

DENNIS LOONEY

**GIVING DANTE A VOICE***Introduction*

William Michael Harnett's *Still Life with Bust of Dante*

In the midst of Dante-mania, the most popular painter of still lifes in the United States in the nineteenth century, William Michael Harnett (1848-1892), created an ensemble in 1883 that calls attention to Dante.<sup>1</sup> Since Harnett is reported to have said of his art, “I endeavor to make the composition tell a story,” it behooves us to unravel the picture’s

<sup>1</sup> Housed in the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, originally called “Still Life with Helmet, Books, Trumpet, and Sheet Music” and now called simply “Still Life with Bust of Dante.”

narrative.<sup>2</sup> In the middle of a tumble of books, a brass horn commands the viewer's attention with its bell directing the gaze to the knight's helmet behind it, just off and slightly left of center. The helmet suggests that some of the unidentifiable books in the pile are chivalric romances, stories of courtly love, wildly popular with readers in the nineteenth century. Mark Twain wondered if the South lost the Civil War because it had read too much Sir Walter Scott, and had taken too seriously Scott's stories of chivalry and love.<sup>3</sup> There are other books and other objects in the mix here too.

Counterpoised to the helmet in the back, right of center is the top portion of a large bust of Dante crowned with laurel leaves. The poet's mouth, interestingly, is eclipsed in the picture. But even without the mouth, it is a recognizable image. From the late eighteenth century into the early twentieth, there was an extensive market for representations of Dante – statues, busts, medallions, as well as paintings, prints, engravings – large and small, durable and ephemeral, fine art and kitsch, bought by travelers on the Grand Tour across Europe. Harnett, an Irish immigrant who settled in New York City, catches that moment with this image. In Florence a tourist might seek out Dante's house, his church, and the very seat from which he supposedly caught sight of Beatrice. And after 1841, tourists could visit a recently-discovered image of the poet as a young man in his political prime around 1300 in the Cappella della Maddalena in the Bargello. Travelers from William Gladstone to Frederick Douglass took home replicas of Dante to commemorate their visits, which adorned their libraries.<sup>4</sup>

They also took home books, of course, and in this painting, in contrast to most of the still lives by Harnett,<sup>5</sup> we can make out the titles of two. One of the volumes is the image front left of a copy of Dante's *Commedia*, so well-read that the back cover, nearly ripped off, is literally hanging by a thread. Up close one reads on the spine in capital letters: DANTE / ALIGHIERI / ROMA / 1506. The poet's last name appears to have been difficult to paint on the book's spine and is smudged, whether intentionally or not is unclear. For the place of publication, perhaps the challenges of depicting too many letters convinced the painter to default to ROMA over what he may have intended to paint, FIRENZE, given that 1506 is the publication date of the important Florentine Giuntina,

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Robert Hughes, "A Reliable Bag of Tricks," *Time Magazine Online*, May 11, 1992: <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,975465-1,00.html>> (accessed January 9, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> See Scott Horton on Twain's take on Scott as spelled out in *Life on the Mississippi*: <<https://harpers.org/2007/07/how-walter-scott-started-the-american-civil-war/>> (accessed January 7, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> To be precise, Gladstone's family had a statue of the poet placed on the exterior wall of the library built in his honor in Hawarden, Wales. On Gladstone's cult of Dante, see Havelly 2014, 179-86; Havelly provides a helpful chronology of Dante in British culture with several pages devoted to the modernist period 284-98. On Douglass and the image of Dante in his private library, see Looney 2011, 62-63.

<sup>5</sup> "This is one of the unusual instances when Harnett actually depicted the titles of the books in his paintings. More typically, the texts appear as props for invoking a leisurely moment in a bachelor's private quarters." Martha M. Evans, *Claude Raguet Hirst: Transforming the American Still Life* 95, note 122. Also helpful is the essay by Judy L. Larson in *William M. Harnett*.

the edition by Filippo Giunta, edited by Girolamo Benivieni with a dialogue by Antonio Manetti on the topography and dimensions of hell. The famous 1506 Giuntina marked a deliberate attempt by Florentine cultural warriors to reclaim their poet after the success of the 1502 Venetian Aldine edition. If Florence couldn't have Dante's mortal remains, at least his city of birth could lay claim to the definitive text of his masterpiece.<sup>6</sup> That Harnett paints ROMA instead of FIRENZE probably shouldn't be overinterpreted; on some level it's certainly an artistic decision based on the realization that there is more space for the letters of one city's name than the other. But for onlookers attuned to the cultural debates in the Renaissance over Dante's reputation, there is a more subtle point to be had: no, not Rome, not Venice either, but Florence!

