TEODOLINDA BAROLINI

EDITING DANTE'S RIME
AND ITALIAN CULTURAL HISTORY
DANTE, BOCCACCIO, PETRARCA... BARBI,
CONTINI, FOSTER-BOYDE, DE ROBERTIS

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Editing Dante’s *Rime* and Italian Cultural History

Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca... Barbi, Contini, Foster-Boyde, De Robertis

In this essay I will consider the great editions and commentaries of Dante’s *rime* that have been produced in the last century: the editions with commentary of Michele Barbi and Gianfranco Contini, the commentary of Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde, and the edition of Domenico De Robertis. The result of my undertaking a commentary of the *rime* for the *Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli*,¹ this paper tracks an experience that has opened up intellectual and cultural vistas that extend far beyond the philological domain to which it might have seemed limited. As I immersed myself in the editorial history of the *rime*, I found myself (as someone who

¹ This project, one-third completed, is one that I undertook with the help of my then student, Manuele Gragnolati, now Lecturer in Italian at Oxford University, who is providing the notes while I am writing introductory essays to each poem. Three of my *cappelli introduttivi* appear in the new journal *Dante: Rivista internazionale di studi danteschi* 1, 2004: «Saggio di un nuovo commento alle *Rime* di Dante. 1. *La dispietata mente che pur mira*: l’io al crocevia di memoria e disio; 2. *Sonar bracchetti e cacciatori azzare*: l’io diviso tra mondo maschile e mondo femminile; 3. *Guido, i’ vorrei che tu e Lippo ed io*: l’io e l’incanto della non-differenza». I would like to take this opportunity to thank my students Daniela Castelli and Martin Eisner, whose generosity as interlocutors has proved invaluable to me throughout the incubation of this essay.
claims no expertise as a philologist or an editor) fascinated by the cultural history embedded in the editorial history. This metacritical meditation has therefore a double focus. I analyze the contribution of each of these editions and commentaries in the complicated history of our reception of Dante's *rime*. I also suggest that a discourse has built up around the enterprise of editing the *rime*—signaled by terms like *raccogliere*, *organico*, *frammento*, *estravaganti*—that has become freighted with the emotional value that the binary *raccogliere* versus *frammento* has assumed over centuries within the Italian imaginary. An enterprise that might seem like a sluggish philological backwater is quickened and made treacherous by the mighty current of Italian identity formation and cultural history.

Its literary giants peculiarly mark Italian identity—and each of the *tre corone* plays a part in this story. Indeed, the significance of this particular editorial history is highlighted by the way it implicates right from the start, as we shall see, not only Dante but also Boccaccio and Petrarch. The role of literary culture in overall Italian culture has traditionally been a powerful one: the great cultural debate that resulted in the choice of Tuscan as the national language was a literary debate; by the same token, Italian nationalism was in part constructed on the shoulders of Dante and other literary icons, as all the statues and street names attest. The ideological and cultural pressures that beset any philological enterprise, given the connection to canon formation, are supremely present in *filologia dantesca*, because of the enormous cultural investment in Dante's status as a national icon. The Dante monuments whose cultural significance I seek to interpret here are not the monuments in stone, but rather the great editions of the *rime* that were produced along the arc of the twentieth century in an editorial enterprise that recently both culminated and concluded with the publication of Domenico De Robertis's five-volume—truly monumental—undertaking.2

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Each of these great editions and/or commentaries of Dante's lyrics is magisterial in its own way. Michele Barbi's 1921 edition of the *rime* for the Società Dantesca Italiana forms the textual nucleus of the posthumous edition with commentary published by the two disciples he chose to complete his work, Francesco Maggini and Vincenzo Pernicone. Working with Barbi's notes and integrating his material, both published and unpublished, with their own, Maggini and Pernicone gathered the fruits of Barbi's long philological and historical labors on the *Rime* into two volumes: Barbi-Maggini, *Rime della 'Vita Nuova' e della giovinanza*, 1956, and Barbi-Pernicone, *Rime della maturità e dell'esilio*, 1969. In the meantime, Gianfranco Contini's edition and commentary of the *Rime*, noted for the pithiness and elegance of its formulations, was published first in 1939, then in revised and expanded form in 1946, with a second revised edition in 1965. In 1967 the British scholars Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde published their translation and commentary, exceptionally useful for its comprehensiveness and for the lucidity of the historical portrait that emerges of the early Italian lyric schools. Finally, the edition by De Robertis that came out in 2002, and that Contini announced as long ago as his 1965 «Postilla del curatore» (xxv), has replaced Barbi's as the authorized edition of the *Rime*.

The editorial history of Dante's lyrics is remarkably complex, and it is so for structural reasons. Because Dante viewed his lyrics, with the eventual exception of the ones he included in the *Vita No-
va and the *Convivio*, as independent freestanding texts rather than as parts of a whole, the editorial tradition has to be tackled poem by poem. As a result of not belonging to a single work, in other words, the *rime* pose a daunting editorial challenge: the dispersion of the poems requires the editor to deal with a very high number of manuscripts, and to follow individual poems and groups of poems through anthologies prepared by copyists. As Contini explains in the «Nota al testo» to his edition, «la storia della tradizione di quelle che chiamammo le ‘estravaganti’ dantesche si converte nello studio comparativo degli antichi canzonieri e nell’esame genetico della *varia lectio* delle singole liriche» (284). Pernicone, who in turn received the baton from Barbi, entrusted this massive task of reconstructing the manuscript tradition for each poem to De Robertis; De Robertis’s edition thus stands as a direct genealogical descendant of Barbi’s and technically completes the task that Barbi envisioned.

The most important editor/copyist in the editorial history of Dante’s *rime* is Dante himself, who copied some poems but not others into the *Vita Nova* and *Convivio*. His choices reverberate down through the editorial history – and literary history – of these poems. Indeed, as a result of the historical impact of Dante’s decisions, in many ways this essay’s true topic will turn out to be the manifold effects of this self-intervention, the historical compensa-

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7 De Robertis notes that «La tradizione è rappresentata da oltre 500 manoscritti» (*I documenti* 1: xviii). Michelangelo Picone described De Robertis’s task thus: «Nel suo Censimento dei manoscritti di *rime* di Dante D. De Robertis ha catalogato all’incirca 450 codici, contando sia le raccolte organiche sia quelle occasionali, sia le attribuzioni uniche sia le testimonianze frammentarie. Anche se sotraiamo a questa cifra i 113 manoscritti contenenti *Rime* apocrife di Dante (in particolare le *Rime* penitenziali composte verso la fine del Trecento, e attribuite a Dante per uniformare il suo canzoniere a quello di Petrarcha), rimane un numero sempre imponente di attestazioni, soprattutto se confrontato con quello delle altre opere minori (con l’ottantina di manoscritti della *Vita nuova*, o con la quarantina del *Convivio*)». See *Dante rimatore*, in *Letture Classensi: Le *Rime* di Dante*, vol 24, ed. Michelangelo Picone, Ravenna, Longo, 1995, pp. 177-178.

8 De Robertis movingly describes this passing of the baton on the first page of his *Prefazione* to his five volumes: «Barbi vecchio, sperando che qualcuno delle nuove generazioni ne rilevasse e continuasse il lavoro, e che negli ultimi suoi anni vi si era associato l’allor verde Pernicone; questi, succedutiogli alla sua scomparsa, che mi chiese al suo fianco dal 1957 e segui i miei progressi finché, stanco, non lasciò tutto a me l’incarico» (*I documenti* 1: xiii). The task conferred upon De Robertis in 1957 thus came to fruition 45 years later.
tions and distortions that developed in response to Dante’s decision to choose some of his poems for inclusion in new texts that will have their own editorial traditions, their own receptions, and their own complex literary genealogies. With respect to literary history, I am thinking in particular of the line that leads from the *Vita Nova* to Petrarch’s *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*, a genealogy that seems on the one hand to exclude the *rime* but that on the other will have a direct bearing on the assumptions of the *rime*’s editors. As we shall see, of all the choices that an editor of Dante’s lyrics is obliged to make, none reveals more about his or her hermeneutic assumptions – none has greater ideological significance – than the choice of what to do with the poems of the *Vita Nova*.

