reification of language, the 'linguistification' of reality takes place in Modistic theory" (79). In this chapter, Lombardi expands on the contributions of scholars as disparate as J. Pinborg, N. Chomsky, J. Derrida, and C. Marmo, in order to analyze another Trinitarian syntactic model in the *constructio-congruitas-perfectio* distinctions of the Modistae. She argues, furthermore, that all three stages are "permeated by desire. In *constructio*, the linear desire between the material dependent and the formal terminant establishes the supremacy of matter at the heart of modistic syntax. In *congruitas*, desire is featured as a form of order [... and in] *perfectio*, desire is twofold: the drive on the part of the intellect, which pushes the sentence forward until it is pacified by the presence of a verb, and the external desire of the hearer, which is pacified by the construction" (120).

In her third chapter, which is somewhat more accessible than the first two, Lombardi utilizes the theological and linguistic information she has gleaned from her earlier chapters in order to propose an even more convincing poetic paradigm for the syntax of desire in Dante's works. The chapter consists of critical comparisons of passages from *Convivio* 2.13 and *Paradise* 2 (on the theory of rarity and density as it relates to grammar), from *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.4 and *Paradise* 26 (on Dante's evolving understanding of language and desire issues related to Adam's speech), and from Dante's various analyses of the Babel narrative and other metalinguistic discourses in the *Comedy*. Lombardi argues that Dante must plumb the depths of aphasia in order to find, almost paradoxically, the poetry that can serve as a binding force, the syntax of rhyme and rhythm, borne out of desire and love, that can help to guide him and his readers beyond a fallen condition.

Lombardi presents an extremely dense study. Her prose gives the impression that she has been puzzling over the Augustinian and Scholastic nuances in Dante for decades. At times this book reads something like the meeting of Umberto Eco and Christian Moevs. But no matter what one might wonder at the conflation of a minute, technical/theoretical linguistics with a vast, spiritualized, theological metaphysics, it works. And it puts Lombardi in very good company, indeed.

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Pamela Williams. *Through Human Love to God. Essays on Dante and Petrarch*. Leicester, UK: Troubadour Publishing Ltd., 2007. Pp. 137. ISBN 978-1905886-401. US \$22.95, £12.99

Through Human Love to God. Essays on Dante and Petrarch by Pamela Williams is a work that contains four essays on two of the most influential Italian poets in the fourteenth century, Dante and Petrarch. In writing this book, Williams has decided to delineate and to study thoroughly a particular aspect of love and its peculiar nature as interpreted by the two poets in their works. Williams devotes two essays to each of the poets and the result is a well balanced work, especially if we consider the rather complicated subject, which deals with themes from Philosophy,

Theology, and Literature. The bibliography contains very well selected sources, showing the ability of the author to choose key authors from a voluminous selection of works.

In her introduction, Pamela Williams marks out clearly the objective of her study: «to highlight certain essential characteristics of the attitude of Dante and Petrarch to human and divine love». To illustrate these human and divine elements, Williams quotes not only classical authors such as Plato, Aristotle and Cicero and their specific opinions about it, but also the important influence of subsequent Medieval courtly literature.

With the first essay, *Acedia as Dante's Sin in the Commedia*, William recognizes this sin, also known as sloth, as central to understanding Dante's meeting with Beatrice in the Earthly Paradise. Naturally, as Williams convincingly affirms, it was not Dante's only sin, but it was indeed the sin that proves to be the greatest impediment to the poet considering God, rather than Beatrice, as his guide for his moral life. Williams's following essay illustrates once again an interesting interpretation of Dante's relationship to human and divine love in the light of his worldly love for Beatrice. We are now transported to the first three heavens of Paradise; more precisely, to the last one, the Heaven of Venus. For a better understanding of Dante, of the *Divina Commedia* and, particularly, of Paradise, we need to have a special key, and it is important to know that here everything moves according to desire. Desire fits well into these worlds, and perhaps it is only in Dante's Paradise that we can see at its highest point this correlation between sexual desire and erotic love. When he decides to speak of his love for philosophy or when he describes his pangs of love for a woman (and we know well what kind of a font Beatrice was for Dante), Dante's grammar of love is exactly the same. As Williams rightly shows, the sexual desire in Dante for Beatrice, even in Paradise, is stronger than his love for God.