There is another juxtaposition in the heap of books to sort out. The other legible title is represented on the cover of a paper-bound volume positioned catty-corner on the edge of Dante's poem, upside down to the viewer. You can make out *Juliette*, which is the title of a scandalous novel by Marquis de Sade about the sexual education of a very young woman. *Juliette, or Vice Amply Rewarded*, is the novel for which Napoleon had Sade imprisoned for the final thirteen years of his life. One of a pair of novels, its counterpart, *Justine, or Good Conduct Well-Chastised*, is the story of a proper young woman, Juliette's sister, who follows the rules and gets nowhere. Juliette, by contrast, once introduced to libertine pleasures in the convent where she was placed at a young age, never slows down. Even her encounter with the pope, whom she debates on the paradoxes of Catholicism in the age of Enlightenment, ends in an orgy. This structural pattern is consistent in the novel: the main character speaks at great length before launching into energetic sex, that is, extensive theorizing on libertine philosophy is followed by a display – to call it pornographic is no exaggeration – of the practice previously discussed. The ultimate point that Sade intended to make is that with vice you prosper in the economy that matters most, that of pleasure.

You would think that the juxtaposition of the two authors whose titles are on display in this painting wouldn't require much commentary: Dante and Marquis de Sade, the moralist versus the libertine. In *Inferno 5*, Dante the poet condemns adulterers like Paolo and Francesca to hell for their incontinence, for their lack of self-control, which is precisely what Marquis de Sade glories in. Dante emphasizes how reading about courtly love, symbolized by the knight's helmet in Harnett's composition, leads the lovers of *Inferno 5* to their death and damnation. Like Twain's Southern readers, they took chivalric romances way too seriously.

But there is more here. Like Juliette, not to mention Marquis de Sade himself, Dante too has some bones to pick with the Church. As readers know, he doesn't refrain from assigning clerics of all ranks to the appropriate section of hell for eternal damnation, not for lust, as it turns out, but for lack of control with money, for corruption, and for any

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<sup>6</sup> For Florence's attempt at recouping the poet from Venetian culture, see <https://www3.nd.edu/~italnet/Dante/text/1506.florence.html>. Accessed January 7, 2022. For a detailed description of the edition, see Gilson, *Reading Dante in Renaissance Italy* 35-42.

number of other kinds of fraud. For speaking truth to power in this way, Dante was held up as a symbol of freedom by Italian nationalists and, through connections with them, similarly by Anglo-American abolitionists in the nineteenth century. Without too much effort one could find commonalities, surprising though they may be, between Dante's positions on the abuses of clerical authority and Sade's critique of the Church. It is difficult to determine the extent to which Harnett himself is attuned to these subtleties of interpretation. But his painting is certainly nuanced enough to allow interpretations on multiple levels that point to the polysemous quality of the reception of Dante. This still life attests to the ongoing engagement in the second half of the nineteenth century with Dante, both the political man and the poetic text of his big narrative poem.

Harnett painted dozens, if not hundreds, of still lifes, many with books on display, and the vast majority of those are copies with no titles. But one author's name is highlighted repeatedly and recurs in slightly different permutations – Dante Alighieri. In “Still Life with Tankard,” formerly in the Harriet and Mortimer Spiller Collection in Buffalo (auctioned in 1997 for a tidy \$827,500), the spine reads “Purgatorio / Divina Commedia.” In “Still Life with Flute, Vase, and Roman Lamp” (1885), in the Yale University Gallery, the painter also emphasizes Dante's second canticle but reverses the order: “Divina Commedia / Purgatorio.” A thorough inventory of Harnett's corpus would likely show other details worthy of comment. My point is that Harnett wanted his viewer to engage with Dante first and foremost, to put the poet in dialogue with other texts, to give him a voice, as it were. On the cusp of modernism, a painter of still lifes, arguably the best in America at the time, was striving to bring Dante to life. Harnett is representative of that moment in Anglo-American culture when Dante was coming into clearer focus. Modernism would move Dante from the back of the picture, as it were, to front and center and would give him a voice that would speak loud and clear to readers and to viewers of film and art inspired by the *Commedia*.

