dissonance—which appear in the verses of the poemetto. This chapter further underscores the Florentine essence of the poem by identifying intelligenza with the power of a woman’s love. This love was considered responsible for instilling true nobility in the minds and hearts of men, an idea which was contrary to the courtly Provençal canon that maintained that nobility could only be inherited. If the name of the poet who wrote L’Intelligenza is destined to remain unknown, this book seems to suggest one, Dante. Certainly, it is a valid hypothesis that requires greater research and that goes beyond the limits and intent set in the preface.

D’Angelo’s book fulfills its promise to shed light on a hitherto unscrutinized medieval poem. It delivers more. She has written a useful scholarly book in Italian about the cultural values and the intellectual needs of the early Renaissance, undoubtedly a most exciting period in human history—a time when the aristocratic feudal system, ordered and hierarchical, gave way to democracy and individualism.

Handsome produced, without typographical errors, containing a rigorous yet imaginative discussion, D’Angelo’s text is an important contribution to the study of medieval literature. It includes useful commentaries and bibliographical material which should appeal to all medievalists. This reader recommends the book highly, not merely as a scholarly tool, but also as a well-written text from which the reader will derive much pleasure.

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In the recent wave of Convivio translations, Shapiro’s new translation of De Vulgari Eloquencia completes the series of the prose works that predate the Commedia. As we have come to expect from this scholar, Shapiro does not limit herself to translating Dante’s brief and incomplete work in good, flowing and readable English, but she also provides ample documentation on the general background of the work (“Introduction: Dante’s Book of Exile”); an essay on the lesser known precursors of Dante as a writer on the “Romance idiom” who probably influenced him and the writing of De Vulgari Eloquencia, complete with a translation of Raimon Vidal de Besalú’s Razos de trobar and of a short piece by Joifre de Foixà, De la doctrina de compondre dictatz, probably a companion piece to his grammar Regles de trobar (“Vernacular Backgrounds”); a study on “Dante and the Grammarians,” where she argues the more “profound affiliations” between Dante and medieval grammatical investigations; and finally, the concluding paper where she deals with the possible elements that may link De Vulgari Eloquencia to the Commedia.

Both the translation and accompanying essays constitute a sound piece of scholarship which probes a mostly neglected early work by Dante and underscores its importance among the most illustrious examples of medieval grammars but also singles it out, rather than Convivio, as the work which is closer in inspiration to the Commedia.

In “Introduction: Dante’s Book of Exile,” Shapiro emphasizes the innovative character of Dante’s project both in subject matter and in recombining previous traditional disciplines. The influence of Augustine’s De Doctrina Christiana as well as Cicero’s
three great categories of style is evident but it is secondary with respect to the innovations introduced by Dante. One of these is the conception of the “wretched” style (stilum miserorum) which calls attention to itself because it is a category exclusively defined in terms of content rather than form as are, instead, the tragic and comic styles. The “wretched” style, Shapiro argues, can be said to be the style of the writer in exile: Ovid’s but also Dante’s.

The notion of exile is central to Shapiro’s reading of De Vulgari Eloquentia since, in her view, it encompasses Dante’s proposal for one illustrious language vis à vis the Romance vernaculars which are seen as “particular cases of progressive linguistic differentiation” (18). This linguistic change to which even Latin as Grammar is not immune is an inevitable law of nature, “a kind of linguistic exile to which all human beings remain subject” (18). “Exile would consequently mean not only a topos for the ‘wretched’ but an integral aspect of the human condition” (18).

The answer to this “linguistic exile” lies in the restoration of the Italian vernacular to its “natural” integrity and its transformation into a grammatical language emanating naturally from the inspiration of knowledge and art. Thus the one hope of countervailing endless change lies in grammaticalization. “The institution of grammar would provide a common uniform language, which through transcendence of time and place would resist formal variation” (28). Through the ratio of grammar, man is restored from exile and confusion; he is recalled to his true linguistic heritage. “On this view language itself can be an agent of moral redemption if restored to unity and regularity, a sign of the lost paradise and the ever-present possibility of return” (29).