The second most important editor/copyist in the editorial history of the *rime* is Boccaccio. Boccaccio copied fifteen of Dante’s canzoni in Toledano 104.6, a codex which includes his first redaction of the *Vita di Dante* and in which he also copied the *Vita Nova* and *Commedia*; he copied the same fifteen canzoni, in the same order, in Chigiano L.V.176, where he copied also his *Vita di Dante*, Dante’s *Vita Nova*, Cavalcanti’s *Donna mi prega*, his poem to Petrarch *Italie iam certus bonos*, and the early form of Petrarch’s authorially collected lyrics, titled *Fragmentorum liber*, known as the Chigiano form. Boccaccio in this way fashioned a group of Dante’s lyric poems, all canzoni, which became, in effect, a canon. These fifteen poems, which Boccaccio refers to as «le canzoni distese di Dante» and which I list for ease in viewing their order, are: 9

Cosi nel mio parlar vogli’esser aspro  
Voi che ‘ntendendo il terzo ciel movete  
Amor che nella mente mi ragiona  
Le dolci rime d’amor ch’io solea  
Amor che movi tua vertù dal cielo  
Io sento sì d’Amor la gran possanza

9 Boccaccio concludes the section of the Chigiano devoted to Dante’s canzoni with the phrase «finiscono le canzoni distese di Dante»; see *Il Codice Chigiano L.V.176: autografo di Giovanni Boccaccio*, edizione fototipica, introduction by Domenico De Robertis, Roma, Archivi Edizioni, 1974. De Robertis glosses «distese» (ossia pluristrofiche) (I documenti 1: xix). Incipits, and all textual citations, are from the De Robertis edition. The Chigiano is being studied by my student Martin Eisner, whose dissertation analyzes the codex as the site of a complex encounter, engineered by Boccaccio, between himself, Dante, and Petrarch.
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Al poco giorno ed al gran cercchio d'ombra
Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna
Io son venuto al punto della rota
E' m'incresce di me si duramente
Poscia ch'Amor del tutto m'ha lasciato
La dispettata mente che pur mira
Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute
Doglia mi reca nello core ardire
Amor, da che convien pur ch'io mi doglia

Subsequent anthologists picked up not only Boccaccio's choice of these particular fifteen canzoni but also his sequencing. We note that Boccaccio's canzoni distese include the three canzoni of the Convivio, in the order in which they appear in the Convivio, but not the canzoni of the Vita Nova, which he copied separately by virtue of transcribing the entire libello.

Of the first print anthologies, the most important is the 1527 volume of the Florentine Giunti brothers, Sonetti e canzoni di diversi antichi autori toscani, commonly known as the «Giuntina».10 The Giuntina has exerted its authority both in the textual domain («Si può dire che nulla in ispecie per le rime di Dante è stato fatto fino ad oggi, anche dal punto di vista testuale, senza tener presente Giuntina» writes De Robertis [Introduzione 2: 1074]), and with respect to the overarching issue of how to organize the poems. Offering what De Robertis calls «[l]a prima proposta di sistemazione e d'ordinamento delle rime di Dante» (Introduzione 2: 1141), the Giuntina devotes its first four books to Dante's lyric output, under the following headings:

Sonetti e canzoni di Dante Alaghieri ne la sua Vita Nuova. Libro primo
Sonetti e canzoni di Dante Alaghieri. Libro secondo
Canzoni amorose e morali di Dante Alaghieri. Libro terzo
Canzoni morali di Dante Alaghieri. Libro quarto

As we can see, the Giuntina here adopts a variety of classificatory criteria, all inconsistently applied. There is a formal criterion, in that two of the four books are restricted to canzoni (traditional-

ly, copyists grouped poems by genre, and according to a hierarchy that began with canzoni, followed by ballate and sonnets). There is also a thematic criterion, given that Book 4 purports to contain only moral canzoni (here at the outset are the three canzoni of the Convivio, again in their Convivio order), while Book 3 contains «Canzoni amorose e morali». Most significantly, the author’s own editorial interventions constitute a basis for classification, for Book 1 segregates the poems that Dante had selected for the Vita Nova, reprinting the 31 canzoni, sonnets, and ballate of the Vita Nova in the order in which Dante places them in the libello, but without the prose frame. Finally, in that the Vita Nova poems are placed first in the Giuntina’s order and the mature canzoni last, there seems to be a very crude overarching chronological criterion at work as well.11

By the twentieth century the chronological criterion that we see only implicitly in the Giuntina had become the explicit basis for ordering Dante’s poems. Barbi, and after him Contini – for although Contini does not intervene with respect to the actual sequence of the poems, which he copies from Barbi, he frequently comments on what he sees as their «cronologia ideale» (67) – weave the empirical evidence that we possess into a chronological framework provided by Dante’s overall artistic trajectory. Key to achieving this loose chronology was an ever more systematic analysis of the stylistic, rhetorical, and intertextual features of the poems, as first Contini and then Foster and Boyde built on Barbi’s foundational edition. The move toward an ever more empirical approach in these areas of scholarship is evident in Foster and Boyde’s commentary and finds full expression in Patrick Boyde’s use of quantitative tools as a way of understanding the development of Dante’s lyric production in his book Dante’s Style in his Lyric Poetry, published four years after the commentary he did in

11 Book 2 is the least cohesive: its 30 poems consist mainly of sonnets and ballate, many no longer attributed to Dante (starting with Fresca rosa novella), and only two canzoni, of which one is no longer considered Dante’s and the other is the trilingual descort which De Robertis has returned to the canon. Dante’s exchange with Dante da Maiano appears (for the first time) in Book 11 of the Giuntina, «Sonetti dei sopradetti autori mandati l’uno a l’altro».
tandem with Kenelm Foster. In their commentary, Foster and Boyde press this approach into the service of reconstructing Dante’s artistic development over time, carefully showing, for instance, how Dante first restricts his vocabulary to forge the stilnovo and then gradually allows it to expand again as he matures beyond the stilnovo.

This brief survey reminds us of what is in any case a logical necessity, namely that any editor of Dante’s lyrics is constrained – in the absence of a work constructed by the author – to adopt his or her own principles of construction, in short, to make his or her own choices. In examining the choices of the editors I will be surveying here, I am going to begin with the most recent, De Robertis. His edition is truly anomalous with respect to the modern tradition, because he rejects altogether the chronological criterion for order that dominates the great twentieth century editions. De Robertis chooses a different criterion from the one chosen by previous editors; he chooses to follow where possible the traces of the editorial history that he tracked so assiduously in his decades of manuscript review. In other words, he substitutes the history of the transmission of the poems for the history of Dante’s development as a poet.

De Robertis outlines the two choices that confront an editor of the rime – the choice of attempting to follow in Dante’s footsteps or the choice of following in the footsteps of previous editors – and he chooses to follow the editors: «O si traccia, si rintraccia una storia, la storia beninteso del lavoro poetico di Dante, quella che la stessa Vita Nova per la sua parte adombrà e che la secolare interpretazione, tra Otto e Novecento, si è sforzata di perseguire; ovvero si propone una forma, almeno quella che la tradizione, la trazione del testo delle rime di Dante, ha via via coagulato e sembra autorizzare... con la segreta speranza, magari, che la tradizione rispecchi la storia del lavoro del poeta o restituisca (tradisca) un’ipotesi ordinatrice» (Introduzione 2: 1144). De Robertis’s edition thus opts to forego the attempt to reconstruct «la storia del lavoro poetico di Dante» and to offer us instead «la tradizione del testo delle

rime di Dante»; at the same time he nurtures the «segreta speranza» that in choosing the latter path he will end up on the former.

De Robertis’s hope that the tradition may reflect Dante’s own arrangement of his poems – «che la tradizione rispecchi la storia del lavoro del poeta o restituisca (tradisca) un’ipotesi ordinatrice» – seems unfounded, given the imbalance between the conservative backwardness of the editorial tradition and the radical adventurousness of the man who wrote the poems in question: if, according to Contini’s dictum, «L’impressione genuina del postero, incontrandosi in Dante, non è d’imbattersi in un tenace e ben conservato sopravvissuto, ma di raggiungere qualcuno arrivato prima di lui», we can safely say that Dante left the editorial tradition light-years in his wake.13 While a tradition may possibly reflect the will of an author, there are many cases in which it does not (Petrarch is an immediate example who springs to mind);14 certainly, to use the tradition as the ordering principle of this edition is to give it an altogether disproportionate and unmerited importance. In effect, De Robertis has staged a kind of regressive coup d’etat, in which he has handed over Dante’s rime to an editorial tradition known more for its deference than for its hermeneutic brilliance.

