specific attention to the purification process in *Purgatorio* 10, 11, and 12, which associate pride—the gravest and most regrettable sin from Dante's theological perspective—with artistic and poetic achievements. Chapter 4 examines intercessory prayer, which creates a synergy that brings together penitent souls and devout humans, culminating in the prodigious procession and liturgy of repentance that takes place in the biblical Garden of Eden at the end of *Purgatorio*.

The final chapter, "Dancing Souls in *Paradiso*," establishes that heavenly prayer expresses itself primarily through singing, since music is by definition more spiritual and harmonious than words alone and is traditionally the language of angels. As evidence of the beatitude that fills them, and despite the fact that they do not possess a physical body, the blessed souls also dance. Vettori examines their dancing as expression of their perfect communion among themselves, as well as with God, and as a highly symbolic act of liturgical celebration from a spiritual and anthropological perspective. The souls' melodious chant and harmonious dance reproduce the divine arrangement of *Paradiso*, featured alongside more conventional types of prayer, such as the canonical verbal prayers of the Christian liturgy. This is seen, for example, in the *Ave Maria* at the beginning of the canticle (*Paradiso* 3) and at its end, when Bernard of Clairvaux's prayer introduces the final ascent to the vision of God (*Paradiso* 33) to demonstrate that Dante's entire pilgrimage happens under the protection of Mary.

This work is a robust examination of prayer (and its opposite, blasphemy) as a fundamental structural element in the *Comedy*. Vettori's study advances an acute interpretative hypothesis on the liturgical and sacramental functions of prayer and its effects, both aesthetic and poetic, on the pilgrim-protagonist, on souls themselves, and on Dante's readers, in a balance between the wish to be elsewhere, the wish to be reunited with the world above, and the historical and political realities in which the poem is deeply rooted.

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"Depurare le tenebre delli amorosi miei versi": La lirica di Girolamo Benivieni. Sergio Di Benedetto.
Istituto di Studi Italiani: Università della Svizzera italiana, Officina 5. Florence: Olschki, 2020. 322 pp. €35.

Sergio Di Benedetto's volume represents the first critical-interpretive monograph dedicated solely to the lyric production of Florentine author and Dantist Girolamo Benivieni (1453–1542). Because Benivieni lived nearly nine decades, writing for approximately seven of them, his lyric legacy runs the gamut of youthful love lyrics, encomiastic pieces, *piagnone* lauds composed for Girolamo Savonarola's Bonfires of

the Vanities, pastoral rhymes, and verses revised and glossed during the restored Florentine Republic and beyond—in short, vastly different poetic sedimentary layers of historical, cultural, and psychological tensions. Di Benedetto hermeneutically excavates many treasures from Benivieni's literary humus, and does so meticulously, as if with a soft brush and fine-mesh sieve.

This book consists of seven chapters, bookended by a brief introduction and conclusion, along with a comprehensive bibliography. The first two chapters consider Benivieni's participation in the *Firenze laurenziana* through his early love lyrics, stamped by the *dolce stilnovo*, Ficinian Neoplatonism, and Dantean and Petrarchan strains in his early *Canzone e sonetti* and *Bucoliche*, before the *Psalmi penitentiali* of his spiritual conversion and his determination to destroy his earlier collections by consigning them to the flames. Chapters 3–5 represent the primary focus of Di Benedetto's study, each dedicated to the three parts of Benivieni's *Commento* of 1500: the soul's ascension, its fall into sin, and its ultimate revelation through union with God. The author rightly declares, "scorrendo i libri di poesie del Quattrocento, possiamo dire che essa è un *unicum* nel momento in cui esce" ("scanning through fifteenth-century books of poetry, we can say that [the *Commento*] is unique for the time in which it appears," 72), given the spiritual expression and pedagogical impetus that the poet brings in uniting his self-glosses to his *canzoniere*. Di Benedetto traces Benivieni's praxis of lyric reform (rewriting, but also redefining the terms that remain in his poetic work) by means of what Benivieni calls "depurare le tenebre," which Di Benedetto aptly uses as his title. For Benivieni, it is an allegorical-pedagogical mode intended to cast off the darkness of the ignorance and original concupiscent sin of his early love poetry by means of a significantly reworked edition of that poetry, encased in a self-commentary that specifies how, for instance, earthly love and beauty really intend to point the human soul toward divine love and beauty.