### From Harnett's Silent Dante to Modernism and Dante

Like Harnett, the readers, interpreters, translators, and artists, literary and graphic, who are discussed in the essays that make up this special issue of *CoSMO*, are devoted to Dante, and they seek to animate the medieval canonical poet, to give him a voice in their work, to find a place for him in their world. These essays contribute to the burgeoning scholarly work inspired by the 700th anniversary of Dante's death. And they do so within the unique purview of the journal itself with a sharp focus on how modernism and Dante join forces. Modernism + Dante is not a pairing that automatically comes to mind when one thinks about either of these topics in the context of their respective fields. If modernism signals a break with the past, how is it then that this canonical presence from the medieval period can figure so prominently in redefining, in reshaping, our perception and understanding of the modern? How can you make Dante new again? Here follow fourteen investigations that explore that question. The collection of essays is divided into

two sections, twelve essays with a special *Focus* on literary, critical, and historical examples on the reception of Dante in the modernist period with discussion of some key pre-modernist examples as well. The issue concludes with two bibliographical essays in *Percorsi*.

In “Dante, British Epic and Women’s Education. William Hayley’s Eighteenth-Century Appropriation of the *Commedia*,” Cosetta Gaudenzi takes us back in time to a pre-modernist moment where the focus on women’s education is strikingly modern, even ahead of its time. William Hayley’s poem, *The Triumphs of Temper* (1781), and his “Essay on Epic Poetry” (1782) make the case for the place and value of “female excellence” on the one hand and the *Commedia* as a legitimate literary model on the other. In six cantos of heroic couplets, Hayley’s *Triumphs* recounts the tale of Serena who is led by Sophrosyne on a heroic journey to hell, purgatory, and heaven. The goal of the journey is for the protagonist to learn and practice wise self-control, the definition of female excellence in this context; and the prize for achieving that goal is marriage to an appropriately wealthy and handsome suitor. Allusions to Dante’s quest abound in Hayley’s rewriting in the *Triumphs*. But it is in the “Essay on Epic Poetry,” where Hayley arguably makes his most significant contribution to the reception of Dante in the English-speaking world. After making a case for the epic qualities of Dante’s *Commedia*, Hayley provides a translation of *Inferno* 1-3 into English *terza rima*. His impressive metrical experimentation set the stage for greater poetry to come in Byron’s *Prophecy of Dante* (1821) and Shelley’s *The Triumph of Life* (1822).

Biancamaria Rizzardi surveys the extensive impact of the Italian model in “Traces of Dante in Nineteenth Century English Poetry. An Overview.” As she notes at the beginning of her essay, it is a creative tradition that reaches back to the beginnings of modern English literature, to Chaucer, with memorable interventions by Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, and continues full speed into the decades of modernism at its peak, with Joyce, Eliot, and Pound. In an early issue of *The Spectator*, in 1843, an anonymous reviewer of John Dayman’s translation of the *Inferno*, proclaimed Dante as a writer and stylist for Anglo-Saxon literary culture: “His manner is English: it is more direct, more concise, graver, than that of his countrymen in general...” By this time in the century, no reviewer had to convince any reader that Dante might be of possible interest as a literary figure. As Rizzardi reminds us, he had already been taken up by Byron, the Shelleys, Coleridge, and other Romantics, and he would be embraced by Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin, and the Victorians. An important feature of this essay is the focus on so-called female popularizers of Dante, women like Maria Francesca Rossetti, Anna Seward, Maria Christina Rossetti, Maria Oliphant, as well as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, acknowledging their work as precursors to that of women to come, such as Sylvia Plath and Louise Glück.

Paola Spinuzzi explores the links between the medieval Italian poet and one of his best-known namesakes, a poet and artist in his own right, in “Dante, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Their Verbal/Visual *Personae*.” Rossetti labored over translations of Dante, the Sicilian poets, and the poets of the Sweet New Style, who were Dante’s predecessors,

which he published in 1861: *The Early Italian Poets from Ciullo D'Alcamo to Dante Alighieri (1100-1200-1300)*. In *the Original Metres together with Dante's Vita Nuova Translated by D. G. Rossetti*. Spinozzi juxtaposes Rossetti's literary project of translation with various artistic forays that contribute to the reception of Dante among the English public (e.g. *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice, Giotto Painting the Portrait of Dante*) to suggest that the philology of Rossetti's literary work is balanced by a precise, even philological, reconstruction of scene and symbol in his figural work. The dual nature of Dante's original text with the foregrounding of visual image in its literary art make Rossetti's two-fold reception, literary and graphic, a powerful example of responding to the original.