The reasons De Robertis gives for his choice are both positive and negative. On the positive side of the ledger, he is proposing a «philological model» of Dante’s rime and vindicating what he calls the rights of the philologist over the rights of the author: «Se questo vuol dire proporre un modello ‘filologico’ della raccolta delle rime di Dante (contro, s’immagina, l’interpretazione di una pretesa volontà dantesca, diritti del filologo contro diritti dell’autore), questo è quanto è possibile e legittimo fare» (Introduzione 2: 1198).

The negative side of the ledger is related to the positive, in that it too involves the rights of philology, narrowly conceived as that

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14 Even Petrarch, who left clear instructions for the handling of his poems in his autograph manuscript, has been mauled by an editorial tradition that has systematically misread him, preferring to impose its narrative than to follow the authorial signposts; see TEODOLINDA BAROLINI, The Making of a Lyric Sequence: Time and Narrative in Petrarch’s Rerum vulgarium fragmenta, MLN 104, 1989: pp. 1-38, esp. pp. 7-11.
which is opposed to interpretation: «E per contro, ogni razionalizzazione storica analoga a quella proposta dal Barbi, oltre alle possibili (e ormai ampiamente registrate, e attuate) controdeduzioni, include sempre una componente d’interpretazione che nulla ha a che fare con quella di cui la critica testuale non può mai fare a meno» (Introduzione 2: 1155).

De Robertis is worried about the open-endedness of interpretation. He is concerned that an interpretive ordering on his part would substitute «interpretazione a interpretazione», thus revealing the free and uncontrollable nature of interpretation: «Come minimo la nuova serie, sostituendo interpretazione a interpretazione, comporterebbe tavole di concordanza e un rinvio (come per es. nell’edizione Foster-Boyde) alla numerazione ossia all’interpretazione precedente» (Introduzione 2: 1155). Noteworthy here is the clear understanding that, absent the author’s numbering, the editor’s numbering or ordering of the poems constitutes in itself an act of interpretation («un rinvio... alla numerazione ossia all’interpretazione precedente»).

De Robertis’s fear of interpretation and its radical instability takes the form of a preoccupation with the practical complications of numbering and with the need for tables to coordinate any new numbering with Barbi’s old numbering, «che ha fatto legge dal 1921» (Introduzione 2: 1155). This preoccupation bears very little relation to the reader’s reality. For whereas Barbi’s numbering of the chapters of the Vita Nova, replaced by Guglielmo Gorni in his edition of the libello, is in fact difficult to relinquish – for all those who have spent a lifetime accustomed to chapter 19 as the site of Donne ch’avete and chapter 25 as the locus of Dante’s theory of poetry, it requires real effort to «renumber» the text in one’s mind – Barbi’s numbering of the rime does not carry the same weight for the reader: one does not think of Dante’s rime by Barbi’s – or anyone else’s – numbering system. Barbi’s numbers never became shorthand for referring to the rime in the way that occurred with the numbered chapters of the Vita Nova (which were treated as Dante’s). There has never grown up around Dante’s rime the habitual use of numbers – as for instance one refers to canzone

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126 of the *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* – which makes sense, for Petrarch’s numbers are his own, while Barbi’s are merely the editor’s.

De Robertis seems unaware, or unwilling to acknowledge, that philology too necessarily involves «una componente d’interpretazione» (*Introduzione* 2: 1155). Wanting at all costs to avoid the free flow of interpretation, the indecorous and uncontrollable spectacle of an infinite substitution of «interpretazione a interpretazione» (*Introduzione* 2: 1155), he takes us to a higher ground allegedly free of interpretation: this safe place is constituted by the «tradizione». Once there he concludes by endorsing a methodological principle for ordering Dante’s *rime* – the principle of non-chronology – that is in fact as interpretive as the principles he rejects: «Non è, in conclusione, proponibile non solo un ordinamento ma una prospettiva di queste rime, delle rime, se non secondo i dati della tradizione, nel caso specifico, di una tradizione, a differenza che per le canzoni, non ordinala» (*Introduzione* 2: 1162). That «i dati della tradizione» are also interpretive choices is never acknowledged. The logical inconsistencies of De Robertis’s position are apparent in his use of the issue of authorial will: on the one hand he discredits the attempt to order the poems chronologically by telling us that Dante would not have arranged a collection so, had he made one (and hypothesizes as to which poems Dante would have excluded from his hypothetical edition [*Introduzione* 2: 1150 ff.]); at the same time he discredits a chronological ordering by suggesting that it serves «una pretesa volontà dantesca» and views himself as championing «diritti del filologo contro diritti dell’autore» (*Interpretazione* 2: 1198).

But, in any case, it is not the will of the author that is at stake in attempting to order the poems according to the history of their composition. It is the reader who gains from an ordering of the poems that allows one a window onto Dante’s poetic development. De Robertis puts aside the genuinely editorial impulse to create a poetic history as an interpretive enterprise in the service of understanding the poems, and replaces it with an antiquarian impulse that venerates a different history, the history of the editorial transmission. This is a history that compensates for the disorder bequeathed to us by Dante: it is fixed, it brooks no contradiction, and it admits no interpretive challenge.

The *ordinamento* of the *rime* that results from this methodologi-
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The choice is a bizarre grafting of Boccaccio onto the Giuntina. De Robertis's order begins with the canzoni: first the fifteen canzoni distese copied by Boccaccio, then the canzone not copied by Boccaccio (Lo doloroso amor), then the incipit of the lost canzone mentioned in the De Vulgari Eloquentia (Trag[emi de la mente]), and last the trilingual descort that he restores to Dante (Ai faus ris). From what he calls the «grande prefazio delle canzoni» (Introduzione 2: 1172), De Robertis proceeds to the sonnets and ballate, which he calls «le rime sparse» (1165); with this label De Roberti implicitly invokes the incipit of the first sonnet of the Rerum Vulgarum Fragmenta, where Petrarch thematizes the fragmentariness of his verse («Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono»). In his order De Robertis preserves the Giuntina's segregation by genre, while reversing the Giuntina's sequence of genres: the Giuntina's second book consists mainly of sonnets and ballate, De Robertis's «rime sparse», while its Books 3 and 4 are devoted to canzoni. He also foregoes the Giuntina's partial adoption of a thematic criterion for organizing the canzoni, canzoni morali versus canzoni amorose, deferring instead to Boccaccio's canon.

Numbers 1-18 of De Robertis's Indice delle rime del volume III are thus canzoni (Boccaccio’s 15 + 3); they yield a tally that is already misleading, given that number 17 (Traggemi de la mente) does not exist. The numbering of a poem that is not extant suggests the degree to which any shard of «history», however fragmentary, is fetishized in this edition. The phantom of authenticity takes precedence over the actually extant, given that the nonexistent Traggemi de la mente has a place in De Robertis's tabula whereas, as we shall see, extant poems like Donne ch’avete do not. The fragmented and chaotic order generated by De Robertis's system of inclusions and exclusions effectively controls the impulse to interpretation. Indeed, how could anyone interpret Traggemi de la mente?

After the initial canzoni, there follows the large heterogeneous group of «rime sparse», numbers 19-73 (Segue, editorialmente non distinte se non dal loro ‘venir dietro’, le ‘rime sparse’, nn. 19-73» [Introduzione 2: 1165]), a group that begins with a subcategory, numbers 19-25, consisting of poems that in some way refer to or connect with the canzoni, that constitute «quella che possiamo dire la ‘storia delle canzoni’» (1169). This large category of «il Dante secondo, quello che ‘viene dopo le canzoni’» (1173) contains
sonnets and ballate – including some but not all of the poems of the *Vita Nova*, a point to which we shall return – interwoven with other poems of particular relevance, such as Cavalcanti’s *Fresca rosa novella* and poems from Cavalcanti to Dante. Numbers 77-108 comprise «le rime di corrispondenza o di tenzone, conforme del resto a un criterio che già valeva in alcuni antichi canzonieri» (1166).

