tors, repeated now for centuries, but with no foundation in the text of the poem. Beatrice in fact describes her intent in ways that would tell us to seek for visual imagery instead, some shape or geometric form. Dante's use of an Aristotelian simile for vision leads Mastrobuono into a complete treatise on scholastic theories of perception and intellectual conception. Together with a canvass of numerical references and visual forms from the Easter Liturgy, that enables him to perform a suggestive experiment at drawing with Beatrice's numbers that both jibes with one of the shapes mentioned in the context (the pilgrim's staff) and produces the figure of Christ in His Second Coming as the solution of the enigma, supported by other hints that Beatrice gives.

Although these two exegetical studies in Chapters 2 and 3 are interesting and provocative, it is the first and fourth parts of the book that should have the most far-reaching effects. In a curious way, they actually call for a return to tradition. It is something of a scandal, as the author well recognizes, to expose the extent to which perhaps the leading stream of American Dante scholarship has been plagued with deviations into personal mythologies created by the critical imagination wandering after a favourite but irrelevant thesis from ancient or modern philosophy or a nostalgia for the Garden of Eden. The discussions of Singleton and Freccero do not make very easy reading, not only because they are polemical, but also because Mastrobuono insists on the conceptual precision characteristic of scholastic theology. But that very discipline occupied a fundamental place in Dante's intellectual background. To take it seriously and to carry out the hard work of rectifying so many misconceptions would bring American Dante scholarship yet farther along the way to easy communication and fruitful collaboration with its European colleagues.

ALBERT WINGELL

St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

Marcello Ciccuto. *Figure di Petrarca. Giotto, Simone Martini, Franco Bolognese*. Napoli: Federico & Ardia, 1991 (Dal certo al vero. Biblioteca di filologia, letteratura e filosofia 4). Pp. 152.

Ciccuto's book is an invitation to meditate upon at least two things: firstly, on Petrarch's relationship with the figurative arts; secondly, on how to write a scholarly book. While the first invitation is consciously offered by Ciccuto, the second one is consciously imposed by the reviewer. I would like to focus upon the latter invitation first.

What immediately catches the reader's attention is that there is as much typographic space dedicated to the footnotes as there is to the body of the text. If one were to give a cursory glance to some scholarly work produced in Italy, it would become clear that such a typographic ratio is not without precedent. One could surmise that the great magnitude of space allotted to footnotes reflects the spirit of the series which published Ciccuto's book: "Dal certo al vero". This Vichian title clearly underscores the fact that the relative validity of our interpretation depends on the certitude-status of the knowledge we possess. It follows, then, that the encyclopedia of knowledge we draw from in order to interpret must be both verifiably sound and in some way present during the act of interpretation. This is a basic precept of the humanist philological practice which informs the work of figures, for example, such as Lorenzo Valla, Angelo Poliziano, and some centuries

later of Vico himself.

Ciccuto is faithful to the mechanics of the movement "dal certo al vero". It is abundantly clear that the author has expended much energy in uncovering a seemingly endless arsenal of bibliographical data to support his ideas. The result, however, is that rather than supporting his ideas, the footnotes flood the book. There is so much bibliographical information both in the footnotes and in the corpus that the discussions in the body of the text very frequently resemble an appendage to the notes. In essence, what has occurred is that the traditional "body of text/footnote" equation has dissolved and we are left with what Derrida calls split or double writing; namely, a page occupied by more than one body of writing, all of which are equally central.

In other words, in Ciccuto's book the body and the notes share the same ontological status. What does all of this mean? To begin with, I doubt Ciccuto had "double writing" in mind when composing his book. Yet the typographic morphology of *Figure di Petrarca* highlights the schizophrenic relationship between knowledge and interpretation. The desire to know could lead to a hermeneutical pathology where the material manifestation of the interpretations is characterized by the obliteration of the stabilizing ratio that links the body to the notes.

While the format of the book is an example of what I would term typographic schizophrenia, Ciccuto's interpretative goals are rather ambitious considering the length of the study. *Figure di Petrarca* includes three chapters: 1) "Per una storia napoletana dei *Trionfi*"; 2) "Circostanze francesi del 'Virgilio' ambrosiano"; 3) "Corradino, Tito Livio, Oderisi, Franco Bolognesi". The general aim of the book is that of showing the aesthetic links Petrarch had with the figurative arts of his times. In the opening chapter the author proposes to undertake some archaeological work in order to define the roots of the sort of triumphal iconography which finds its precedence in Petrarch. Ciccuto locates the inception of the interaction between text and pictorial representation in the Naples area: "... è proprio la cultura partenopea di impronta robertiana ad avviare una ferrea collaborazione fra testo letterario e resa figurativa su cui gioverà incidere al fine di rinsaldare il legame capace di illustrare le leggi di fruizione aristocratica di un diffuso patrimonio storico che ai nostri occhi di moderni appare vestito dei segnapoli cavallereschi ed epicizzanti" (7). But the tradition of a symbiosis between text and image owes very much to what Ciccuto terms "una sorta di ideale movimento 'andata-ritorno'" (8) between Naples, Rome and Northern Italy. Ciccuto is also concerned with discovering the ties that the poetic texture of the *Trionfi* has with astrological art and with the Giotto school.

