Antonella Braida follow the nationalist appropriation of Dante in the Risorgimento. Yet Dante also serves a subsequent cosmopolitan reaction against the nation, which takes the shape of a stylistic innovation drawing on foreign models such as the Pre-Raphaelites studied by Giuliana Pieri. In the 1950s the Italian secretary of education contacted Salvador Dalí for an illustrated edition to mark the 1965 Dante centenary, but protectionist objections hampered the process, so that Dalí eventually opted for French publishers, as Ilaria Schiaffini shows.

The tension between local, national and transnational culture is at the centre of the comparative enterprise, born as it was from the displacement of Jewish exiles and 'European intellectuals fleeing "totalitarian regimes"' and their construction of a transnational and cosmopolitan cultural identity.[8] For Goethe, writing after the Napoleonic wars, *Weltliteratur* identifies a common heritage by rising above the differences within and between nations.[9] If such a position was appealing in the aftermath of the world wars, Erich Auerbach's 'Philologie der Weltliteratur' is a response to a new balance of powers. Under the homogenising supranational hegemony of the American and Soviet blocs, Goethe's cosmopolitan notion of *Weltliteratur* came to embody the danger of standardisation in a world which was shrinking and losing particularity. In Auerbach's hands, then, the task of the philology of world literature is not to rise above particularities, but rather to celebrate linguistic multiplicity and to recuperate the specific traditions of cultural forms.[10] This concern with the forms in which culture is transmitted and transformed also characterised the approach to the arts pioneered by Aby Warburg, to whom Curtius had dedicated *European Literature and Latin Middle Ages*. In the work of Warburg, Erwin Panofsky and their school, Jacob Burckhardt's cultural history turned into a history of styles, mental habits and the relationship between the arts rather than an abstracted organic concept such as *Volksgeist* or *Zeitgeist*.[11]

Dante on View: The Reception of Dante in the Visual and Performing Arts takes the *Commedia* beyond the precincts of the literary. Reception theory argues that texts come to life in the performance of readers. For Wolfgang Iser, such a performance is anticipated and shaped by the figure of the 'implied' or potential reader inscribed in the text. For Hans Robert Jauss, readers and their 'horizon of expectations' define the historical conditions in which a text is received. The focus on the reader questions the boundaries between media, because it places the literary in the continuum of the reader's cultural experiences. Peter Armour's contribution to this volume builds on

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[8] George Steiner, 'What Is Comparative Literature?' (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 7; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 3, 8.

[9] Goethe, Letter to Boisserée (12 October 1827), in Strich, *Goethe und die Weltliteratur*, p. 398.

[10] Erich Auerbach, 'Philologie der Weltliteratur', in *Weltliteratur: Festgabe für Fritz Strich zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. by Walter Muschg and Emil Staiger (Bern: Francke, 1952), pp. 39–50.

[11] Ernst Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 1–2, 25–8.

Auerbach's essay on Dante's apostrophes to the reader by situating them within a culture of performance that blurs the distinction between the *Commedia* and theatrical entertainments.[12] As a result, the *Commedia* itself becomes a text to be performed.

The visual reception of Dante is an increasingly expanding field of enquiry. In *Dante and the Romantics* Braida points out that Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Ugolino*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1769, marks a crucial moment in the reception of Dante in Britain.[13] Ralph Pite's *In the Circle of Our Vision* includes a chapter on 'illustrating Dante', in which he points out analogies between illustrations and commentaries of Dante's *Commedia*. In the 1970s Sarah Symmons worked on the European circulation of John Flaxman's illustrations from Dante and their reception. Reviews by Goethe and Schlegel were read not only in Germany, but also in England, testifying to a European Romantic community. In Flaxman's outlines artists found a simple idiom that could mediate antique forms for the use of the moderns.[14]

Speaking against disciplinary enclaves, Ernst Gombrich argued that 'the so-called "disciplines" on which our academic organisation is founded are no more than techniques'.[15] *Dante on View* calls for a variety of different 'techniques' of analysis bringing together scholars across different disciplines. The study of the visual reception of a literary text inevitably draws on the iconographical method of the Warburg School with its focus on the stories and styles that convey 'meaning in the visual arts', as Erwin Panofsky put it.[16] Yet to turn to literary sources in search for meaning means to separate 'questions of meaning from questions of representation', or rather to avoid the question of the visual medium altogether.[17] Hence the tendency to defend the borders of disciplines by appealing to medium specificity. For the need to convey such a meaning through a linguistic message or the 'relay of language' might consign images to the 'imperialism of language'.[18] If Panofsky was termed 'the Saussure of Art History', Roland Barthes's semiotics gave even more prominence to

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[12] Erich Auerbach, 'Dante's Addresses to the Reader', *Romance Philology*, 7 (1953–54), 268–78.

