"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 fore-shadows, 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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Peter Armour. *Dante's Griffin and the History of the World: A Study of the Earthly Paradise* (Purgatorio, cantos xxix-xxxiii). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. Pp. 330.

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

both forward and backward in the text itself and in the scheme of God's cosmic historical plan.

Armour's first step is an examination of the correspondence between the explanations of the commentators and contemporary griffin lore. His survey of both visual and written sources leads to a startling discovery: the griffin was a fierce predator representing avarice, the devil, cruelty, persecution and tyranny. Armour concludes from this evidence that "Dante is indicating that his griffin is not Christ and the Lamb but a powerful potential enemy of Christ" which in the earthly Paradise "enters fully and miraculously in accord with God's will" (45).

Armour's second step is a provision of textual evidence, which, he argues, demonstrates that the Christological interpretation of Dante's griffin presents contradictions "in terms of setting, structure, and development, of doctrine, symbolism, and vocabulary" (66-67). The alternative reading which resolves these problems, he reveals, is a recognition of what Dante sees as a "profound and astonishing truth" (73): the griffin represents ideal Rome, God's own idea of Rome, which, rather than being the result of violence or greed, was decreed by God as part of his providential plan.

What Armour sees as the fundamental significance of the griffin's two "reggimenti" of eagle and lion is summed up in the acronym which forms the title of his third chapter: "SPQR"—*Senatus populusque Romanus*, the indissoluble link between the Roman people and the Empire. At the outset, the author acknowledges that, as in the interpretation of the griffin as Christ, there is no external evidence of a pre-existent tradition from which Dante chose the griffin to stand for Rome. Since, however, the eagle and lion are "extraordinarily rich in Roman symbolism," it is in the griffin's binary constitution that Armour finds Dante's reasons for choosing this animal (75). The griffin represents the fusion of imperial and popular sovereignty endorsed by Ghibelline circles and revived in reality in the political affairs of Dante's Italy: a fusion grounded in an opposition to papal pretensions to supreme power, and in the concept of popular sovereignty and the election of kingship in the temporal sphere under God.

Having laid this groundwork, Armour proceeds to develop the significance of the griffin in each of the three incidents in which it participates in the drama that unfolds within the earthly Paradise. Armour interprets the griffin in the triumphal procession as standing for the masterwork of God's historical process in Rome—the *imperium* of Prince and people at the time of Augustus; as such, the griffin draws the chariot of Christ in an historical context, of Beatrice in Dante's. Within this scheme, according to Armour, the griffin combines the historical ideal of the Roman *imperium* in the past with the continuing universal ideal of the Augustan state, the patrimony of Augustus with that of the individual Caesar—such as Henry VII. As a poetic image, symbolically summarizing Dante's depiction of the conjoined Roman Republic and Principate in Book 2 of the *Monarchia* and his anti-hierocratic arguments in Book 3, the griffin expresses Dante's solution to contemporary monarchist controversies. In addition, Armour perceives the biformed griffin as denoting the reciprocal moral responsibility in the constitutional union of ideal Monarch and people in a fusion of authority which ensures true moral freedom for everyman, and which is in accordance with the will of God: an exemplum for the recreation of paradise on earth, one which Dante experiences when Virgil, poet of Empire under Augustus, consecrates Dante "Emperor" in his own person, with free will as his guide.

In canto 31, where Dante sees an image of the griffin reflected in Beatrice's eyes,

the description of the griffin as "la fiera / ch'è sola una persona in due nature" (81) presents, Armour believes, an audacious parallel between Christ and the Empire: a union of the divine and human on earth, "where to be truly Roman is to be Christ-like, and to be truly Christian, Roman" (151). The Christian Roman Empire, the heir to the Rome of Augustus, Armour believes, can be perceived as Christ's temporal, political body, represented on earth by the Emperor, the inheritor of Christ's kingship. Armour proceeds to provide contemporary philosophical and moral arguments for the elevation of the King's position to the divine, asserting that "what Dante is presenting in the earthly Paradise is not the theology of the Incarnation but his remarkable theology of Rome" (163). In the alternation of the Griffin's two regimes in the mirror of Beatrice's eyes, Armour continues, Dante sees both a synchronic and diachronic expression of the ideal monarchy; in these eyes which are the medium of AMOR, Dante sees reflected "the dual mystery of ROMA" (177).

To the griffin's participation in Dante's prophetic vision, Armour devotes two chapters, one dealing with the griffin's act of linking the shaft of the chariot to the tree, the other with the relationship of the griffin to the disasters which occur to the chariot after the animal's ascent into heaven. In the light of biblical exegesis and of legendary lore, Armour argues that Dante's tree in canto 32 represents both the tree of Adam's transgression and of Christ's redemption; the shaft, therefore, represents not the cross (as has been traditionally claimed) but "the link which is re-established between God's Justice and the chariot" (211); the codification of Roman law and/or those entrusted with the guidance of the pre-Christian world community. The griffin, in this context, stands for the *imperium* of Tiberius, the Roman agency used by God for his greatest act of justice. In addition, the biformed creature represents both the theological and juridical conformity between natural law and God's eternal Law, as well as between universal and particular natural law; as such it presents both a model and goal of world reform.

Armour perceives the eagle and the giant, who contribute to the monstrous transformation of the chariot, as antitheses of the griffin, whom he links to the 515, the prophetic restorer of the ideal of earthly Rome. In the context of contemporary millenarian prophecy, the griffin represents the last Emperor of a world Monarchy, "the Christ-like Prince of West and East who will lead the society of all mankind in the final triumph of Christianity and then consign all earthly power to God in Jerusalem regained" (277-78).

This book adds a new dimension to our understanding of the possibilities of meaning contained in Dante's complex structuring of the significance of his earthly Paradise. It provides a sustained, cohesive, extensively researched and closely argued rereading of Dante's griffin.

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Le Chiose Ambrosiane alla "Commedia". Edizione e saggio di commento a cura di Luca Carlo Rossi. Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 1990 (Centro di cultura medievale 3). Pp. xlix + 298.

Uno degli sviluppi maggiori negli studi danteschi di questi ultimi anni è indubbiamente il graduale recupero della tradizione esegetica trecentesca, sia come guida imprescindibile per una più aderente lettura della *Commedia*, sia come fenomeno di cultura