Massimo Ciavolella and Amilcare A. Iannucci, eds. *Saturn from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Toronto: Dovehouse Editions Inc., 1992 (University of Toronto Italian Studies 8). Pp. xii, 181.

This informative and readable volume contains ten essays, nine of which were presented as papers at a conference held at the University of Toronto in 1988. That conference was convened to "explore those aspects of the complex and ambiguous figure of Saturn which had remained largely unexamined in Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl . . ." (ix), particularly the relationship between Greek Cronos and Roman Saturn, and the precise meaning of the Roman festival of Saturnalia. Three principles, one appropriately chronological and the others thematic and disciplinary, organize the essays of the collection. One first encounters a set of discussions of Saturn in the ancient world, then a group dealing with the god's presentations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance in the context of specific works and authors. The central organizing theme concerns the ambiguity of Saturn's influence, viewed principally as inauspicious, but secondarily as auspicious as well. From a disciplinary perspective, the essays reveal the role of Saturn in the contexts of mythology, social and cultural history, literature, and iconography.

Gianni Guastella's "Saturn, Lord of the Golden Age" (1-22), orients the reader to some of the possible sources of the god's ambiguous reputation among the ancients, pointing out the ways that Roman Saturn derived attributes both from the Greek Cronos, who had reigned supreme during the mythical Golden Age, and the Roman counterpart who was "connected with the history of the land of Italy" (9), and with agriculture. Saturn, Guastella points out, "represented an original period that had been overcome by the age of Zeus, and he also represented a divine model that had been rejected after Zeus-Jupiter's accession to the throne" (11). Thus, "If Zeus' accession to the throne is positively considered, then the dark side of the story of a cruel deity surfaces more decidedly But if the succession of the two sovereigns is evoked . . . based upon the deprecation of the 'cultural' trend of present times, then negative aspects are attributed to the most recent epoch, while the Golden Age acquires, by contrast, a positive characterization" (12).

In his admirably erudite *tour de force* Guastella overviews the development of the Saturn story in Greece and Rome over a 2000-year period, accounting along the way for the contradictory characteristics assigned to Saturn in Greek and Roman narrative and culture and conducting in his notes a useful and instructive survey of the relevant literature. Happily, the high standards of scholarship reflected in Guastella's introductory essay characterize most of the essays of the collection.

Conducting a Bakhtinian discourse, Maurizio Bettini's "Iacta alea est: Saturn and the *Saturnalia*" (23-36), brings the reader into the world of the Roman festival with a wonderfully rich discussion and interpretation of its practices. "The world of the *Saturnalia*," he says, "is a world marked by the uncertainty or rather by the reversibility, of the lot. The Roman citizens are no longer Roman citizens, the slaves are no longer slaves, the masters are no longer masters, property is changed into gifts, slaves act as magistrates,

the king is drawn by dice, the *alea*, the game of chance, the lottery hovers everywhere" (30). For Bettini, Saturnalia evokes "the rule of 'anti-destiny,'" where "people pretend that the destiny, the fortune, the personal lot of goods and social standing of each and every person do not exist and do not matter" (26). I found this essay extremely thought-provoking in the way it suggests the Utopian underpinnings of all revolutionary movements.

Responding point-by-point to the positive aspects Bettini associates with the practices and rituals of Saturnalia, Giuseppe Pucci examines the "alarming" and "terrible" attributes of Saturn in "Roman Saturn: the Shady Side" (37-50). Pucci explores the connections of Saturn with the practice of human sacrifice, identifies the deity with *Dis Pater*, the Lord of the Dead, argues that the Saturnalia, which, as he explains, really comprised several festivals occurring near the winter solstice, are festivals of the dead, partly celebrating "the work of sowing and subsequent rest, and partly a reorganization of the relationships between the Living and the Dead at a liminal time of a sacral crisis that ultimately has to be resolved in favour of the Living" (45).

Moving from the ancient to the medieval world, the volume next presents three literary essays: Amilcare A. Iannucci's, "Saturn in Dante" (51-67), James F. Burke's "The Polarities of Desire: Saturn in the *Libro de buen amor*" (69-77), and Donald A. Beecher's, "From Myth to Narrative: Saturn in Lefevre and Caxton" (79-90).