[13] Braida, *Dante and the Romantics*, pp. 21–3.

[14] Pite, *In the Circle of Our Vision*, pp. 39–67; Sarah Symmons, 'John Flaxman and Francisco Goya: Infernos Transcribed', *The Burlington Magazine*, 113 (1971), 508–12; Id., 'French Copies after Flaxman's Outlines', *The Burlington Magazine*, 115 (September 1973), 591–99; Id., 'J.A.D. Ingres: The Apotheosis of Flaxman', *The Burlington Magazine*, 121 (November 1979), 721–5. For the modern need for a transcendental perspective on antiquity, see Schlegel's fragment no. 271, in *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 56.

[15] Gombrich, *In Search of Cultural History*, p. 46.

[16] See Erwin Panofsky, 'Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art', *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955).

[17] Svetlana Alpers, 'Interpretation without Representation, or, the Viewing of Las Meninas', *Representations*, 1 (February 1983), 30–42, at pp. 33–4.

[18] On the imperialism of language, see W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 43 and E. B. Gilman, 'Interart Studies and the "Imperialism of Language"', *Poetics Today*, 10 (1989), 5–30; on the linguistic turn, see Richard Rorty, ed., *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967); see also, by way of contrast, W. J. T. Mitchell's discussion of the subsequent 'pictorial turn' in *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 11–34.

the linguistic paradigm than did the founder of linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure: 'linguistics is not a part of the general science of signs, even a privileged part, it is semiology which is a part of linguistics'.[19] Indeed, Barthes's translinguistics takes the shape of a descriptive meta-language that anchors the uncertainty of visual signs to a linguistic message.

Literary scholars have analysed Dante adaptations as 'transfers of meaning', 'correspondences' between sign systems, 'intersemiotic translations'.[20] But to study the visual reception means more than to trace such an act of translation from one medium to another, and to secure such media to the tools of discrete disciplines. Combining narratology with art history, Nick Havely investigates the disappearance of Gianciotto from pictures of Paolo and Francesca, uncovers revealing visual palimpsests, and reconstructs the figure of the jealous husband progressively cut out of the frame by the successive restorations of a picture. Furthermore, the modes of visual representation of the verbal text may also question the autonomy of media. For instance, in this volume Pieri writes about Rossetti's 'iconotext', a 'co-presence of words and images' within a verbal or visual medium.[21] But is Dante's *Commedia* the meaning of Dante in pictures, film and TV? Marshall McLuhan, the father of media studies, argues that 'the "content" of any medium is always another medium'.[22] By this token, bringing Dante on view is first a way of representing a literary text, but may also be the occasion to represent other media. Jane Everson suggests that Dante in painting and prints shapes Dante ballets. Besides such iconographical work there are cases in which a medium is ostentatiously represented in another, witness the use of Gustave Doré's prints in Bertolini and Padovan's film *Inferno* (1911), or Tom Phillips's use of Laurel and Hardy to foreground a comic dimension in the relationship between Dante and Virgilio. To transfer the two comic actors in the illustration in the form of frames within a film reel means to emphasise the medium specificity of cinema as a material support. On the other hand, a representation can elide the difference between the media it remediates. The fluid transmutation of a bronze bust of Dante into the face of actor Bob Peck in Phillips and Greenaway's *A TV Dante* alludes to the interchangeability or convergence of media in the digital age.

Dante's polysemy is an ideal ground for experimenting on the relationship between the arts in practice as much as in theory. Nor are practices separate from theories. In his seminal essay 'Figura' Auerbach analysed Dante's polysemy as a juxtaposition of separate figures.[23] Dante himself transposed the idea that Old Testament types announced their New Testament antitypes to the relationship

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[19] Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Cape, 1967), p. 11; Compare Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), p. 68.