If one takes the index to the poems as an index of the editor’s methodology and approach, De Robertis’s index is notable for presenting information in the least accessible way possible. An alphabetical listing of the poems, indispensable for actually using the edition, may be found in the front matter of the first of the five books, *I documenti*, Tomo 1, as far away as possible from the book that contains the poems, which is the last of the five. A listing according to Barbi’s edition («Rime di Dante e dei suoi corrispondenti secondo l’ordine di *Dante ’21*») may be found at the end of *I documenti*, Tomo 2. The volume that contains the texts includes only the listing that follows De Robertis’s order. Moreover, De Robertis follows Barbi in the less than helpful practice of including the poems of correspondents in his consecutive numbering along with Dante’s own poems, discontinuing the practice, used by Contini and Foster-Boye, of numbering the poems of Dante’s interlocutors in such a way as not to add to the total tally. The result is that this edition of the *rime* does not offer a list of poems from which one can easily ascertain the total number of poems assigned to Dante, a particularly unfortunate lacuna in an edition that reassigns to the poet a number of the poems that Barbi had placed in the dubious category.

By tallying De Robertis’s index and cross-referencing it with Barbi’s, I obtained the following data – unavailable in clear form anywhere in the five volumes. Barbi assigns a total of 88 poems to Dante, including the 31 poems of the *Vita Nova* and the 3 poems of the *Convivio*, and puts 26 poems in the dubious category. De Robertis’s edition on the other hand contains 79 poems attributed to Dante and 16 of dubious attribution. Starting with Barbi’s total

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16 De Robertis is inconsistent: while in general he follows the practice of including poems directed to Dante in his consecutive numbering (*Fresca rosa novella* receives its own number, 27, and so forth for all the correspondence poems), the three responses to number 26, *A ciascun’alma*, are numbered 26a, 26b, and 26c. See *Introduzione* 2: 1199.
of 88 poems, De Robertis's total of 79 poems is achieved thus: 1) by subtracting the 31 Vita Nova poems from 88, he reaches a total of 57; 2) by adding 14 Vita Nova poems back to the base of 57, he reaches a new total of 71; 3) by adding to 71 the 8 dubbie that he reclassifies, De Robertis reaches a final total of 79.

De Robertis reduces the number of dubbie from 26 to 16 by moving 8 of them to the regular canon and excluding 2 altogether (the excluded are Deb, pangi meco tu, dogliosa petra; Nulla mi parve più crudel cosa). The 8 that he moves to the canon are: Ai faus ris, Quando 'l consiglio degli ucce' si tenne, Amore e monna Lagia e Guido ed io, Se 'l viso mio a la terra si china, Questa donna ch'andar mi fa pensoso, Non v'accorgete voi d'un che ssi more, Io sento panger l'anima nel core, Degli occhi di quella gentil mia dama.

The most significant difference between the Barbi and De Robertis editions, however, is not the recalibration of the dubbie. It consists of a hermeneutic - rather than a philological - difference, and it occurs because De Robertis takes his philological principles to such an extreme that he reaches a kind of hermeneutic materialism. In sharp contrast to Barbi, De Robertis does not include in his edition of Dante's lyrics every lyric poem that he assigns to Dante. While the Convivio canzoni are present because Boccaccio copied them among the canzoni distese, only 14 Vita Nova poems - and none of its canzoni - are included. Why does De Robertis choose to include only 14 of the 31 Vita Nova poems in his edition? The answer is formulated, again, as an allegiance to philological principles. De Robertis includes only the Vita Nova poems that we happen to possess «nella loro veste pre-VN» (Introduzione 2: 884), in a «prima redazione»17 - and this despite the acknowledgement that all the Vita Nova poems may well have come into existence independent of, and prior to, the libello: «anche ammettendo che tutte le rime della Vita Nova siano nate indipendentemente dalla loro (successiva) destinazione, non può (non deve) accogliere in un'edizione delle Rime se non quanto riconoscibile secondo tratti che

17 See the index, where De Robertis places «(la redazione)» after 13 of the 14 Vita Nova poems he includes (the exception is A ciascun' alma). On this topic, see Introduzione, vol. 2, chapter 4, «La tradizione estravagante delle rime della 'Vita Nova'»; noteworthy comments may be found throughout the volume (e.g. Introduzione 2: 758-9, 1162, 1169, 1175, 1181-5, 1202).
dalla *Vita Nova* lo distinguano e ne garantiscono l'indipendenza (un componimento, e ce n'è diversi, che non presenti di questi tratti è irrelevante dal punto di vista filologico benché con ampia testimonianza fuori della tradizione organica, in quanto nulla garantisce che non rappresenti un prelievo dalla *Vita Nova*)» (I documenti 1: xvi).

De Robertis propone un modello ermeneutico per le *rime* che eleva le contingenze di storia materiale – di ciò che è stato perso e di ciò che è stato preservato – a principio più importante della realtà di ciò che Dante effettivamente produsse. Essere una delle poesie esistenti di Dante è un condizione insufficiente per l'inclusione in una collezione di poesie del Dante. Allo stesso tempo, De Robertis's criterion for inclusion, although presented as philological, also defers to Dante’s authority: the decision to include poems that we happen to possess «nelle loro veste pre-VN» – and only those poems – is conditioned by Dante’s will as author of the *Vita Nova*. In fact, in its own convoluted way De Robertis’s criterion for inclusion of *Vita Nova* poems is as deferential to Dante as the more straightforward claim by Picone, to which we will arrive in due course, that Dante’s *rime* are by definition poems not included in the *Vita Nova* or *Convivio*. De Robertis runs counter not just to Contini’s ideal history («cronologia ideale») of the poet’s development, but also to real history, defined as Dante’s real and extant lyric production, all of which merits inclusion in what purports to be an edition of his lyrics.

At this point, we need to bring some clarity to the term and concept «history», which has been much bandied about by Guglielmo Gorni in his assault on the Barbian chronological template for the *ordinamento* of the *Rime*. In his recent *apologia* for De Robertis, Gorni takes him to task for being insufficiently militant in support of his editorial reforms and reformulates De Robertis’s positions in a way that makes explicit both the fear of interpretation getting into the hands of the non-initiates and the use of «history» as a defensive bulwark behind which to protect Dante’s poems from the contagion of unlicensed and uncontrolled interpretation.\(^{18}\) Any attempt to recreate a chronology of Dante’s lyrics

Gorni views as fanciful and frivolous; the history of the editorial tradition, on the other hand, is serious and sacrosanct, because it alone is history:

Perché questa specie di rassegnazione, questo farsi scudo dell'ineluttabile? Altro premeva dire, avendo deciso di rinnovare in modo così traumatico la vulgata. Se l'opinione o il criterio professati erano questi, andava difeso con energia il principio che l'editore critico è in primo luogo al servizio della storia, non di organigrammi ideali sovrapposti ai documenti; che un conto sono l'esegesi e la cronologia, reversibili e sempre perfettibili, e un altro la serie dei testi quale si legge nei manoscritti, serie che va rispettata il più possibile, perché è storia. (588)

Throughout this passage Gorni establishes a false dichotomy between what he calls, on the one hand, «storia», and on the other «organigrammi ideali sovrapposti ai documenti», «un feuilleton senza fine», «da ricapitolazione degli amori di Dante»:

In assenza di collezione d'autore, è prevalsa qui (e sempre prevalga) la storia della tradizione, che al riguardo è unanime a proporre, nei codici più antichi, più completi e che più contano, le «distese» di Dante compattemente. L'opzione di De Robertis trova un supporto nell'ordinamento dei canzonieri storici duecenteschi, in cui le canzoni precedono sempre; ma è meno in omaggio a quel modello, che per ossequio alla reale tradizione dantesca, che ha proposto quella serie non più vista in tempi moderni. Non è infatti il caso di scusarsi col mondo dei dantisti, che vorrebbero prima le rime per Beatrice o presunte tali; poi quelle per le donne schermo (impalpabili e tutte congetturali); poi per la donna gentile, per la donna petra, nonché da ultimo la canzone «montanina» per la misteriosa montanara del Casentino... No, ne vien fuori proprio un feuilleton senza fine, per saggi liricamente disposti. Basta con le ricostruzioni artificiali.