Iannucci argues that Dante in the *Commedia* represents Saturn in two ways, as the god and as the planet, and that Dante, though employing both the mythic and the astrological traditions in his work, assimilates the two in *Paradiso* in a fashion atypical for the Middle Ages. Though Dante generally emphasizes the positive aspects of both lines of Saturnian representation, Iannucci discovers in *Inf.* 15.96 a veiled reference to the planet/deity and its more negative aspects in the figure of a peasant with a mattock, and argues persuasively on both literary and iconographic grounds for a reading of this Dantean crux that considers Saturn in association with both time and fortune. In *Par.* 21, similarly, Iannucci speculates that, perhaps owing to the negative influence of Saturn, in that planet's sphere, "Beatrice does not smile and the blessed do not sing" (62).

James Burke traces distant and implicit reflections of Saturnian ambiguity in the adventures of Love that Juan Ruiz' hero-poet experiences in the *Libro de buen amor*. One set of adventures, Burke says, "occur atemporally," and presumably associate themselves thereby with Saturn's Golden Age aspects; the other set Burke finds associated with the calendrical "events of the liturgical year and behind them . . . of traditional folklore" (73), and thus with the temporal attributes of Saturn. In doing so he clarifies for the reader both how very attenuated and how very far-reaching and persistent strands of influence from pagan antiquity can be in the culture and discourse of the Christian Middle Ages.

Continuing the collection in this vein, Donald A. Beecher remarks on the way in which certain episodes of the Saturn story retained their narrative integrity, despite "centuries of adaptation, glossing, moralizing, and allegorizing," and how, at the same time they challenged each teller of the myth "to recover the story without doing violence to the diverse components of the Saturn tradition" (79). After charging Boccaccio with failing to "reconcile his scholarly obligations with his narrative impulses" and with never fulfilling "the popular need for a unified narrative account" (81), Beecher conducts a brilliant narratological analysis of the way in which Lefevre reworks Boccaccio, and, in sequencing events and rediscovering the Saturnine aspects of the Saturnian character as a

way of organizing and motivating the story, "honours his obligation to the established details of the mythographers but always as an historian looking for naturalistic interpretations that would conform to the level of verisimilitude established by the historical narrative" (82). Lefevre, Beecher concludes, successfully imposed upon Boccaccio's version of the story the naturalistic standards of Burgundian romance, thereby rescuing the work from the arcana of Christian moralizers and returning it to the popular mainstream. It was this work that Duchess Margaret of Burgundy commissioned William Caxton to translate and to print at his press in Bruges, where, by 1474, it became "the first printed book in English" (87).

The next two essays in the collection deal with Saturn and art history. The first of these, Roberto Guerrini's "Saturn at the Città di Castello" (91-97), brings to public notice a heretofore little studied representation of Saturn at the Palazzo Vitelli alla Cannoniera in Città di Castello. This fresco appears on the staircase and, says Guerrini, "expresses better than any other example the Renaissance conception of . . . [Saturn]" (91) though Saxl and others leave it out. Illustrated with photographs, Guerrini's article describes the fresco and points to the literary provenance of several of its elements, tracing their sources to "Fulgentius, the Vatican Mythographers, . . . Boccaccio," and elsewhere, but finds it impossible to ascribe the whole to "any precise or unique source" (95).

The second of the art history pieces, Leatrice Mendelsohn's "Saturnian allusions in Bronzino's London *Allegory*" (101-150), offers an iconographic analysis that largely overturns Irwin Panofsky's reading of the same painting. Firmly grounded in archival sources, Mendelsohn's discussion interprets the painting's seven figures as veiled presentations of aspects of deception connected with "carnival personifications" (105), and "popular festival entertainment" (103). This article is also helpfully illustrated with photographs and focuses the reader's attention once again on those aspects of Saturn widely prevalent in Roman antiquity, here presented as illustrative of a method of veiling under graphic allegory subjects (like sodomy) whose candid treatment would have offended public sensibilities.

