author concludes by affirming that "la poésie du cosmos et la glorification de la puissance divine s'accomplissent grâce à une réflexion sur l'écriture et la théologie."

The book also contains four appendices: two are dedicated to some of Dante's predecessors (e.g. Ristoro d'Arezzo and Bonvesin de la Riva); the other two ("Dante et la signature des étoiles" and "Dante et l'Odyssée: forme et signification") take up the discourse of his last chapter.

Notes. Index of names.

LB

Bernard Delmay. *I personaggi della Divina Commedia: Classificazione e regesto*. Firenze: Olschki, 1986. Pp. 414.

In this volume Delmay lists and classifies all the characters who appear in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. First, he explains how his various categories and sub-categories work. Delmay distinguishes three main groups of characters: A. those present to the action, B. those cited, and C. those given as speaking examples (in *Purgatory*). Characters present to the action are sub-divided into the following groups: 1. those who speak, 2. those who are silent, and 3. those who are entelechies or symbolic personifications (both in human and non-human form). The second set of characters, those who are cited, are divided in turn according to whether they are named by 1. Dante the narrator, 2. Dante the pilgrim, 3. Virgil, 4. Beatrice, 5. Cacciaguida, or, 6. other spirits. Delmay also indicates whether the character is historical, mythohistorical, mythological, or a pure spirit. A list of abbreviations and a brief bibliography are included in the volume.

An alphabetical list of all the characters in the *Divine Comedy* forms the main body of the text (280 entries in all). Each entry gives the origin, history, and main characteristics of a character. Francesca da Rimini, to give an example, is in group A1-S (a historical character, in action, who speaks). We are also told where she lived, what her family origins were, how she came to love Paolo, what her sin was, and where she is located in Dante's gallery of the afterworld.

Delmay's book is a useful tool which offers quick access to essential information about every character in the *Divine Comedy*.

AST

Peter Dronke. *Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*. London: Cambridge UP, 1986. Pp. xiii + 153.

Placing himself in the company of Auerbach (figural approach) and Nardi (neo-Platonic approach), Dronke argues that it is possible, through a consideration of medieval modes of understanding metaphor, to derive ana-

lytical approaches to Dante that are both more subtle than "allegorical" analyses and probably truer to Dante's intention. He stresses the concept of "open meanings" in imagery and also explores medieval poetic ideas in which imagery functions neither to "hide" nor to adorn meaning, but rather to create meaning: "imagery consubstantial with meaning." He outlines his approach in the first chapter and, in succeeding chapters, employs it in an analysis of several moments in the *Commedia* which he considers exemplary of the "medieval Latin imaginative world in which Dante lived": the giants in hell (Chapter 2), the "phantasmagoria" in the earthly paradise (Chapter 3), and the first circle in the solar heaven (Chapter 4). Throughout his "method is to begin from Dante himself, trying to ascertain what imagery he might, historically, have known, and how he has transfixed it" (ix).

In the two Excursus which conclude the volume, Dronke seeks to clarify, with documentation, the controversy surrounding the authorship of the *Epistle* to Can Grande, (concluding that Dante probably did not compose the expository part of the letter) and to set out the medieval Latin tradition of the legend of Nimrod the astronomer.

Brief bibliographical note. Index. Excellent end-notes, into which he unfortunately too often consigns intriguing arguments that should be in the body of the text, e.g. note 8 to Chapter 1, on the prophetic tradition.

FB

Joan M. Ferrante. *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984. Pp. ix + 392.

Without reducing the *Comedy* to a political tract, Ferrante reads Dante's poem from a socio-political perspective. Indeed, she suggests that the political attitudes in the poem are consistent with those of the *Monarchy* and the *Convivio*, but in the *Comedy* Dante elected to express his views in verse in order to give them persuasive force and to ensure popular circulation. The first two chapters address problems of city and empire, church and state, respectively. Ferrante reads the *Inferno* (Chapter 3) as a metaphor of a corrupt society, "when all its members act for themselves and against the common good." *Purgatory* (Chapter 4) figures "a society in transition, moving from self-centeredness to concern for and commitment to others, but not yet organized within an effective structure." *Paradiso* (Chapter 5) is the "ideal society in all its essential elements working harmoniously." The concluding chapter explains the problems of exchange and communication, and describes how Dante "accepts commerce as an essential part of life in a complex society, as a basic form of exchange, like language, though vulnerable to the same kinds of control." Ferrante surveys medieval attitudes towards "usurers" of both money and language, both forms of exchange open to willful "corruption" (by counterfeiters and