**DSA Sponsored Panels at 2022 RSA Convention in Dublin**

**1.**

***Dottrina*: Poetics of Vernacular Learning (Part I)**

Organizer: Filippo Gianferrari (UCSC)

**Chair:**

**Helena Phillips-Robins, University of Cambridge**

**Dante and vernacular preaching: Living out the Credo in Paradiso 24**

At the culmination of Paradiso 24 Dante proclaims his vernacular version of the Creed. What does it mean to say “Io credo in uno Dio”? In Lent 1305 the popular preacher Giordano da Pisa delivered an extensive sermon cycle in which, drawing on a tradition of theological speculation that goes back to Augustine, he addressed this very question. Giordano’s sermons– preached in the vernacular, like most sermons, but also, more unusually, recorded in the vernacular by members of the congregation – are not direct sources for Dante’s thought, but provide valuable indications of the types of ideas circulating in the contexts in which Dante lived. Dante’s Credo is often taken as simply a series of doctrinal statements; I will suggest that on a more fundamental level it expresses a desire for, and the dedicating of life to God. Like Giordano, Dante is concerned that his audience understand what it means to make that key profession, “Io credo in Dio,” and that they live out that faith “in” God.

**William Franke, Vanderbilt University**

**Revolution in Poetic Language: Dante’s Use of the Vernacular as Vehicle for Theological Revelation**

The choice of the vernacular seems to be a choice for a dynamic language against the static discourse of theology and against the Latin clerical culture that apparently resists change in order to uphold its theological myths and vested interests. This is the tendency of current trends in criticism – to see the vernacular as a liberation from theology. However, Dante actually opts for the vernacular because of its theological potential and out of theological motivations. In the theophany of Scripture in Heaven of Jove (Paradiso XVIII. 70-117, the Latin text (DILIGITE, etc.) is performed by the vernacular poem in which it is embedded. Each letter vanishes in the production of a sense of the whole word and phrase of which it is a part. In this scene, we see the transformation of Scripture into vernacular poetry. Theological revelation is effected by being performed through the special effects of Dante’s skywriting as a spectacle of

son et lumière, fireworks in the firmament.

This talk is drawn principally from my forthcoming (in September 2021):

The Divine Vision of Dante’s Paradiso: The Metaphysics of Representation

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021 (303 pages + xx)

**Luca Lombardo, Università Ca’ Foscari, Venezia**

**Dante’s rhetorical-grammatical and philosophical education: formative function of the notary in the Florentine vernacular culture**

After an elementary level of literacy, Dante studied the Latin language, that is grammar, from the second half of the seventies to the early nineties of the thirteenth century: it is therefore not surprising that, when he devoted himself to writing the Vita nova and began attending the «nelle scuole delli religiosi» (Convivio II xii 7), he handled the Latin so well that he could face the reading of Boethius and Cicero. It is probable that those books were added to him from a scholastic legacy: in fact Cicero’s moral works were already known to a master of rhetoric such as Boncompagno da Signa; as for Boethius, we know from Black’s research on the glossed manuscripts of the Consolatio of the Tuscan area that the book called by Dante «non conosciuto da molti» was used since the late thirteenth century in the teaching of grammar, as revealed by traces of scholastic use in several manuscripts. This paper aims to clarify the context in which Dante would have been able to access the books certainly known to him before his arrival at the *Studia* of the Friars. This discussion focuses on the Florentine laity and on those representatives of the municipal ruling class who, educated in the *ars dictaminis* andthe *ars notariae*, imparted literary teaching to the laity, in which the study of grammar implied-due to the heterogeneous nature of the texts used by the magisters--also an intro to the rudiments of higher disciplines such as law, natural philosophy the ethics of Seneca, Cicero and Boethius.

**2.**

***Dottrina*: Poetics of Vernacular Learning (Part II)**

Organizer: Filippo Gianferrari (UCSC)

**Chair: Catherine Keen, University College London**

**Arielle Saiber, Bowdoin College**

**The Thing Is… The Explosion of Thinginess in Renaissance Fables**

In his *Vita nuova*, Dante underscores how the vernacular can do all the rhetorical acrobatics Latin does.  He evokes the ancient poets who made inanimate things speak, as if they had sense and reason, and points to how he, too, has done so in his embodiment of Love.  A century later, we see authors such as Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo exploring the reaches of personification and *prosopopoeia* in their apologues and fables as they beginincluding large numbers of objects not hitherto seen in classical or vernacular literature.  By the sixteenth century, Bartolomeo Scala and Bernardino Baldi have followed suit in their fables.  This paper considers the marked increase in everyday objects that speak in Italian fables and traces the social, cultural, and technological forces influencing literary production.