On the same subject of love, and through an analysis of its intimate influence on her other great Italian poet, Williams introduces *Sexual Sin and Petrarch's Love For Laura*, the third essay of this book. First of all, while voicing her disagreement with another Italian poet, Giacomo Leopardi, who considers Petrarch's Platonism a sort of myth, Williams points out instead that in the *Canzoniere* sexual desire for Laura is almost totally absent. Many years ago Umberto Bosco, an illustrious Italian scholar of Petrarch also quoted by our author, specified that there are only two episodes in which we can see Petrarch's sexual desire. In formulating her theory, Williams cleverly shows that, throughout all of Petrarch's life, St. Augustine's works and his inflexible philosophy on sex were of exceptional importance to the fourteenth century poet. In fact, echoes of St. Augustine's words in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* are quite easily audible, as are the similarities between some sonnets or canzoni with the *Secretum*, all elements that clearly show a dependence on Augustine's *Confessions*.

With the last essay on canzone 366 of the *Canzoniere* and on the motivating force of human love, Williams broaches Petrarch's interpretation of this spectacular hymn dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In this, his last canzone, Petrarch "deplores his life and admits his sin," reaching in so doing some important conclusions

about philosophical Stoicism. Written about twenty-four years before his death, even this canzone shows that Petrarch was still quite remarkably influenced by Augustine who is considered one of the fundamental figures of the Stoic tradition in the West. The influence of Augustine, who wrote about his life as a sinner in his *Confessions*, is seen in the last canzone of Petrarch as an act of real penitence. Even though Petrarch differed from Dante because he did not transform or transfigure human love into a sort of beautiful religious ecstasy, both authors wrote and thought about aspects of love, sexual desire, and lust even if they tried to resolve them in different ways.

This book is well written with accurate translations from Latin and Italian into English. It contains some interesting information and it provides a novel interpretation of important aspects of the works of two great poets and their relationship with Love.

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Roberta Morosini. *Per Difetto Rintegrare: Una Lettura del Filocolo di Giovanni Boccaccio*. Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2004. Pp. 222. ISBN 88-8063-397-X, € 25.

In questo eccellente saggio, scritto "per scelta" sulla filigrana della sua tesi di dottorato (ed a ragione, consideratone l'assoluto rigore non disgiunto da una certa qual freschezza espositiva), Roberta Morosini affronta simultaneamente diverse questioni. L'oggetto dell'analisi è il *Filocolo*, di cui l'autrice rigetta brillantemente l'invalso *status* critico di opera giovanile e farraginoso, appuntando la sua analisi sul ruolo della ripetizione con *variatio* della vicenda di Florio e Biancifiore, così come essa viene 'ri-narrata' dal 'compositore' dell'opera e da diversi dei suoi personaggi. Il 'compositore' (la cui distinzione dall'"autore" Boccaccio rispetto alla paternità dell'istanza narrativa e dalla figura del mero 'compilatore' rispetto alla sostanza diegetica è sottilmente studiata nel primo capitolo del saggio) avrebbe l'obiettivo di strappare la vera storia dei due amanti ai *fabulosi parlari degli ignoranti* (e cioè alle storie imprecise di persone non rozze, ma semplicemente 'mal informate'), 'reintegrando' elementi dell'*inventio* narrativa omissi a causa di difetti strutturali o volute, strategiche, omissioni riscontrabili nelle versioni dei vari affabulatori. Nel dirimere detta questione l'autrice sottolinea anche la *metanoia* di Florio-Filocolo avvenuta a Napoli, presso la corte di Fiammetta, in cui (nella famosa 'cornice' da tanti studiosi considerata esclusivamente un prologo di quella del *Decameron*), Florio intraprenderebbe non soltanto un itinerario di conversione ma, anche e soprattutto, farebbe sua, attraverso l'escussione delle *Quistioni d'Amore*, l'arte di amare razionalmente.

Organizzato su di un'introduzione, quattro capitoli, una conclusione ed un'appendice, lo studio ci aiuta ad inseguire il movimento di quella che l'autrice chiama, con metafora certamente felice, l'"onda" narrativa boccacciana. Il primo capitolo, dopo alcune decisive questioni di semantica, si sofferma sulla 'fase di andata' e cioè sul *nostos* alla ricerca dell'amata. Il secondo s'incentra sulle già citate