[20] Roman Jakobson, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation', *Selected Writings* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1962–88), II, 260–66.

[21] See Peter Wagner, 'Introduction: Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality – The State(s) of the Art(s)', in *Icons – Texts – Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*, ed. by Peter Wagner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 15–16.

[22] See Marshall McLuhan, 'The Medium Is the Message', *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 1964 and 2002), p. 8.

[23] Erich Auerbach, 'Figura', *Archivum Romanicum*, 22 (October–December 1938), 436–89.

between artists. Owen's essay in this volume traces the emergence of the figure of the poet from Everyman to individual artist, laying the ground for later artists to identify as antitypes of Dante and to turn the *Commedia* into a container for new portraits of the artist. Dante's *Commedia* itself becomes a 'type' for new textual 'antitypes'. For instance, Salvador Dalí's illustrations use Dante to express a personal poetics based on the encounter between Surrealism and psychoanalysis. On the other hand, iconography and semiotics shape Phillips's interartistic interpretation of polysemy. Finally, Christopher Wagstaff's study reveals how film went hand in hand with the interpretation of Dante, for at the time of *neorealismo* Dante was perceived as realist, just as post-war Italian film-makers were inspired by Dante to invent a filmic form of 'plurilinguismo' and 'stilnovismo'.

In the following paragraphs, we will outline the sections of this volume, which is divided into performances, pictures and films.

Dante on Stage: Plays, Ballets and Music

Dante's links with the medieval theatrical tradition have only received minor attention so far. In a groundbreaking essay, Umberto Bosco first investigated Dante's use of lower and popular art forms such as the *laude*, the *contrasti* of religious inspiration or liturgical drama.[24] Bosco's suggestion that the *Commedia* should be read as a hybrid genre has been recently followed up by Zygmunt Baranski and Amilcare Iannucci.[25] Baranski explored the puzzling question of Dante's debt to the Latin comic tradition and its relevance to the understanding of the genre of the *Commedia*.[26] Indeed the poem, as Iannucci has pointed out, is a 'readerly' text that challenges the reader to assist the poet in creating a unique visual and spiritual experience out of his poetry.[27] For Baranski, at the centre of Dante's experimentation lies his dissatisfaction with the contemporary approach to literary genres, or 'genera dicendi'. Often associated with particular groups of texts, especially tragedy and comedy, these required a strict correspondence between subject matter and style. According to Baranski, 'it was against [their] perceived constraints that Dante directed so much of his energy when

[24] Umberto Bosco, 'Dante e il teatro medievale', *Studi Filologici, Letterari e storici in memoria di Guido Favati* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1977), pp. 135–47. According to Bosco, the poet was thus closer to Boccaccio and the Renaissance than is often asserted.

[25] Zygmunt Baranski, 'Dante e la tradizione comica latina', *Dante e la 'Bella Scola' della poesia*, ed. by Amilcare Iannucci (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), pp. 225–45; Peter Armour, 'Comedy and the Origins of Italian Theatre around the Time of Dante', in *Writers and Performers in Italian Drama from the Time of Dante to Pirandello*, *Essays in Honour of G. H. McWilliam*, ed. by Julie R. Dashwood and Jane E. Everson, Studies in Theatre Arts I (Lewiston, Queenstown & Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), pp. 1–32; Amilcare Iannucci, 'Dramatic Arts', *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Richard Lansing (New York & London: Garland, 2000), pp. 319–24; 'Dante's Theory of Genres and the *Divina Commedia*', *Dante Studies*, 91 (1973), 1–25.

[26] 'Dante e la tradizione comica latina', *Dante e la 'Bella Scola' della poesia*, ed. by Amilcare Iannucci (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), pp. 225–45.

