PATRICK BOYDE. *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos*. Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Pp. 408.

Now available in paperback, this book is the first instalment of an ambitious trilogy; the second volume, subtitled *Man and Society*, is already in press. For Dante's cosmology, it accomplishes in impressive detail the sort of project that C.S. Lewis sketched some twenty years ago (with apologies for leaving the quadrivium and celestial diagrams outside his orbit). Boyde in fact lists *The Discarded Image* among the dozen sources that influenced him most (p. 381), and the affinity can be seen, for example, in his elaborate and perceptive reading of the pilgrim Dante's passage through the center of the earth (pp. 70-71), a text that Lewis also highlighted with just a few sentences, but in much the same spirit.

The curious epithet *philomythes* is taken from a text that Dante certainly knew, where Aristotle called every lover of myth in some sense a philosopher (pp. vi, 47). Boyde means it to convey Dante's peculiar stance as a philosophical poet, possessed of a systematic vision of the world that he communicated with enthusiasm. In the author's diagnosis, our professional separation of philosophical and literary research has infected Dante studies with a weakness that is not yet entirely overcome. He makes some trenchant remarks about the narrow categories too frequent in philosophical commentary and the persistent temptation for literary critics to focus on form and art apart from content (pp. 1-2).

The present work is designed to bridge this gap. Some eight maps and astronomical diagrams are therefore provided in good order where they are needed. Successive chapters mount through the entire Aristotelian hierarchy of being: the four elements, meteorology, geography, plants and animals, the celestial bodies and the intelligences. A second part contains four final chapters (pp. 205-95) on Dante's complex synthesis of the creation of the universe with the generation and corruption of things within it, including the origin of human beings. In a third part, some eighty pages of documentation give mostly quotations from primary sources (including Dante's own philosophical prose). Aristotle's natural philosophy is judiciously presented here with generous selections from Aquinas's paraphrases; the student with a little Latin thereby gets a compendium of clear and lapidary sentences that contain all the originals of Dante's technical vocabulary. For Christians, of course, the intelligences were angels, and there is a complete canvass of the scriptural references to those admirable creatures that informed Dante's narrative of encounters with them (pp. 179-90). Precedents in the language of the Bible are indicated wherever relevant, like the "skipping mountains" of the Psalms for the earthquake in Purgatory (pp. 94-95). The four chapters on creation

are documented, as the subject requires, with Patristic expositions of Genesis and texts from Christian and Islamic Neoplatonism.

The book would not fulfill its stated purpose, however, were it a mere encyclopedia of Dante's science. Boyde's chief accomplishment is to demonstrate the interlocking of science and poetry in Dante's art. Each chapter has a literary analysis of the effects that branch of doctrine had on Dante's drama and wordcraft, showing the force of scientific conceptions working its way into the structure of his lines, and emotion reaching its most intense expression in the passages that are densest with doctrine. We find that Aristotle's psychology of wonder as the beginning of wisdom controls the changing prominence and tone given to *maraviglia* and *stupor* in stages from the opening of the *Purgatorio* into the *Paradiso* (pp. 43-56). Multiple poetic techniques verbally recreate the perception of the more impressive physical phenomena at the same time as Dante presents them in the language of scientific description (e.g. pp. 84, 88). The narrative is heavily charged each time some milestone point or division of the universe is reached and crossed. The technical vocabulary is more widespread than first appears (the innocent vocables *raggio*, *lume*, *luce*, *splendore* are terms of art, pp. 207-08), and it contributes to the dry and lean character of Dante's diction, his talent displayed instead in the rich texture of other poetic devices (pp. 89-90).

Boyde's reasoned account of the antique cosmology and theology is sympathetic. He retraces the roots of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic thought in common sense and ordinary language often enough for the modern reader to comprehend that, with all its weaknesses, the strength of the "discarded image" was its kinship with some of our basic feelings: the love of light, warmth, colours, shapes, and sleep, our fear of some animals and fondness for others, and our awe at the spectacle of the night sky. Such science became more easily the object of love and the subject of poetry, and accorded well with the vast amount of keen naturalist's observation that Dante displays (and the author catalogues, pp. 112-23). Many of the poet's similes and metaphors are shown to have come, in fact, from the philosophical texts. The bow and arrow and the seal and wax run through Aristotle's physics and psychology (pp. 217, 226). Even the famous green log that hisses and spits when it burns (*Inf.* XIII) is often instanced by Aristotle for the interplay of the elements (pp. 71-73). This line of inquiry reaches its peak with the cascade of lyric and incantatory texts on the theme of God as Light that Boyde presents from the *Paradiso* (pp. 266-69), to cap his discussion of the theological grounds (and difficulties) of that comparison.

Dante's originality stands out clearly demarcated against this panorama of inherited teaching, whether it be in a metaphor like the "upside-down tree of time" (p. 160) or the brilliant solution to problems of theological geography that he invented with Mount Purgatory (pp. 109-11). Boyde's study of the poet's view of creation is perhaps the knottiest and most obscure part of the book (in this reflecting Dante himself?), but it plausibly concludes with a "reconstruction" in which the Neoplatonic mediation of divine creation by the intelligences and the heavens looms too large for strict orthodoxy (pp. 263-65). Partly by reference to Statius's explanation of shades, Boyde has demonstrated rather more of a system in Dante's ontology than Gilson could find at the end of *Dante the Philosopher*.

Only a handful of misprints, early in the Latin of the notes, mar the presentation of the book. It is hard to tell whether a numerical misprint or merely the thicket of argument produces an apparent inconsistency about the day the pilgrim entered Hell (Thursday or Friday, p. 163). The Dominican Fathers of Ottawa (p. 357) are once confused with Toronto's Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies (p. 300).

A single serious conceptual difficulty arises at the start, and that is in Boyde's diffident and differentiated but still extended comparison of Dante with Lucretius. Classicists will recognize that the point is a similar fusion of style and doctrine in the Roman author, and Santayana did make the same link in his eloquent *Three Philosophical Poets*. But for most readers of Dante, this introduction is pedagogically unsound — *ad ignota per minus nota* — and perhaps fundamentally confusing. The strongest complaint could be developed from the difference between didactic and narrative modes (acknowledged by the author on p. 3). Had Dante known of Lucretius (and Aristotle's *Poetics*), one wonders if he might not have applied to him the Philosopher's strictures on Empedocles: what is written in verse is not necessarily poetry unless it does a work of *mimesis*.

This comparison seems to have blurred some distinctions with regard to the *Comedy* as well. "Hypothesis" and "model" are good words for our attempts to project a religious conversion into Dante's biography (p. 37), but they are hardly the last word on the poem that purports to recount the events by which that conversion was effected. (Compare "his fiction," p. 287; the Letter to Can Grande defends with two *exempla* precisely the possibility of *some* vision of God in this life, *not* ultimate happiness.) It should be stressed that Dante was so much the *philomythes* that he laid down the requirement that we believe his story, even if our suspension of disbelief is achieved at the cost of historical incoherences. Among his poetic conventions was the primacy of the literal sense.

Beyond that hurdle, in any case, the reader who has some taste of Dante will be well advised to consult this extensive and exhaustive survey on any and all details of the poet's world-lore and its central place in his art.

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RONALD G. WITT. *Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1983. Pp. 480.

Although it is difficult to credit, given the vast amount of documentary evidence surviving about Salutati's life and given the significance that has been attached to his career in the formation of Florentine humanism in late Trecento and early Quattrocento, Ronald G. Witt's *Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* represents the first complete biography written about the celebrated humanist chancellor. Indeed, an explanation of this curious fact may perhaps be that the