[**Filippo Gianferrari**](mailto:fgianfer@ucsc.edu)**, UCSC**

**Pastoral Syncretism: The *Ecloga Theoduli* Between Dante’s *Purgatorio* and Boccaccio’s *Olympia***

This paper argues that Boccaccio’s eclogue *Olympia* (*Buccolicum Carmen* 14) is a sophisticated parody and refutation of a popular medieval school text, the *Ecloga Theoduli.* This thesis challenges traditional interpretations of *Olympia* as overwhelmingly autobiographical in nature and primarily modeled on Virgil’s and Dante’s representations respectively of the Elysium and the Earthly Paradise. As the paper shows, Boccaccio’s rewriting of the *Ecloga Theoduli* takes as its model and interlocutor Dante’s integration of the same text in his own *Purgatorio*,and particularly his representation of the Earthly Paradise. Here, Dante had already criticized the *Ecloga Theoduli*’srejection of pagan mythology in favor of the Biblical truth, but did not altogether abandon the school text’s drawing of a boundary between pagan and Christian poetries. Boccaccio takes Dante’s criticism of medieval education a step further:While dramatizing and amplifying the latter’s claim that pagan poets had fleeting visions of the earthly paradise in their poetic representations of Parnassus (*Purgatorio* 28.139-141), Boccaccio also rejects the *Ecloga Theoduli*’s exclusion of the pagan world from the Christian paradise.

**Francesco Feriozzi, University of Oxford**

**Dante in Pietro Bembo’s and Giammaria Barbieri’s Occitan Studies**

The rediscovery of Occitan literature in sixteenth-century Italy is mainly connected withthe imitation and cultivation of Petrarch’s poetry. However, Dante’s works, too, had a role in it, both as an object of research (Arnaut’s speech in *Purgatorio* XXVI), as a source of information, and a model of  literary canon (mainly the *De vulgari eloquentia*). In this paper, I am going to look at two specific examples of Dante coming into play in the Occitan studies of the Cinquecento. First, I will show how Pietro Bembo’s transcription of Arnaut’s speech on MS Vat. Lat. 3197 can be used to assess the Venetian humanist‘s knowledge of Occitan at that point in time and to identify the sources at his disposal. Secondly, I will look at Giammaria Barbieri’s *Arte del rimare*, showing how much of its occitan content shows an influence from the *De vulgari*, the *Vita nuova*, and the *Commedia*.

**3.**

**Dante and the Sciences of the Human: Medicine, Physics, Soul**

*Organizer: Matteo Pace* (Connecticut College)

**Chair: Matteo Pace (Connecticut College)**

**Catherine Bloomer (Columbia University)**

**Disabled Body and Female Soul: From Dante to Marinella**

In the genealogy of body/soul thought, from Aristotle to Jacopo Zabarella and Francesco Piccolomini, the body is thought of in primarily male able-bodied terms. On the other hand, Lucrezia Marinella argues for the superiority of the female soul through the superiority of the female body, and Dante defends the disabled body by claiming first the universality of such defects and second the natural endowment by God of the soul. For Dante, who praises women’s perfection at great length, it is extraordinary that not gender, but rather disability figures into the body/soul debate. This omission allows Dante to sidestep the misogynistic claims that women were defective and instead to insist that bodily difference is not indicative of diseased souls. In contraction, Marinella argues it is male bodily difference that is representative of a lesser soul; she nearly espouses the medieval connection of evil with physical defects that Dante writes against.

**Andrea Moudarres (UCLA)**

**Chiron’s Body: Centaur Representations between Inferno 12 and Medici Florence**

This paper considers the physical representation of the centaurs, particularly that of Chiron, in Inferno 12 and this representation’s reworkings in 14th- and 15th-century Florence. From the appearance of the Minotaur at the canto’s outset to Chiron’s “petto” and the pilgrim’s own

movement in the first ring of Hell’s seventh circle, Inferno 12 draws the reader’s attention to the body. In exploring how Dante deploys this motif in the canto dedicated to those who committed violence against their neighbors, my goal is threefold: first, to highlight the political significance of the relationship between the human and the bestial in Inferno 12; second, to illustrate the ways in which commentators such as Giovanni Boccaccio and Cristoforo Landino interpreted the hybrid bodies of the monsters featured in this canto; third, to briefly compare Dante’s depiction of the centaur’s body with the visual renderings of the same subject in 15th-century Florentine art.