Si dica francamente: la mia non è la ricapitolazione degli amori di Dante; la mia è una selloge storica, fondata sui documenti antichi. Vi do il Dante lirico come lo leggevano il Boccaccio, Antonio di Tuccio Manetti e tutti quanti fino all'Ottocento... (588)

The fallacies here are obvious. First, the ancients are just as capable of «ricostruzioni artificiali» as we are. And, in fact, the «selloge storica, fondata sui documenti antichi», put together by Boccaccio and copied by others, is nothing if not artificial. Second, the history involved in the enterprise of attempting to reconstruct Dante's historical development as a poet is real history too: the history of Dante's development, stylistically and ideologically, is equal-
ly as real as the history of the manuscript tradition. It is a real history that we cannot fully establish, because we do not have the data to fill it in with absolute precision, and that is therefore vulnerable to interpretive license, but it is nonetheless real and nonetheless history. To say that it is not history, and to dismiss it as «la ricapitolazione degli amori di Dante», is to suggest that if we cannot make a perfect history we should give up on history altogether.

The «ordinamento dei canzonieri storici duecenteschi, in cui le canzoni precedono sempre» is as much an artificial construct as Contini’s «cronologia ideale», and it one that offers us much less insight into Dante than the modern Barbian construct. What it offers instead is insight into Dante’s readers: «il Dante lirico come lo leggevano il Boccaccio, Antonio di Tuccio Manetti...». In other words, it is an order that gives us a window onto Dante’s reception – onto how his lyrics were read in other times. It is certainly important to know how Boccaccio and others read Dante lirico. But, while this is information worth having, and worth studying, is it really the case that past reception should determine our reception? Should Boccaccio’s way of reading Dante’s lyrics be the privileged way of reading Dante’s lyrics? Why? Just because it is old and through convention and authority became editorially institutionalized? When we follow this order, are we reading Dante, as Gorni claims in his conclusion («Il presente intervento, di prima ricezione dell’opera, vorrebbe spezzare una lancia a favore di questo nuovo modo di leggere Dante» [598]), or are we reading Boccaccio reading Dante?

As readers of Dante go, Boccaccio is certainly among the most brilliant, but he is anything but neutral, and he is not committed to reconstructing Dante’s history. As a reader and interpreter of Dante, Boccaccio had a complex agenda that involves both his pigeon-holing Dante in order to better position himself as what Dante was not – this tactic is displayed throughout the Decameron – and the task he set himself to negotiate between the dead Dante and the living and much-revered Petrarch. Through his interventions as reader and interpreter of Dante, Boccaccio has imposed himself so cannily on the reception of Dante that we have much work to do to recover uncontaminated readings: the case of Inferno 5, where current commentaries still carry Boccaccio’s version of the story as though it were Dante’s, is but one example, the case of the
canzoni distese another. To promote Boccaccio’s reading as the ordering principle of Dante’s rime on the basis of its being a historical document is absolutely unacceptable. Far from acquiescing in Boccaccio’s contamination of the reception, our work as historians of literature and critical readers of these texts must be to reverse it, to study what it shows us about Boccaccio while trying to «unlearn» it and return to a pre-Boccaccio understanding of Dante. Our work should not be to institutionalize Boccaccio’s reading.

De Robertis offers an interpretation of Boccaccio’s order, which he reads as a response to Petrarch, without seeming to realize that his own interpretation of Boccaccio’s order disqualifies it from serving as the appropriate lens through which to approach Dante’s poems. At the head of his list of canzoni distese Boccaccio placed Così nel mio parlar, a poem that, along with its fellow rime petrose, can be dated to circa 1296; not only does Boccaccio thus separate Così nel mio parlar from the other three petrose, but he places it before earlier poems, indicating that he either did not know or did not care about the historical disposition of the poems. Certainly, De Robertis does not view Boccaccio as swayed by historical concerns; he suggests that Così nel mio parlar is at the head of Boccaccio’s list as homage to Petrarch, who cited it in Lasso me: «Che poi Così nel mio parlar vogli’esser aspro inaugurasse la serie, staccata dal terzetto compatto delle altre petrose, a cui corrisponde come materia (con qualche riserva in proposito) più che come tecnica, è più probabile che dipenda dalla sua citazione esemplare nella canzone Lasso me (RVF 70) di Petrarca (e sarebbe stato un buon invito per Boccaccio, colla sua inclinazione per la conciliazione delle tradizioni, e delle contraddizioni: se non fosse che, s’è appena ricordato, la ‘forma’ preesiste all’edizione Boccaccio) più che la citazione petrarchesca cedesse alla suggestione di una tale testa di serie» (Introduzione 2: 1148). While Boccaccio’s desire to bring together his two great precursors is certainly worth studying in its own right, our task as editors of Dante’s rime must be to keep these issues separate from the interpretive frame that we bring to understanding poems that predate Boccaccio’s birth.

19 Boccaccio succeeded in utterly contaminating the reception of Inferno 5; see Teodolinda Barolini, Dante and Francesca da Rimini: Realpolitik, Romance, Gender, «Speculum», 75, 2000, pp. 1-28.
De Robertis and Gorni seem to want to impose on Dante a compliance with convention, when in fact we could speculate that the conventionalism of the *canzoni distese* may well have been dictated by Boccaccio's desire to reconcile Petrarch with Dante. Gorni notes with approval that Dante's lyrics have been forced to comply with the conventional «ordinamento dei canzonieri storici duecenteschi, in cui le canzoni precedono sempre». And yet we know that Dante himself was not wedded to this model, for in the *Vita Nova* he created a new kind of *canzoniere storico duecentesco*, one in which he shows his willingness to mix the various lyric genres and to experiment with a chronological ordering. Nor is this all: Dante inscribes the incipits of three of his own canzoni into the *Commedia* as signposts of a chronologically based poetic autobiography, thus confirming the *Vita Nova*’s principle of using lyrics as markers of personal history.\(^{20}\) It is interesting that Boccaccio fixes Dante into the older convention in the very codex, the Chigiano, in which he copied the first extant form of Petrarch’s *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*, a collection of lyrics in which Petrarch too, like Dante in the *Vita Nova*, dispensed with the convention according to which «le canzoni precedono sempre» and mixed the lyric genres.

In any case, speculations aside, Boccaccio – because he is a great author in his own right, with his own agendas – cannot provide the appropriate filter through which to present Dante’s poems to the world. The task of the Edizione Nazionale of Dante’s lyrics should be to present Dante’s poems as free of intervening filters as possible, not to reify the filters already imposed on them by time. In effect, De Robertis has abdicated a part of his task as editor of these poems. He has given us Gorni’s «silloge storica, fondata sui documenti antichi», a conflation of Boccaccio’s mini-edition with the Giuntina’s edition. So doing, he has taken us backwards, rather than forwards. Let me be clear: De Robertis is a great philologist and scholar to whose unstinting work over the past decades we are all deeply indebted. Precisely because he has given us invaluable aids in the work of interpretation – his magisterial editions of the *Vita Nova* and Cavalcanti, for instance, which contain so much in-

interpretive insight along with philological acumen — it is particularly troubling that his authority now buttresses a choice that will hinder the work of interpretation, rather than promote it. Most unfortunate is the institutionalization of this choice in the Edizione Nazionale, which carries the imprimatur of the Società Dantesca Italiana.

The irony is that, had De Robertis chosen instead to invest his unique authority in this field, accumulated over so many years, in establishing his own chronological ordering of all Dante's *rime*, including the *Vita Nova* poems, it is unlikely that he would have encountered many challenges. Even if not accepted in every instance, an *ordinamento* of Dante’s full lyric canon constructed by De Robertis would be an enormous asset from which we would all benefit. I for one would certainly welcome De Robertis’s chronological ordering of all Dante’s *rime* and indeed hope that he will still produce one.