We also see in Di Benedetto's procedure how the shadows of Benivieni's grief (for Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, first and foremost, but also for Lorenzo de' Medici, Antonio Manetti, Marsilio Ficino, Politian, Savonarola, and so many others; Benivieni, in his lifelong bachelorhood—at turns lonely and desperate—outlived all of his closest friends) find the light of hope through a Dominican spirituality shared in part with other turn-of-the-sixteenth-century poets, including Ugolino Verino and Giovanni Nesi. Di Benedetto demonstrates appreciable finesse in not painting all *piagnone* poets as a monolithic group. Chapter 6 consists of a pioneering consideration of Benivieni's oft-overlooked appendixes to the *Commento* (the "Deploratoria" and a *poemetto* titled "Amore") vis-à-vis the *itinerarium animae in Deum*, while the final chapter presents a consideration of Benivieni's *Opere* and final edits to his poetry in the Cinquecento.

At no point does Di Benedetto attempt to force Benivieni's verse to stand for a single poetic school or ideology, nor does he want needlessly to flatten or reconcile the divergent strains of influences on Benivieni's poetic production. This research concentrates

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and distills Benivieni's lyric text, thus foregoing any consideration of how Benivieni's poetry extended to other disciplines (one immediately calls to mind in musicology how Benivieni's lauds were set to melodies already familiar to Florentines in the 1490s, an area admirably explored by Patrick Macey in *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola's Musical Legacy* [1998]). By focusing on the cultural precedents for Benivieni's poetry, Di Benedetto's research earns its place in the company of Benivieni studies destined for long duration.

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Le Décaméron de Boccace: Une œuvre de transition. Catherine Guimbard. Nouvelle bibliothèque du Moyen Âge 124. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2019. 282 pp. €45.

Catherine Guimbard has written an eloquent, comprehensive treatment of Giovanni Boccaccio's most famous work, which has received new notice in the face of COVID-19. The first chapter, "A Double Formation: A Double Passion," reviews the biography of Boccaccio, beginning with his legal and literary education in Naples, where Angevin rule brought together the classical and French as well as the merchant and courtly traditions. Guimbard examines the *Decameron* in the context of Guelph republican politics before emphasizing the Horatian thematic of pleasure and utility. Addressing the powers of fortune, love, intelligence, and reason, the storytellers "take destiny into their own hands . . . and re-create a reality indifferent to all metaphysical tension but not bereft of an ethical dimension" (45).

Chapter 2, "The Codification of the Genre 'Novella,'" discusses the new literary space for Boccaccio's work, based upon the narrator's voice in the introduction to day 4's storytelling. It is a voice opposed to the learned and the intellectuals of his time; Boccaccio disrupts exemplarity by introducing and multiplying points of view, even as he links novelle through the frame story. In contrast to clerical examples, a novella is an "anti-exemplum," allowing liberty of judgment. In addition, "Boccaccio's novella offers us the first free representation of the new merchant society, a non-idealized image of earthly life" (77). Chapter 3 examines the garden as a narrative frame. In one sense, the garden exemplifies openness and the work's fusion of genres; in another sense, it is closed by a wall, signifying the "precise delimitation of reality" (84). The storytellers form a new garden, based on rationality, in transition from the church: it is "the antithesis to the Church, it opposes itself to it like activity to passivity, like the will to begin again to the acceptance of the end, like life to death" (90). The garden is a place of narrative and ludic activity, a site of atonement and rebirth (*renaissance*). Sounding an Occamist note, Guimbard stresses how knowledge here is based upon particulars and rounded with uncertainty.