[27] See especially Amilcare Iannucci, 'Dramatic Arts', *The Dante Encyclopedia*, pp. 319–24.

he composed the *Commedia*'.[28] The result is a poem that not only blurs the medieval distinction between genres, but one that defies any univocal differentiation between art forms. In *Purgatorio*, for example, Dante introduces ekphrasis to narrate biblical history (*Purg.* XII) and to render the other-worldliness of God's 'visibile parlare' (*Purg.* X). In *Paradiso*, he proceeds to translate his vision into colours, light and music. While these have been addressed as the classical *loci* of Dante's experiments with the arts, his links with medieval theatre are still far from unanimously and comprehensively assessed. Yet Iannucci claims that theatricality is pervasive in the *Commedia*: 'Dante's *poema sacro* unfolds like a *sacra rappresentazione* modelled on the "comic" structure of Christian history seen as providential drama'.[29]

This volume pursues this line of investigation with Peter Amour's exploration of Dante's debt to the revival of scripted and performed theatre in medieval Italy. Armour explores the link between the inherent dramatic quality of the poem and its early reception. Armour speculates that the oral transmission of the poem almost certainly began with its recitation by Dante himself. He thus situates the 'orality' of the poem within the medieval approach to poetry as 'sung' or spoken word. While the *Commedia* was certainly designed as a text to be read by a single 'lettor', as Dante makes clear on several occasions, Armour identifies its parallel function as a text to be heard by an audience in public recitations and readings. It is perhaps this theatricality that the first readers appreciated in the poem. Having lost any means of assessing this early reception, one can only try to reconstruct it from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante* or fictional accounts such as Franco Sacchetti's *Il Trecentonovelle*.[30] This appreciation of the poem as an oral narrative helps to explain why this text has been extremely productive in the performing arts, whether one refers to recitals or to actual performances of the poem.

Richard Cooper's contribution investigates the tradition of theatrical performances based on Dante's life and his work. Recitals of the *Commedia* are a typically Italian phenomenon (embracing actors such as Adelaide Ristori, Tommaso Salvini and, more recently, Vittorio Gassman). Yet Cooper shows the national and cosmopolitan aspects of Dante on stage starting with the 'Dantate' performed by the Carbonaro Gustavo Modena exiled in London. Plays based on the life of Dante or on individual characters became a European fashion by the middle of the nineteenth century. Early approaches to the subject by the critics Carlo Del Balzo, Isidoro del Lungo and Cesare Levi dismissed this tradition on aesthetic grounds and welcomed the

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[28] Zygmunt G. Baranski, '"Tres enim sunt manerie dicendi …": Some Observations on Medieval Literature, "Genre", and Dante', *The Italianist*, 15 (1995), Supplement 2, ed. by Zygmunt G. Baranski, 23.

[29] 'Dante's Theory of Genres and the *Divina Commedia*', p. 3.

[30] See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, ed. by Giorgio Padoan (Milan: Mondadori, 1965), pp. 5–6. Boccaccio's text was written in response to a commission to read Dante to a general public in Florence in 1373–74; although the manuscript had some circulation, it was first published in 1724. Boccaccio's readings are celebrated in Franco Sacchetti's poem 'Or è mancata ogni poesia', which he composed to honour Boccaccio's death. In his short stories, Sacchetti went on to recreate the oral transmission of Dante's *Commedia* during the poet's lifetime: see Franco Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle*, ed. by Valerio Marucci (Rome: Salerno editrice, 1996), nos 114–15, pp. 345–50.

move to an exclusively scholarly and literary approach to Dante.[31] A reassessment of performances based on Dante began only in the second half of the twentieth century with Beatrice Corrigan's 'Dante and Italian Theater: A Study in Dramatic Fashions' (1971). Although she identifies Dante's influence on Italian theatre from the Renaissance to Orazio Costa's 1966 production of the *Commedia*, her approach is still mainly focused on Italy.[32] Marc Scialom's *Le Thème du livre dans les adaptations théâtrales de Dante en France au XIXe siècle* (1991) has extended the analysis to the French performances.[33] Cooper's contribution complements both studies by exploring Dante's text in performance across Italy and Europe. In addition to the politically sensitive performances in pre-unification Italy, Cooper explores the cosmopolitan circulation of Dante's text. Consider the British author Heloïse Durand Rose, the founder of the Dante League of America, who wrote a theatrical adaptation of Dante for the Italian actor Ermete Novelli, but at the same time dedicated it to the American poet and Dante translator Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Francis Marion Crawford, an American novelist resident in Italy, was approached by Sarah Bernhardt. As the *Commedia* becomes a reservoir for roles for actors, plays toured Italy and France as well as Britain. Cooper's essay concludes with the two most influential examples of the genre: Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Francesca da Rimini* (1901) and Victorien Sardou's *Dante* (1903).