As matters stand, De Robertis’s monumental accomplishment on the philological and textual level — he has after all completed the painstaking «esame genetico della *varia lectio* delle singole liriche» of which Contini wrote, so that with respect to decisions about textual variants it would be foolish not to accept his authority — is unfortunately compromised not only by his choice with respect to the order but also by his edition’s systematic lack of transparency. The arbitrariness and opacity of De Robertis’s edition is

21 And so I do follow De Robertis for the text — even when I find it difficult, as with his substitution of *Lippo* for *Lapo* in the incipit *Guido, i' vorrei che tu e Lippo ed io.* In this instance I do not find his arguments convincing; indeed, they seem to demonstrate the quotient of interpretation that is necessarily part of even De Robertis’s practice of philology: «La situazione stemmatica, se per la ‘formalità’ dei nomi propri si potesse imporre lo stemma codicum, metterebbe senz’altro in minoranza *Lippo* rispetto a *Lapo*, vulgo *Lapo Gianni*, finora riconosciuto partecipe dell’invito e con ciò membro della società degli stilnovisti, menzionato anche (ma in lezione ricostruita: i testimoni hanno *Lupum*, *T* con la prima *u* modificata da altri in *a*) nel *De vulgari eloquentia*. Fatto sta che dopo la proposta di Gorni e della sua ripresa della questione nell’articolo *Paralipomeni a Lippo*, SFI XLVII (1989), in particolare pp. 13-15, diversi risultano i documenti segnalati di un’equivalenza *Lippo-Lapo*, più di una volta *Lippus seu Lupus*. Sicché a questo punto non si tratta più nemmeno di una provocazione (come in De Robertis *Cavalcanti* 148 e 149). Scrivere *Lapo* è come scrivere *Lippo*: e questa variante, assolutamente indifferente, qui decisamente adottata, significa semplicemente *non* *Lapo Gianni*; come non s’intende *Lapo Gianni* nel prossimo sonetto 39 *Se vedi Amore* pur ponendo a testo, secondo il consenso codicum e conforme all’uso, ben attestato, *Lapo... (Testi, 306)*. But I am not in a position to take one of De Robertis’s variants and not another; such decisions will have to await the consensus of philologists over time.
exemplified by his handling of the *Vita Nova* poems: witness De Robertis’s decision to break his own rules and to include *A ciascun' alma*, «che non può essere edito altrimenti che nella *Vita Nova*, per non essercene altra versione, e che si produrrà solo pro memoria» (Introduzione 2: 1175). De Robertis gives us an edition of Dante’s *rime* that includes the canzoni of the *Convivio* – because Boccaccio copied them – and excludes the canzoni of the *Vita Nova* – because Boccaccio, having copied them as part of the *Vita Nova*, did not recopy them among his *canzoni distese*.22 With respect to the canzoni of the *Vita Nova*, De Robertis writes «che non spet-tano qui, per il fatto di non designare, nella veste in cui ci sono pervenute, che solo quel libro» (Introduzione 2: 1169). But had Boccaccio chosen to recopy the *Vita Nova* canzoni among his *canzoni distese*, De Robertis would have given them to us, issues of their «veste» notwithstanding.

The De Robertis edition of the *rime* differs greatly from the edition it is intended to replace: the salient characteristic of Barbi’s edition is its openness, its will to make manifest. Moreover, Barbi accepts responsibility for difficult editorial decisions. Barbi’s generosity toward his readers, his desire to share information, is apparent throughout an edition whose hallmarks are exhaustive historical and philological explication. Barbi does not wield philology as a weapon to keep out the uninitiated; he wants to make these texts more, not less, accessible. While it has become fashionable to denigrate Barbi and to show one’s critical independence by criticizing him (I am not referring here to De Robertis, who is always generous and honorable toward his predecessors), we should not forget that the greatness of Barbi’s contribution is that he gives us the very material that we can ultimately use to disagree with him. Barbi does not fear his successors, or worry about what we will do with the poems; he gives us an order based on a reconstruction that he lays out in painstaking detail, and he trusts us to do with it what we will.

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22 Boccaccio thus ended up transmitting 20 of Dante’s canzoni: the fifteen *canzoni distese* plus the five that are in the *Vita Nova* (the *Vita Nova’s* three great canzoni, *Donne ch’avete*, *Donna pietosa* and *Li occhi dolenti*, as well as the *libello’s* two monostrophic canzoni, *Si lusingiamente* and *Quantunque volte*). Boccaccio does not transmit Dante’s two other monostrophic canzoni, *Lo meo servente core* and *Madonna, quel signor che voi portate*, or – most significantly – *Lo doloroso amor*. 
Teodolinda Barolini

Barbi's desire for transparency is expressed in his division of the collection into seven books (as they were called in the 1921 edition, or parts as they were renamed in the later commentary volumes), each of which has a title. The titles provide explicit categories that parse and anchor the poems according to a variety of possible and overlapping criteria. The first of these criteria is authorial and editorial, with biographical and chronological implications; in making the first book of his edition «Rime della 'Vita Nuova'», Barbi is following in the editorial tracks of the Giuntina, which in turn followed Dante. Barbi continues in a chronological and biographical vein with the second book, «Rime del tempo della 'Vita Nuova'»; the same principle will be applied in Book VII, «Rime varie del tempo dell'esilio». Biographical and chronological criteria combined with formal and thematic considerations undergird the third section, «Tenzone con Forese Donati», while thematic principles inflected formally and biographically sustain the fourth, fifth, and sixth parts: «Rime allegoriche e dottrinali» (this section contains the *Convivio* canzoni), «Altre rime d'amore e di corrispondenza», «Rime per la Donna Pietra». The seven books are arranged in an order that is intended to be overarchingly chronological.

Barbi's edition is generous to a fault. He includes everything: all compositions of correspondents replying to Dante, all poems whose attribution to Dante is uncertain, and all poems of Dante's even if they were destined by the poet for inclusion elsewhere. His goal is to include all of Dante's lyric production. As we noted previously, the total number of poems that Barbi assigns with certainty to Dante and includes in his edition is 88; of these 88 poems, 31 were destined for the *Vita Nova* and 3 for the *Convivio*. Barbi's practice is closer to the Giuntina, which prints all the poems of the *Vita Nova* together in its first book, than to Boccaccio, who copied the *Vita Nova* entirely, with its prose, and then, in the same manuscript but separately, copied the fifteen *canzoni distese*. Barbi in essence honored the Giuntina's innovative solution to the problem that is at the heart of this story: the problem of how to respond to what Dante had already done.

In comparison to Boccaccio, who does not allow the *Vita Nova* poems any separate status as lyrics, the Giuntina affords them that status by including them in a collection that is by definition, as its
title *Sonetti e canzoni di diversi antichi autori toscani* states, a collection of lyrics. At the same time, by keeping the *Vita Nova* poems together and in the sequence that they follow in the *libello*, and by placing a boundary between them and the other lyrics, the Giuntina effects a compromise of sorts: Dante’s will as author of the *Vita Nova* is respected, on the one hand, but on the other the poems that Dante placed in the *Vita Nova* are not lost to the lyric tradition. At some level the Giunti brothers understood that to keep these poems part of that tradition they have to be represented in it editorially and materially; they have to actually appear in a form and under a rubric that is not that of the book, *Vita Nova*. This may seem like a small matter, or an obvious one, but in fact it has been neither, given the gravitational pull on the editorial tradition of Dante’s will. It is interesting, moreover, that the *Vita Nova* exacts a higher degree of respect for Dante’s will than does the *Convivio*, which from the beginning suffered the loss of its canzoni to the lyric tradition with impunity. Another way to put this is that the unity of the *Vita Nova* seems to be viewed by Dante’s posterity as more sacrosanct, or more fragile (maybe because poems constitute a much higher proportion of the *Vita Nova*’s textuality than of the *Convivio*’s, maybe because the *Vita Nova* is gendered as «fervida e passionata» while the *Convivio* is «temperata e virile» [Conv. 1.1.16]), so that tampering with that unity is more problematic. Whatever the causes for the divergent treatment, the *Convivio* canzoni have a long history of being transmitted as independent lyrics – kept together, however, and with the *Convivio* order preserved – going back to Boccaccio and the Giuntina.