Giovanni Bassi, in "A Turning Point. Walter Pater's Dante," examines how Pater used Dante both in his critical writings and in his fiction to define his thinking about sense perception, artistic form, and cultural history. In Pater's essay, "Style," he "mentions Dante's concern with 'the glory of God' as a perfect example of the high moral purposes that should characterise great art." Pater's familiarity with Dante extends across the entire *Commedia* and also includes the *Vita nova* and other minor works such as the *Convivio*. In fact, he participated in the resurgence of attention on Dante the love poet, inspired by the uncovering in Florence's Bargello in 1840-1841 of the youthful portrait of Dante in his prime around 1300 – the image of Dante in love that became all the rage for tourists and scholars alike, the resounding emphasis of the New Life on the poet's reception. Bassi argues that Pater's Dante was the key to understanding how later artists in the Renaissance, e.g. Botticelli and Michelangelo, fused the realms of the physical and spiritual in their art. Dante's fusion of the material and the transcendent not only inspired them as artists but also subsequently became the foundation of Pater's aesthetics.

E. M. Forster, whose love for Italian culture shimmers across his works, not surprisingly engaged seriously with Dante. But he did so in a subtle way that has not been fully unappreciated till now. In the personal inventory of his library recorded in 1941, among the general sections of his collection ("modern poetry, ancient history, American novels"), one heading stands out, "Dante, and books about him." In "I am the means and not the end'. Dante and E. M. Forster," Raffaella Antinucci documents this lifelong fascination beginning with the early lecture delivered to the Working Men's College in 1907, on Dante as our modern contemporary. Forster's grasp of the totality of Dante's work is impressive as is the skill, pedagogical and oratorical, with which he introduces the audience to the author from three perspectives: that of the individual, that of the individual's relation to government, and that of the individual's attempt at knowing the Unknowable. In this way he frames his presentation of *New Life*, *Monarchia*, and the *Commedia* for an atypical class, an audience of working class men. There is much more to Forster's Dante, including the supernatural tale, "A Celestial Omnibus" (1911), in which Dante takes the reader on a hitchhiker's guide through the universe!

In "What Dante means to me'. Dante ed Eliot fra i modernisti americani," Massimo Bacigalupo takes his cue from Eliot's reflections at the age of sixty on what Dante had meant to him from his earliest work into the 1950s, when he gave the lecture whose title

marks this essay. Eliot was invited to address the Italian Institute of London on July 4, 1950, two years after receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature. He had been living with Dante, as he recounts for over forty years, first in translation and then in the original, on the page and in his memory. From the 1920s on, especially in the wake of the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922 (with Pound's extensive revisions), Eliot's Dante became the canonical Dante for Anglo-American modernism. More than any other literary figure, Eliot introduced readers to Dante, from the disgust of infernal vice to the sublime visions of heavenly bliss. Bacigalupo points to the influence of Dante in shaping Eliot's work across his poetic corpus, in "Prufrock," "Gerontion," "Ash Wednesday," and *The Four Quartets*, in addition to *The Waste Land*. This essay reminds us that these poems are the building blocks of Anglo-American modernism, and, to paraphrase its title, confirms that Dante means much to modernism itself.

In "A Divine Graphic Comedy. Notes on the history of Dante's adaptations in English," Elisa Fortunato tracks the history of graphic novels inspired by Dante in the Anglo-American tradition. The critic pays particular attention to the impressive collaboration of Sandow Birk and Marcus Sanders in their *Dante's Inferno* (2004) and to Seymour Chwast's graphic novel, *Dante's Divine Comedy* (2010), which up to this point is the only adaptation of Dante's poem into a book of poster design style. Fortunato situates the history of illustrated responses to Dante's visual and cinematic poem from its beginnings with the Codex Trivulziano 1080 (1337-1338), to Joshua Reynolds' depiction of *Count Ugolino and His Children in the Dungeon* from 1773, and on again to Robert Rauschenberg's transfer drawings of the *Commedia*, among others. Fortunato argues for the appropriateness of the graphic novel as a mixed hybrid genre that highlights the combination of word and image and as such it has much in common with Dante's poem itself. In more than one place the medieval poet writes a kind of graphic art into the narrative of his poem. And the critic wonders if the poem will find a renewed and extended life with a new generation of readers in this newfangled form.