Music and ballet are an important dimension of the theatrical treatment of Dante. Composers' interest in Dante significantly covers the period that saw the development of his theatrical fame: the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The reasons for composers' interest in the poet are diverse. In Germany and Russia the literary search for a contamination between poetry and music was already well established by the 1820s. Conversely, music was turning towards narrative and theatricality. The inspiration and adaptation of literary forms into narrative music is exemplified by Franz Liszt's long-term interest in Dante and Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky's *Francesca da*

[31] Carlo Del Balzo, *Poesie di mille autori intorno a Dante Alighieri*, 15 vols (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1889–1909); Isidoro del Lungo, 'Medio evo dantesco sul teatro', *Nuova Antologia* (1 March 1902), pp. 23–31; Cesare Levi, 'Le sfortune di Dante sul teatro', *Il Marzocco* (19 September 1920); 'Dante Dramatis Persona', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 79 (1921), 123–66. For a study and bibliography of Dante in the theatre, see also Mario Ferrigni, 'Dante e il teatro', *Annali del teatro italiano*, I (1901–20), 1–23. The article also includes a useful bibliography.

[32] *Dante Studies*, 89 (1971), 93–105

[33] Marc Scialom, *Les Innovations théâtrales et musicales italiennes en Europe aux XVIII et XIX siècles*, Actes du 3 Congrès International Paris, C.N.R.S. Sorbonne, 28–31 May 1986 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), pp. 237–51. French adaptations perpetuate the medieval perception of the significance of the poet, often assumed to the role of the biblical scribe, now placed on stage side by side his own fictional creations: 'Nous avons tenté de mettre en évidence, dans ces adaptations, la fonction dramatique d'un thème clef, celui du livre rédigé et lu à haute voix (symbole du livre adapté), tour à tour envisagé sous deux apparences: tantôt Divina Commedia – et il assure alors l'interaction des thèmes de l'écrivain et de son oeuvre –, tantôt roman arthurien – et il suscite le dialogue de la littérature et du réel, c'est-à-dire, plus obscurément, du mythe de Dante lui-même et de sa représentation théâtrale', Scialom, p. 251.

Rimini (1876).[34] Putting into music Dante's *Paradiso* is the hardest challenge. Maria Ann Roglieri's approach is truly interdisciplinary as she investigates the narrative and visual potential of *Paradiso* from the standpoint of musical genres. According to Roglieri, the sudden burst of musical compositions inspired by the last *cantica* coincides with the development of new musical techniques, forms and instruments capable of overcoming the intrinsic challenges of Dante's *Paradiso*. Her analysis singles out two main aspects in successful twentieth- and twenty-first-century musical adaptations of *Paradiso*: the use of words and the employment of new instruments such as electronic tape and hyperinstruments. The musical medium thus emphasises the linguistic and multimedial nature of Dante's paradisiacal experience as one that rests solely on the artist's ability to recount the supernatural.

While Roglieri also mentions composers' occasional use of ballet to represent Dante's own use of dance in *Paradiso*, Jane Everson's contribution analyses a ballet that has shown resilience and generated interest both as an interpretation and as a modern 'translation' of *Inferno*. Devised shortly after the outbreak of World War II, Frederick Ashton's ballet *Dante Sonata* was performed twice in 1940 and 1946 and then revived in Britain in autumn 2000. Ashton's ballet perceives and adapts the *Commedia* through the horror of war and the invasion of Poland in particular. Everson's unprecedented study analyses the ballet as a true composite art: mise en scène, scenery, costumes and music create an artistic experience that is only apparently at variance with Dante's text. Like recent and less recent adaptations of Dante for the stage or for film, artists, playwrights and choreographers often rely on earlier adaptations or illustrations of the poet. As Everson points out, the visual idiom that shapes the performance can be traced back to John Flaxman's illustrations to Dante's *Commedia*. Yet this mediating influence does not substitute Dante's own descriptions. In fact, Everson identifies aspects of the choreography that depend on direct readings of *Inferno*. For instance, some of the whirling movements of the ballet depend on the flow of Dante's words rather than the frozen images of movement that could be found in the illustrations.