Barbi’s much-subdivided index now seems somewhat fussy, redolent of nineteenth-century positivism, particularly when compared to Contini’s streamlined alphabetical listing of the poems. Contini’s index exudes a high modernist purity: its lack of subdivisions, the shift from Roman numerals to Arabic, and the volume’s overall concision conspire to create a format that even typographically signals itself as new and modern. To weigh the impact of Contini’s contribution we need to remember that, in 1939 and 1946, when his volume first appeared, the Barbi-Maggini and Barbi-Pernicone volumes were not yet published, so that Barbi’s writings on the lyrics had to be accessed piecemeal. Contini’s sleek volume with its 54 poems attributed to Dante offered by contrast
both poems and commentary in one compact and elegant presentation. Contini's commentary brings an altogether new standard of literary insight and interpretation to a body of work that had always been under-interpreted. Thus, although Contini is not stylistically a forthcoming author, his style being rather to engage in a dance of dispensing and withholding information that flatters the reader with its teasingly elliptical quality, he is — for all his rhetorical reticentia — extremely forthcoming in the way that counts the most: he gives us actual readings of Dante's poems, poems that — mirabile dictu — have hardly ever been read. His commentary shows us that these are poems and that as poems they need to be read and interpreted. While we still turn to Barbi's commentary for its historical and philological wealth, Contini's commentary provides brief but authentic lecturae.

As a result of so much that is new in Contini's presentation of the Rime, it has been easy to overlook the crucial way in which his edition is not just similar but indeed identical to Barbi's: Contini follows Barbi's sequence exactly, a fact that is obscured by his alphabetical rather than chronological index and which he himself hardly trumpets, noting it on the twentieth page of his «Nota al testo».

How then does his volume contain only 54 poems? We remember that, of Barbi's total of 88 poems, 34 were the lyrics that Dante placed in the Vita Nova and Convivio; Contini reaches a total of 54 by omitting those poems. As a result of omitting the Vita Nova poems, Barbi's Parte prima, Contini begins his edition with Barbi's Parte seconda, namely «Rime del tempo della 'Vita Nuova'», and thus with the exchanges with Dante da Maiano, which Barbi places at the head of that section. It is a little startling to realize that the seamless flow of lyrics in Contini's edition deviates not at all from the Barbian template, or rather deviates only through omission: gone are the 31 poems of the Vita Nova and the 3 canzoni of the Convivio, gone are the suture marks created by the divisions into books. What remains is Barbi's order.

Before proceeding to the analysis of these editorial choices, we should note the existence of a third chronological model, put forth

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23 «Per quanto finalmente spetta all'ordine delle poesie certe, di Dante o dei corrispondenti, abbiamo pure accolto, ponendo in parentesi la sua numerazione, l'ordine del Barbi» (302).
by Foster and Boyde, which could be described as faithful to the Barbian spirit of inclusion, but updated in the Continian fashion by removing the unnecessary subdivisions. The Foster-Boyde edition, which contains 89 poems rather than Barbi’s 88 because the editors (incorrectly, in my opinion) invert the order of attribution in a five-sonnet exchange between Dante Alighieri and Dante da Maiano and thereby attribute one more sonnet to Dante Alighieri, adopts the Barbian template. But Foster and Boyde go further than Barbi in their practice of his principles of inclusion and chronology. They make a courageous and unprecedented adjustment, which is truly innovative in the history of the editions of Dante’s rime: they integrate the Vita Nova poems fully into the canon. The Foster-Boyde edition thus is the first to include the Vita Nova poems not separately – à la Giuntina and Barbi – but interleaved in a way that attempts to recreate a plausible chronological and stylistic arc. Barbi’s principles of inclusion and integration – the hallmarks of his scholarly temperament – are fully realized by Foster and Boyde’s decision not to segregate the Vita Nova poems within their edition.

Contini’s major structural contribution, on the other hand, is the omission from his Rime of the poems of the Vita Nova and Convivio. His omission of these poems has resonated strongly in ways that suggest that this is not a «neutral» philological issue but rather one that taps a profound cultural nerve. Contini addresses the issue, not directly but nonetheless forcefully, in the first words of his «Nota al testo»: «Dante non raccolse organicamente le sue liriche...» (283). Already here, in the codeword «organicamente» and in Contini’s characterization not of what Dante did do but of what he did not do («non raccolse»), we can glimpse the defensive posture that has governed discussions of Dante’s rime and that is still visible in recent contributions, such as Michelangelo Picone’s 1995 essay «Dante rimatore». Reviewing what he calls the maximalist or minimalist reconstructions of the Rime of the modern critical tradition, that is Barbi’s reconstruction versus Contini’s, Picone asks «Quali delle due ipotesi ricostruttive possiamo considerare più fondata? and ends up opting for Contini: «Dovendo scegliere fra le due ipotesi, io mi schiererei decisamente dalla parte di Contini» (174). Picone’s choice is the more surprising in that he shows such a clear intellectual appreciation of what is at stake in Barbi’s format; for this reason, it is worth tracing his argument in some detail.
Picone explains the significance of Barbi’s decision to include the poems of the *Vita Nova* and *Convivio* in his edition thus: «Ha così ragione Barbi nel ritenere essenzialmente diversa una lirica letta nel contesto della *Vita nuova* o del *Convivio* dalla stessa lirica letta invece singolarmente. Una rima accompagnata o meno dal commento dell’autore non viene insomma recepita nello stesso modo dal lettore. Come dimostrato da D. De Robertis, tale diversità trova talvolta dei riscontri anche al livello della lezione: una poesia può aver subito delle piccole ma significative variazioni testuali quando è passata dalla tradizione extravagante a quella organica della *Vita nuova*» (174). Picone’s defense of Barbi is impeccable: poems read in the context of the *Vita Nova* or *Convivio* will indeed be received differently by the reader than the same poems read independently.24 Moreover, Picone invokes De Robertis’s finding that the divergent editorial histories between *libello* and freestanding poems may generate minor textual variations, using this finding to highlight the existence of the *Vita Nova* poems prior to the existence of the *Vita Nova*. In other words, in Picone’s analysis divergent editorial histories serve not as yet another pretext for excluding the *Vita Nova* poems from editions of the *rime*, but rather as a reminder that these poems started as independent *rime* and therefore have a claim to being included in editions of the *rime*.

Picone’s statement of the view that holds that the *Vita Nova* and *Convivio* poems deserve their own space within the lyric tradition seems irrefutable. And yet it did not seem irrefutable to Picone, who ends up siding with Contini. What I find interesting is the change of language that heralds his choice, a shift to a lexicon that is freighted with cultural—rather than philological—baggage. Already signaled in his contrast between «la tradizione extravagante» and «quella organica della *Vita nuova*», the value judgments that accrue to these supposedly objective categories, one «extrava-

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24 The divergence between the poems and the prose is striking and understudied; systematic analysis of how the *Vita Nova* prose rewrites and conditions the poems it purports to gloss has yet to be done. Most illuminating and useful from this perspective is De Robertis’s commentary in his edition, *Vita nuova*, Milano, Ricciardi, 1980. Recent suggestions that Dante «must have» written some poems appositely for the *libello* and attempts to guess at which ones they were are unconvincing; see, for instance, STEFANO CARRAI, *Critica genetica in assenza di autografo: per una protostoria della Vita Nova*, «Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana», 19, 2002, pp. 9-17.
gante», the other «organica», jump out at us from the following sentence: «D’altro canto ha ragione anche Contini nel rispettare l’indipendenza e la specificità di opere come la Vita nuova e il Convivio; nel non ritenere cioè estrapolabili le poesie ivi raccolte, e quindi nell’applicare un’ermeneutica del frammento solo alle Rime extravaganti» (174). Suddenly, we are immersed in an anthropomorphic rhetoric whereby Contini «respected» what by implication Barbi did not. What Contini respected, moreover, was nothing less than the «independence» and identity of the Vita Nova and Convivio. Respect was shown by keeping what was ingathered safely inside, by making sure that the lyrics once «raccolte» never again be plucked out, never again be considered «estrapolabili» and thereby lowered to the status of fragment, of «rima extravagante». The repetition of the prefix extra here – in the slide from «estrapolabili» to «extravaganti» – is not coincidence, for this rhetoric, constructed around the binary inside versus outside, raccogliere versus frammento, is in fact built into a philological discourse which has traditionally and suggestively referred to the poems not included by Dante in the «organic» Vita Nova and Convivio as «rime extravaganti»: literally poems that wander outside, outsiders.

