



as late medieval contemporaries, this insightful study reveals that it is also remarkably modern.

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The Divine Vision of Dante's "Paradiso": The Metaphysics of Representation.
William Franke.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. xx + 304 pp. \$29.99.

William Franke's latest monograph is a relative novelty in Dante studies: an intensive study on a single episode, the manifestation of Scripture in *Paradiso* 18: "Love justice, you who rule the earth" (18.70–136). His core thesis is that this textual appearance functions as a theophany, anticipating the *visio Dei* while negotiating the representation of divine presence through a written text. The study is ultimately an examination of Dante's metaphysics of representation, raising questions of mediation that can serve as a point of inquiry for scholars in other fields across the humanities and social sciences. This is consistent with Franke's entire oeuvre, which seeks to understand the ramifications Dante's thought can have for us today "in the broad horizon of our intellectual traditions and cultural heritage" (xi).

These two aims guide the structure of the book, which is split into two parts. Part 1, "The Literary Vision," provides a literary-critical study of the passage. Chapter 1 examines the basis for Franke's argument of the scriptural writing as theophany from Christ as *logos*. As the Incarnation mediates the human and the divine, the written medium of the passage is the only true presence of the divine possible in a poem. Chapter 2 delves into the nexus of speaking, writing, and contingency, wherein Dante's focus on the parts of language as part of a larger implicit order reveals divine order. Chapter 3 uses the speculative grammar of Dante's time to show this order as a microcosm of unity in diversity in the *Paradiso*. In chapter 4, Franke shows how Dante uses language and images to point to infinity by the limits of mediation itself, which then further connects to the heaven of Jupiter's association with justice, the focus of chapter 5. This rich chapter argues for Dante's understanding of language as transcendent. For Dante, God is infinite excess and glimpsed in the breakdown of signification, yet only God is ontologically self-sufficient. Franke argues that the interplaying mechanics of image and language in the scene are meant to draw the reader into a similar sort of self-reflection to open oneself up to divinity. Chapter 6 focuses on God as the source of all mediation, but that he is only visible when mediation fails, pointing to that which cannot be mediated.

Part 2, "Philosophical Reflections," is composed of six chapters, or excursus. Excursus 1 rehashes the main arguments in part 1 about language vis-à-vis more recent

theories of language. Excursus 2 draws on Saussure to show that Dante views language as revealing a transcendent sense of totality that is a mirror of the divine. Excursus 3 extends the analysis of language into ideas of temporality and eternity through Christ as *logos*. Excursus 4 discusses how Dante's conception of transcendence differs from modern phenomenology by viewing the negotiation of otherness as not rooted in the self, but rather in God, in whose image the self is created. Excursus 5 focuses on language's revelatory power for Dante, revealing the providential order of the world in justice. Excursus 6 uses Levinas to argue that Dante's idea of language results in an "ethical imperative of justice" (198), Franke's final argument about Dante's continued relevance for the modern reader.

Ultimately, the study's structural division belies the stated purpose of bringing in a wider audience. While part 1 is self-contained, part 2 struggles to justify its existence as a separate entity. The issue here is that none of the excursus function individually from the others or separately from part 1. The sum experience of the monograph leads to a lingering question of how it could have been better unified, which dulls the provocative questions and conclusions one encounters in its pages. This further complicates the intended audience, as it is not ideal for a reader with no prior experience with Dante. Despite this, Franke's study is indispensable, as it offers a fresh take on the contemporary need for further engagement with the *Commedia*, in addition to posing deep new insights on Dante and medieval theology more broadly. Franke's thorough analysis on ideas of language, mediation, and justice in the heaven of Jupiter offers plenty of insights that will be sure to enrich further studies on the *Commedia*.

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Torquato Tasso e il desiderio di unità: La Gerusalemme liberata e una nuova teoria dell'epica. Corrado Confalonieri.

Rome: Carocci, 2022. 250 pp. €28.

The book analyzes the history of the theory of epic, with a focus on Torquato Tasso and the issue of unity—how many actions the plot should have, what an action is, the relationship between episodes and the main narrative thread, the motivation behind the characters' actions. The topic is of paramount importance, since unity has been the defining quality of epic vis-à-vis competing genres such as the chivalric romance (and later the novel) for centuries, respectively characterized by "unity/variety, . . . collective war/individual adventure, . . . [and] linearity of the events/deviations" (16, translations mine). Confalonieri's analysis ranges from Aristotle and Horace (chapter 1) to the Italian sixteenth century (chapter 2), from Hegel to Lukács and Bakhtin (chapter 3).