The penultimate essay in the collection, Frederick A. de Armas, "Saturn in Conjunction: From Albumasar to Lope de Vega" (151-72), takes us into the realms of astrology and pseudo-science as they intersect that of literary history. Focusing first on the identity of Albumasar (Abu Ma'shar, b. 787, d. 886 C.E.), an authority on astrology widely quoted in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, this article explores the powerfully malefic influences of the planet, and its representation in the work of Lope de Vega, Giambattista della Porta, and Thomas Tomkis. Not least among the interesting aspects of this article is the fact that it summarizes the controversy, one spanning some centuries, that occurred concerning the horoscope of Christ — a horoscope in turn often thought to be connected with the "'great and almost unparalleled' conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn that occurred six years four days and seven hours before Christ's birth (Renaker 223 in de Armas 158)". Such a conjunction occurred again in 1603-04 and seemed, according to de Armas, to reinforce notions of the bi-polarity of Saturnian influence, whereas, for the astrologers, among whom Albumasar seems to have played an archetypal role as an astrologer function, Saturn's influence remained essentially malefic.

In the final essay of the collection, "Saturn and Venus" (173-181), Massimo Ciavarella returns to a subject that continues to fascinate him, that of the physiology of love, its connections with the four elements of Greek science and medical practice, and, in turn, the association of human physio-psychology with the four bodily humours and they, in turn, with the natal astral and planetary influences that determined the predispositions of

human beings. Saturn, not surprisingly given the darker side of the deity's nature, is associated with melancholy, both the cold and the hot sort, and with ill fortune in love. Somewhat surprisingly, however, Ciavolella finds "the influence of Venus and Saturn . . . inextricably, yet fatally, connected" and argues that "it is . . . because of the unyielding influence of the rays of Saturn and Venus on the human being that lovers can turn melancholic, and melancholiacs can see their feelings of longing heightened to an unbearable level . . ." so that "the passionate lover lives under the menacing sickle of Saturn, at the mercy of the darker side of his nature" (174).

Saturn From Antiquity to the Renaissance is a treasure-trove of riches, not only for the professional academic, but for general readers as well, especially those who find themselves fascinated with the way natural processes and ideas about the connection of human beings with them clothe themselves in myth and reappear in interpenetrating communities of discourse in various guises in many times and places, and under many theological, intellectual, and artistic auspices. The volume's scholarly standards are high, and the quality of the essays is remarkably even for a collection principally incorporating conference proceedings. All the essays make rewarding reading; many are also brilliant.

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Teodolinda Barolini. *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1992. Pp. 356.

Un libro sorretto da forte intelligenza, ben costruito e pausato utilizzando la libertà argomentativa offerta da moduli indipendenti (i dieci capitoli e l'Appendice in cui si articola, che spaziano dall'*Inferno* al *Paradiso*), eppure tali da lasciarsi assemblare a costruire un organismo unitario, a dar conto e rassegna di una linea di ricerca coerentissima. E libro, per quanto, anche formalmente, non agevole, condannato a piacere, impegnato com'è a sostituire cose alle parole, con l'uso di salda informazione e di perfetta conoscenza del testo, di una sottile abilità argomentativa, che non è mai sofisma, che corrode dove bisogna e polemizza quando occorre e, al caso, morde dove è opportuno mordere.

Intento-guida è, come dice l'autrice, di "detheologizzare Dante", di chiedere ragione a Dante, cioè, delle guide ermeneutiche che sorreggono il poema e che egli vi ha inserito quali condizionamenti interpretativi per il suo lettore, di indagare, quindi, le tecniche che ci persuadono a credere in ciò che egli afferma, quasi fosse poeta teologo, eliminando lo scarto fra ciò che Dante dice e la sostanza della sua operazione letteraria. In quest'ottica, viene ovvio che il barbacane che sorregge la costruzione stia nel saggio che apre il volume — premessa teorica di tutto lo svolgersi dimostrativo —, contributo non nuovo, ma cui dà luce e spessore il rileggerlo e rimeditarlo accerchiato dagli altri, nuovi a loro volta e non. Qui s'avanza la capitale domanda: "How are we to respond to the poet's insistence that he is telling us the truth?", che adduce una preventiva, fondamentale questione: se Dante credesse nella verità letterale di quelle cose per le quali rivendica verità letterale. La proposta solutoria giunge al termine di un percorso che dà rassegna del pregresso lavoro critico sul tema, a partire dall'intervento di Nardi, che innescò le discussioni e s'apprezza anche perché s'appiglia, ed è richiamo salutare su ambo le