In the second chapter the author discusses the frontispiece of the Virgilio ambrosiano codex in light of Petrarch's bucolic poetics. What Ciccuto underlines in the discussion is the role played by Simone Martini. According to Ciccuto, Petrarch was interested in depicting the essence of an artistic sign: "... il segno cioè come parte di un sistema di relazioni, capace di indicare qualcosa di assente-nascosto, di intelligibile al di là della percezione sensibile e quindi della pura apparenza" (86). Ciccuto is convinced that Petrarch perceived Simone as the artist who was able to overcome the purely reproductive aspect of art by adding something hidden to the images, thus coming closer to the "verità superiore" of the model.

The critical focus of the final chapter gravitates upon the figurative apparatus of the copy of Livy owned by Petrarch. The author reconstructs the history of the depiction and concludes that "tra l'episodio modellizzante del portico di San Pietro e le risultanze romane della prima apertura verso Assisi . . . si incardina dunque l'apparato figurativo della prima sezione del *Tito Livio*" (151).

In all of the discussions Ciccuto is very sensitive to the question of cultural geography. While his insights are both sound and highly informed, his critical logic is, to say the least, bewildering. *Figure di Petrarca* is a heavily thicketed forest of facts and interpretations. It is often painfully difficult to follow the trajectory of his reasoning as a result of both the deluge of footnotes and the endless interpolated clauses all of which bombard the eyes. This book exacts a very specialized state-of-critical-consciousness; namely, one that functions under the knowledge that the relationship between knowing and stating, between the body and the notes is held together by the desire to overcome the scission which is inscribed in human speech.

PAUL COLILLI

Laurentian University

Maria Bendinelli Predelli. *Alle origini del "Bel Gherardino"*. Firenze: Olschki, 1990 (Biblioteca dell'"Archivum Romanicum"). Pp. 359.

In questo studio l'autrice esamina i rapporti fra i nodi fondamentali delle vicende del cantare trecentesco (quali la partenza del protagonista dalla città natale, l'unione segreta con una donna ricca e potente, il ritorno alla propria casa, l'imprudente rivelazione di quell'amore e la sua conseguente perdita, le successive avventure per riconquistarlo, fino alla prigionia, alla liberazione per opera di un'altra donna innamorata di lui e al conclusivo torneo triduano in cui l'eroe si presenta sconosciuto sotto abiti di colori differenti) e analoghe situazioni rintracciabili diversamente in vari testi francesi del XII secolo, dai *lais* di *Lanval*, di *Graelent* e di *Guingamor* ai più lunghi poemi quali il *Partonopeu de Blois*, l'*Ipomedon* di Hue de Rotelande, alcune versioni della leggenda di Lancillotto (come il *Lanzelet*, adattamento tedesco di un testo francese perduto, il *Lancelot* in prosa e *Le chevalier de la charrete* di Chrétien de Troyes), il *Cligès* e l'*Yvain* sempre di Chrétien e il *Bel Inconnu* di Renaut de Beaujeu—ma se queste sono le opere cui più spesso troviamo riferimenti, non sono certo le uniche, ché moltissimi particolari presenti in diverse altre sia dell'epoca classica che di quella medievale, elencate all'inizio della "Bibliografia" (335-39), non sfuggono all'analisi meticolosa ed accurata della Predelli.

Non si tratta tanto di una ricerca di fonti: l'attenzione dell'autrice non si rivolge solo a rilevare coincidenze di episodi e derivazioni da un testo all'altro, ma tende piuttosto a cogliere specifici motivi diffusi in un particolare momento storico e culturale della tradizione letteraria europea. Sarebbe impossibile, nell'ambito di una recensione, seguire dettagliatamente tutto l'arco della scrupolosa disamina sia della struttura della narrazione di quelle opere, sia di situazioni particolari (come ad esempio la sequenza del torneo che si ripresenta più spesso) le quali si ripetono o variano nelle stesse; ci limitiamo pertanto solo a segnalare che tale disamina porta la Predelli a ipotizzare l'esistenza di un *Ur-Lanzelet* dal quale sarebbe derivato a sua volta un *Ur-Gherardino*. Un primo schema che illustra i rapporti fra i principali testi si trova a p. 128; il successivo esame dei contatti rintracciabili fra le varie opere chiarisce ulteriori sovrapposizioni e intersezioni di linee quali si trovano in un secondo grafico offerto a p. 224.

Certo l'esistenza di tali testi congetturali dai quali derivano i momenti ripresi variamente in versioni ed opere diverse, con successivi echi e richiami fra l'una e l'altra più o meno indipendenti da quei testi originari, aiuta a giustificare e a spiegare il lavoro degli