Marco Fazzini explores the poetic resources Seamus Heaney has called on in the creation of his own voice with its strong local cultural accent and identity in "Delving 'Underground'. Dante, Heaney and their companions." To go underground, to descend into darkness, is to go into the Dark Wood of creation, which Heaney does, following David Jones, Geoffrey Hill, Norman MacCaig, among other poets, not to mention Dante himself. Fazzini takes the reader through various of Heaney's poems that depend on Dante at the micro level. And he reminds us that Heaney's three major volumes of poetry – *North*, *Station Island* and *Seeing Things* – recreate the canticles of Dante's *Commedia* on a macro level. Heaney's identity as a poet from Northern Ireland who had moved as a young man with his family to the Republic of Ireland created in him a sense of kinship with Dante through the perception of a mutual experience of exile. Though Heaney's displacement to the south was not exactly for political reasons on a par with Dante's actual exile, there is no question that there was a political element to it. His friend and fellow poet, Ciaran Carson, translated *Inferno* as a poem resonating with the Troubles of

Northern Ireland. And Heaney himself, as Fazzini points out, translated the Ugolino episode in a political key for prisoners.

Antonella Francini provides the definitive study of the American poet Charles Wright's lifelong devotion to Dante in "Like a medieval journeyman with his poem in his hand": *Dante's Presence in Charles Wright's Poetry*. Francini sketches out the early moments in Wright's adult life which led him to Sirmione on Lake Garda (he was stationed with the U.S. Army nearby in Verona in 1959) where he was inspired to become a poet. Publishing as recently as 2019, he has enjoyed a distinguished career as a professor of poetry; he was a winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award; and he served as the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. Early on in his engagement with Italian literary culture, he set out to read each canto of the *Commedia* over a period of three months and he succeeded. Francini shows convincingly how that apprenticeship shaped Wright's poetry, which resonates with allusions and language taken from Dante, most especially from Dante's *Purgatory*. Dante's middle canticle especially attracts Wright as a source with its poetry of moral progression, of movement onward and upward, of hope and hopefulness. And from Dante, Wright hits upon a felicitous expression for one of his most Dantesque volumes, *The Southern Cross* (1981), whose title recalls the vision of that new constellation in the opening section of Dante's *Purgatory* 1.22-24, as well as signaling Wright's own origins in rural, religious Tennessee.

Erminia Ardissino's "John Kinsella. Una poesia dantesca in chiave ecologica," leads us into and across the work of Kinsella, the Australian poet who uses Dante as a literary guide across the culture and landscape of his native land. Three large poems, a trilogy composed over the last fifteen years, take their inspiration from Dante's *Commedia*: *Divine Comedy: Journeys Through a Regional Geography* (2008); *On the Outskirts* (2017); and *Musical Dante* (2021). Kinsella's position as Professor of Literature and Sustainability at Curtin University in Western Australia signals the importance of the ecological humanities for his writing. Ardissino makes the convincing case that Kinsella takes from the Italian model not only a structure and specific allusions, not only form and content, but also an ethical tone that speaks truth to power, that in Kinsella's case speaks out for the rights of the transcendent landscape of his Western Australia. Kinsella's eco-activist voice resounds with accents drawn from a radical Dante. William Blake appears, as one might have reason to expect. But so does Louis Armstrong, who in the first part of the trilogy serves as guide (much as the musician leads Ellison's protagonist in the prologue to *Invisible Man*: "I not only entered the music but descended, like Dante, into its depths."). In Kinsella's third part of the trilogy, appropriately named "Musical," a series of poems still in the works inspired primarily by Franz Liszt's *Dante Symphony* and *Dante Sonata*, we also hear Hildegard of Bingen and The Cure. But most of all we hear the Australian sounds of this committed poet.

In "From Cocito to Avalon Via Shaft Lake. Collapsing Story Frames in 'Pictures of the Ice' by Alice Munro," Héliane Ventura provides a close reading of the short story by Munro, first published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in January, 1990. Munro takes Dante's



infernal ninth circle as a primary source of inspiration for her story of religious betrayal, modeling her story's Canadian Shaft Lake on Cocytus, the frozen pit of hell in the ninth circle. In *Linden Hills*, Gloria Naylor similarly uses the bottom of hell as the point of reference for situating the most exclusive section of the suburban development for socially mobile African Americans in the novel. Munro explores Dante's ethics of treacherous fraud in the ninth circle with characters that are refracted through two other works, John Galt's *Bogle Corbet, or The Emigrants* (1831) and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), by James Hogg, who is, it turns out, a distant relative of the author. Echoes of Byron and Tennyson are heard in Munro's multidimensional imitation of the original source. And as is often the case, one imitation of Dante is filtered through another across time and space.