The way is thus prepared for the ascent of the vernacular through the destruction of the “shrubbery and undergrowth” of individual languages (29). In this respect, says Shapiro, “The one language, the logos of Italy, resembles God Himself, who irradiates in decreasing degree the world of man” (30). It is “illustrious” because it is noble, ennobling and found among poets and those who are truly noble; it is “pivotal” because it regulates the lesser languages as well as human conduct. It is “the paterfamilias or pastor of all the others” (31). By regulating change in all the municipal dialects it also regulates the totality of human conduct. For as long as it accepts “its own exile and alienation from any local idiom,” Shapiro claims, the vernacular remains truly a “pastoral language” (31). As for its “curial” and “courtly” attributes, since Italy has no court, these can only be imaginary as are truly the courts of reason and intellect.

For Shapiro, the linguistic model for Dante is the corpus mysticum where Christ is the supplement for the missing kingship which makes continuity possible. Dante replaces the mystical body with “the gracious light of reason” which takes the place of the king (33). “The entire activity of interrelated aims represented by Dante’s conception of the one language amounts to the in-gathering of the whole social aggregate under one rule” (33). The emphasis is on language as “communication” in order that “the lines of communication remain open between the hierarchized ranks” (34).

In De Vulgari Eloquentia, Dante “links innovation to exile in deed and thought” (42) but does not attempt to reconcile any of the polemics. Serious contradictions remain, for instance, between the poetic and the philosophical and, more specifically, the philological and the linguistic. Thus, although the choice of the canzone in the second book would seem to argue for a rhetorical framework, the analysis is essentially syntactical and analytical. This and other anomalies point to a work which is basically a study of syntax that has nothing to do with the sphere of poetic rhetoric.
"The prevailing conception of semantic authority," says Shapiro, "yields in Dante to the primacy of syntax. In this dyad resides the most problematic, hence intriguing, aspect of the originality of De Vulgari Eloquentia" (45).

In the chapter entitled "Conclusion: Problems and Perspectives," Shapiro attempts to resolve these different strands by making new claims for the treatise. In her view Dante abruptly moves the argumentation away from the initial intention of writing a rhetorical and stylistic treatise to undertake an analysis of language "unparalleled" in rhetorical tradition (179). The originality of the work, however, lies in its unifying the disciplines of rhetoric, logic, and grammar. This is confirmed by Dante's use of Latin for this work: it implies that he wanted to bestow upon it the same status as that of Latin grammars, maintaining thus a qualitative distinction among potential readers.

This is what differentiates De Vulgari Eloquentia from Convivio which is characterized by the effort to spread higher culture. De Vulgari Eloquentia, instead, seeks to develop aspects of a higher culture within Romance culture while developing only one of these aspects. This "chiastic" difference between the two works is what determines their difference and the superiority of natural over artificial language not only for the unification of Italians but also for the validation of poetry for this end. This aspect is also reflected by the central event of exile in Dante's life which has its parallel in the alienation of the prose works from the sphere of poetics and rhetoric.

The importance of De Vulgari Eloquentia for Shapiro lies also in the way it foreshadows, if not directly affects, the later Commedia. One instance is the process of writing itself. Dante widened the boundaries of poetic form by delimiting the subject matter of the lyric that eventually led to the rigorous terza rima form. Similarly, the criticism of poems in De vulgari eloquentia has its continuity in the poetic criticism of the Commedia. But perhaps even more important, Dante's preoccupation with communication and signification throughout the treatise proves to be a necessary phase in the elaboration of the major work.

This brief and general overview cannot obviously do justice to Shapiro's erudite and thorough analysis. Her claims for a De vulgari eloquentia that can no longer be considered secondary to Convivio as the "spiritual" predecessor of the Commedia is bound to create much needed discussion which, regardless of the outcome, will certainly help to focus attention on this work once again.

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In this work, Peter Armour builds an alternative reading to the "single, agreed interpretation" of Dante's griffin, constructed from the mid-1300s onward (13). Armour perceives a need for a reconstruction which, independent of the commentaries, investigates Dante's intentions in the creation of this "central feature in the universalizing imagery" of his earthly Paradise (12). Challenging an interpretation of more than six hundred years duration, Armour constructs an exegesis which, following Dante's unfolding of narrative, demonstrates a cohesiveness of interrelated meaning pointing