**Joseph Romano (Columbia University)**

***Sedes amoris*: the Problem of the Passions between Dante and Petrarch, and Aristotle and Augustine**

Regarding the seat of the passions, especially love, Dante oscillates between Aristotelian physics and Augustinian anthropology. As a phenomenon of Aristotelian natural science, Dante defines love as *un accidente in sostanza*, subject to generation and corruption, seated in the sensitive appetite, and accompanied by bodily alteration. As an Augustinian spiritual reality, love is the satisfaction or joyous expression of the will itself: “De la mondizia sol voler fa prova... l’alma sorprende, e di voler le giova” (*Purg*. 21.61-3). After establishing how the problem of the passions touches the heart of the soul/body problem in Dante, this paper builds from Natascia Tonelli’s work and traces Petrarch’s reception and reaction. In the *Secretum* Petrarch rejects Aristotle and inflects Dante’s Augustinianism with an explicitly Stoic and Ciceronian account of the passions that fissures Dante’s integration of *eros* and *caritas,* and the scientific and spiritual, and questions the very possibility of sanctifying love.

**4.**

**Dante’s Thought in Context: Theology and Philosophy in Late-Medieval Italy**

*Organizer*: Lorenzo Dell’Oso (Trinity College, Dublin)

**Chair: William Franke, Vanderbilt University**

**Lorenzo Dell’Oso (Trinity College, Dublin)**

**Cosmology, theology, and philosophy in Florence’s ‘schools of the religious’: some research hypothesis**

In the well-known passage in *Cv* II.XII.7, Dante declares that he went to the place (or places) where Philosophy “showed itself truthfully” and that is “in the schools of the religious orders and at the disputations of the philosophizers.” His attendance, “perhaps of thirty months,” enabled him to “feel its sweetness” in such a way that the love of philosophy itself “drove out and destroyed all other thought.” While studies have long grappled with the exegesis of this passage, it atill remains unclear what “philosophy” would have been detected by a layman attending these schools, and what “philosophy” would have been transmitted through public debates (the well-known quodlibetal disputations), and through the lectures on Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* – lectures that even a layman could have attended. By analyzing a few samples, the paper intends to shed light on a few “drops” of a still unexplored “sea”: the transmission of philosophical, theological, and cosmological knowledge both through the disputations and the lectures on the *Sentences*--most of which are still unpublished. After proposing a methodology for the analysis of these texts in relation to Dante’s work, and clarifying what “philosophy” was in the late medieval period, I will compare some of Dante’s doctrinal positions (in particular in *Vita nova*, *Le dolci rime d’amor* and *Convivio*) with what was disseminated and maintained in the lectures on the *Sentences* held at the Franciscan monastery of Santa Croce, between 1294 and 1296. The aim of this discussion is understanding how much and how this material may have influenced Dante’s philosophical education, before and after his exile.

**Nicolò Maldina (Università di Bologna)**

**Dante's and the Context of Late-Medieval Preaching**

Over the past years, Dante scholarship has clearly demonstrated that the Dante's theological culture was significantly informed by the culture disseminated by late-medieval preachers in their sermons. The paper focuses on the multiple ways in which Dante adapts, adopts and responds to late-medieval preaching in the Comedy, with a stress on theological culture and a specific attention to preachers active in Florence during the last decades of the 13th. century.

**Andrea Robiglio (KU Leuven)**

**Dante As Romance Philosopher**

That Dante Alighieri knew the Romance tradition first hand is an established fact. This paper argues that this familiarity and knowledge should qualify the interpretation of Dante's thought. Dante reveals a peculiar disposition in the search for truth; his intellectual drive seems to have been first absorbed through the courtly literatures and indirectly from other traditions and ‘cultures’ (e.g., scholastic philosophy, vernacular religious culture, monastic tradition, and civic thought). Read in this way, Dante directs us to unearth with systematic precision a genuinely philosophical, multilingual, thematically sectorial medieval tradition, focused on dominant problems (e.g. love, honor, play, election) and transmitted through specific literary genres and templates.