Dante in the Visual Arts

The visuality of the *Commedia* was a quality perceived by its first readers. In fact, early illuminated manuscripts of the *Commedia* centre on Dante as much as his poem.

As is the case for performances based on the poem, readers have been equally interested in the image of Dante as poet and pilgrim, character and narrator. These associations have established a visual metonymy in which the poet and his work replace and evoke each other. Dante and his poem have generated a striking abundance

[34] See Franz Liszt's *Paralipomènes à la Divina Commedia* (1839) and his *Dante Symphony* (1856). On Tchaikovsky, see Catherine Coppola, 'The Elusive Fantasy: Genre, Form and Program in Tchaikovsky's *Francesca da Rimini*', *Nineteenth-century Music*, 22:2 (Autumn 1998), 169–89. See also the excellent discussion by Leo Botstein, http://www.americansymphony.org/dialogues, accessed on 2 April 2004.

and variety of images, as Valerio Mariani and Jean-Pierre Barricelli point out.[35] Rachel Owen follows Dante the pilgrim and Dante the poet in fourteenth-century manuscript illuminations. These earliest images of the poet date from the time of his death to Botticelli's illustrations at the end of the fifteenth century. Initially dismissed for the approximate representation of Dante's features, this early tradition is now being reconsidered. Owen argues that a preoccupation with the pilgrim's narrative is a result of a genuine response to the text, but the visual forms chosen to represent the poet in these manuscripts must be retraced to illustrations of the scribe/prophet in illuminations of the Bible. While the early images are generic figurations of Dante as Everyman, a physiognomy of Dante as an individual emerges only later. The identification between Dante the poet and his work coincides with the development of the new Renaissance interest in the individuality of the author, now progressively freed from the medieval subservience to *auctoritates*, ideology and religion.

In the European visual reception of the *Commedia* two cantos and two characters soon prevailed over all others: Ugolino (*Inf.* XXXIII) and Francesca da Rimini (*Inf.* V). In Britain, in particular, the widespread interest in these two characters coincides with the development of the aesthetic of the sublime and the beautiful theorised by Edmund Burke.[36] Readers, translators and painters subject Dante, like Milton, to a process of anthological selection in the search for the terrible and the sublime and often find them in both or either episode.[37] Nick Havely reassesses the origins and evolution of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artistic approaches to *Inferno* V. As Havely points out, illustrators typically approach the episode of Francesca in conjunction with Boccaccio's retelling of the same story in his *Esposizioni*, as well as with the chivalric romances of Lancelot du Lac or Tristan mentioned in the text. Boccaccio's voyeuristic approach seems to prevail in the numerous illustrations by Henry Fuseli, John Flaxman, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, Eugène Delacroix and William Dyce, despite their different treatment of the tragic outcome. As Havely shows, in some cases the lovers are shown surprised, attacked or dead; in others, the moment chosen is the one in which the vengeful husband is observing them (like the viewer of the painting). More complex treatments, such as those by Delacroix and Dyce, further emphasise the viewer's experience as witness or voyeur.

The important role Britain played as the springboard for the European reception of Dante is particularly evident in the nineteenth century. Giuliana Pieri's contribution identifies the links between the Pre-Raphaelite movement, its reception and the re-evaluation of Dante in Italy. The Pre-Raphaelites found in Dante the central figure for their rediscovery of the Middle Ages thanks to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's translation of *Vita nuova* and his unprecedented expertise on Dante more generally. Pieri's study

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[35] Jean-Pierre Barricelli, *Dante's Vision and the Artist* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993); Valerio Mariani, 'Illustrazioni', in *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, 6 vols (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970–78), II, 115–18.

[36] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. by James T. Boulton (London: Routledge, 1958).

[37] Ugolino's episode was the first to attract the interest of readers and illustrators; *Inferno* V became increasingly popular towards of the end of the eighteenth century. The two episodes are significantly coupled together in Henry Constantine Jennings's translation, printed privately in 1794 (reissued in 1798).