In "Mary Jo Bang's *Inferno*. A Missile for Capturing Dante's Future(s)," Daniela Fargione assesses Bang's version of the first canticle, which saw the light in 2012, in the context of: recent theories of translation; the venerable tradition of rendering Dante's poem into English; and the extraordinary qualities of Dante's poem itself (its multilingualism, its vivid realism, its openness to non-literary media, its emphasis on the reader's sensory participation in the text, and more), which entice and challenge the would-be translator. Fargione follows Edwin Gentzler's theory of post-translation studies that values the translator's version as an act of radical cultural subversion rather than a mere transposition of words from one linguistic side to another. One way Bang overturns the original is to replace it with contemporary references: John Coltrane, Amy Winehouse, Bob Dylan, Woody Allen, and the Addams Family. There are also references that, although more literary and high-cultural, are equally unexpected, such as Confucius, Shakespeare, Freud, T. S. Eliot, and Sylvia Plath. Fargione weighs the impact of the illustrations of Henrik Drescher on the reader's experience of the book as object and as multi-dimensional text. Drawings accompanying *Inferno 5* call to mind the *femme fatale* of popular cinematic culture and thus encourage the reader-viewer to imagine Semiramis, Helen, Cleopatra and the rest through the lens of Disney's Cruella de Ville from *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*, who is depicted in the margin with copulating cartoon dog-humans on a leash. Fargione's essay leaves open the question of whether or not Bang's translation works; rather, the scholar asks us to reexamine what we expect and need from a translation of Dante in the first place.

The special issue concludes with a section, *Percorsi*, which contains two essays that explore archives that shed light on the reception of Dante in the Anglo-American world. These important bibliographical essays remind us of the scholars who make up our extended reading community, past and present, and of the books whose interpretations form the bonds that link us to each other and previous readers.

In 1949, in the wake of Dorothy L. Sayers' translation of the *Inferno* in *terza rima* as one of the early Penguin Classics, Dante became an unexpected best-seller in postwar Britain. Her translation sold 50,000 copies in its first year on the market! To be sure, Sayers was preceded by women translators and commentators of the late Victorian

period who were regularly dismissed as mere *dantofili*, not full-fledged *dantisti*, but it was impossible to ignore the extraordinary success of Sayers. To wit, the eminent scholar Cesare Foligno found her work on Dante far superior to that of T. S. Eliot. In “Dorothy L. Sayers and Feminist Archival Historiography in Dante Studies. (Re)discovering Female Authorship in Fin de Siècle Britain,” Federica Coluzzi explores the Dante of Sayers and surveys the literary and historical context out of which it emerged. Pointing to several previous women who worked on Dante, she makes a convincing case for the growing legitimacy “of Victorian women’s scholarly professionalism in the expanding field of Dante studies.” Archives like the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College (Illinois), which houses the collection of Dorothy Sayers (initially curated by her friend and fellow Italianist scholar Barbara Reynolds), give voice to the scholars whose works they contain; they also enable those who follow, Coluzzi first among them, to spread the word.

Ombretta Frau takes the reader on a tour of the substantive collection of two hundred items devoted to Dante at the college in New England where she has had a distinguished teaching career: “American Dante. The Valentine Giamatti Collection at Mount Holyoke College.” As she acknowledges, Val Giamatti’s reputation has long since been eclipsed by that of his son A. Bartlett Giamatti, the noted Renaissance scholar who became president of Yale University, only to leave that illustrious position to become Commissioner of Major League Baseball, not to mention that of his grandson, the accomplished actor Paul Giamatti. But the elder Giamatti has left a valuable legacy for scholars of Dante that includes some of the rarest and most treasured early printed editions of the *Commedia*, such as the first Florentine edition by Niccolò di Lorenzo della Magna published in 1481 with illustrations after Sandro Botticelli. Frau describes the collection in helpful detail and shares as well the ways in which Giamatti acquired various volumes. Although Mount Holyoke College is a much smaller institution, its Dante collection holds its own among several other esteemed collections in Dante materials at American institutions of higher learning (Cornell University, Harvard University, University of Notre Dame, and University of Pennsylvania).

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