If I may be permitted to speculate, this language, structured around the terms «organico» and «extravagante», terms which permeate all criticism on the rime, suggests an analogy between Italy and the macrotext: it conjures the vulnerability of a feminized Italian state (feminized like the «fervida e passionata» Vita Nova), a body politic that, because it existed in name only («serva Italia» for Dante, «Italia mia» for Petrarch), was unable to gather up and incorporate its citizens who – like the poems, the microtexts – thus remained for centuries dispersed, «extravaganti». More culturally than philologically grounded, Contini’s choice has been heard to say more or less this: once unity has been achieved, once an author has come along who with his authority ingathers and collects that which is otherwise dispersed and homeless, no one should presume to undo it. We should not «extrapolate» those poems; we should not take them out of their context and lower their status from part of an organic whole to mere wandering fragment. The emotional force of this argument lies in words like organico, unitario, raccogliere, frammento, extravagante, estrapolare – words which have the effect of reversing what it is that needs to be respected: rather than
respecting the independent existence of these poems, which pre-
date the works in which they were gathered, it turns out that we
are disrespecting the unity of the *Vita Nova* and *Convivio*, and that
we are uprooting the poems from their homes.

Two forces are at work here. One is the need to respect
Dante’s will as *auctor* of the *Vita Nova* and the assumption that we
can best do that by never removing from the *Vita Nova* the poems
that he situated within it. The other is the enormous influence of
Petrarch, whose brilliant authorial innovation – the lyric sequence –
contaminated editorial response to the lyric tradition before him.
While these two forces might seem antithetical to each other (one
respects Dante’s will too much, and the other retroactively imposes
a later will and viewpoint onto his lyrics), in fact they have a com-
mon denominator in preferring poems that are brought together in-
to an «organic» and unified whole: the *Vita Nova*, the *Rerum Vul-
garum Fragmenta*. The literary and cultural imbrication here is
massive, for Petrarch positioned himself in a way that has proved
to have almost infinite cultural appeal. By inscribing political and
cultural fragmentation into his work as the explicit analogue of ex-
istential fragmentation (and by dropping all the anachronistic stuff
about Empire with which Dante freighted a similar view), Petrarch
created a text that spoke in tongues, culturally speaking, leaving
traces that range from Machiavelli’s impassioned invocation of
*Italia mia* at the end of the *Principe* to Contini’s talismanic opening
words: «Dante non raccolse organicamente le sue liriche».

As with Boccaccio’s editorial interventions, Petrarch’s influence
retroactively contaminates our reception of the lyric tradition that
precedes him. Our dealings with that tradition are overdetermined
by Petrarch’s creation – the metaphysically charged lyric sequence,
whose manipulation of material and spatial order is consciously
conceived as a way of playing with the properties of time – a cre-
ation that is indebted, moreover, in a wonderful twist of history, to
none other than the *Vita Nova*, which provided Petrarch an exam-
ple of sequenced lyrics in a form that he could then radicalize by
removing the prose.25 Petrarch’s decision to *raccogliere organicamen-

25 On Petrarch’s invention of the genre of lyric sequence to confront temporal (not
just thematic) issues, see BAROLINI, *The Making of a Lyric Sequence: Time and Narrative*
te, an accurate description of the process whereby he sequentially transcribed poems from his draft notebook into the unified and organic book of poems he nonetheless chose to call *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* and «rime sparse» (to thematize fragmentation is not necessarily to be fragmented), has become the benchmark by which the preceding tradition is measured. As a result a lyric tradition in which no stigma attaches to the free and uncollected lyric is viewed through an inappropriate lens that describes it in terms of what it is not.

De Robertis too can be seen to be responding to Petrarch, in a way that we can better understand by contrasting him to Contini. Whereas Contini’s «Dante non raccolse organicamente le sue liriche» responds to Petrarch defensively, De Robertis adopts an aggressive stance vis-à-vis the Petrarchan legacy, as though he were preemptively making sure that we never commit the sin of associating Dante’s lyrics with an ordered and sequenced *canzoniere*. Whereas Picone, following Contini, seeks to «applicare un’ermeneutica del frammento solo alle *Rime* extravaganti», avoiding the «ermeneutica del frammento» whenever possible, De Robertis has the opposite inclination: he opts for a radical fragmentariness as a mark of historical – i.e. pre-Petrarchan – authenticity. Labelling Dante’s non-canzoni the «rime sparse» of his edition, De Robertis betrays the ways in which he is conditioned by Petrarch: he adopts a Petrarchan rubric to designate the fragmentary and non-Petrarchan nature of Dante’s *rime*. De Robertis turns to the «documenti antichi», through which he hopes to recreate the authentically fragmented and resistant-to-interpretation Duecento experience, as a

*in Petrarch’s «Rerum vulgarium fragmenta», cited above. As to the question of whether Petrarch «invented» the *canzoniere*, history being the unmarked continuum that it is, our attempts to «discretize the continuum», as scientists put it, are bound to be subject to endless pushings of the (invented) boundaries forward and back. OLIVIA HOLMES, *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book*, Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 2000, hopes to «push backward in time the moment at which we consider the genre [of *canzoniere*] as emerging, both in order to give some poets traditionally considered 'minor' their due credit and to suggest how deeply the roots of subjectivity run» (23). Subjectivity is a word of great latitude, and «roots of subjectivity» brings us right back to our individual *discretio* as discretizers of the continuum: which are the roots, which the branches? I remain persuaded that one can fairly say that Petrarch «invents» the lyric sequence according to the definition I give in «The Making of a Lyric Sequence», whereby a lyric sequence is a genre used literally to manipulate time. And in fact the analyses offered by Holmes of earlier collections are purely thematic.*
response to Petrarch and his «organic» collection: the underlying credo of his edition is in this sense anti-Petrarchan, in that he is committed to opposing what he views as an anachronistic Petrarchan solution to the ordering of lyric poems. As a result, there can be no narrativity, no implicit chronological and autobiographical arc, no love story (no «ricapitolazione degli amori di Dante» in Gorni’s words). De Robertis wants to make clear in his edition that Dante’s rime do not form a canzoniere.

As usual, the Vita Nova poems – the poems with respect to which Dante complicated matters initially, even before Petrarch’s arrival on the scene, by being the first to exert editorial control over their disposition – are the major indicators of critical stress. Thus, we have Picone arguing that the Vita Nova poems are merely prove until they are absorbed into the organic macrotext: «Ritengo infatti che una lirica, una volta che è stata inclusa nella Vita nuova o nel Convivio, ha perduto il suo carattere di prova estemporanea, per entrare a far parte di una totalità letteraria e di un ingranaggio compositivo dai quali soltanto riceve il suo significato» (174). Assuming that a poem that existed before the Vita Nova was merely a «prova» until it was placed in the libello and that such a poem can «only» receive significance from its new position, Picone reaches the conclusion that the rime are to be defined as those lyrics that Dante left out of the Vita Nova and Convivio. De Robertis achieves a similar result, though he reaches it from the opposite route: he only accepts into his edition of the rime those Vita Nova poems for which he has manuscript evidence of textual variants by virtue of which he can categorically claim their existence (as prove?) before the Vita Nova. In his quest to recover pre-Petrarchan authenticity, De Robertis thus creates a new group of estravaganti. By excluding 17 Vita Nova poems, he has created a reverse stigma: the Vita Nova poems for which the vagaries of material history do not provide sufficient proof that they existed independently of the libello must be left out of his edition, while their fellows – along with the Convivio poems, accepted unquestioningly because included among the canzoni distese – are brought in.

26 «Le Rime comprendono quindi la produzione lirica di Dante che è rimasta fuori dal giovanile libello amoroso e dal maturo trattato filosofico» (174-5).
More typical than the problem of *Vita Nova* poems rebuffed by an edition of the *rime* is that of *rime* presumed second-class because excluded from the *Vita Nova*. An example of this view is offered by Giovanni Cappello, who, in the essay «Per un ordinamento delle 'Rime' di Dante», struggles to build a case for the autonomous value of the *rime* from the following self-inflicted premise: «Non sembra legittimo, senza testimonianza esplicita della volontà dell’autore, che uno stesso testo possa figurare come parte integrante di due opere». Cappello wants to reach the conclusion that Dante’s *rime* possess «valore autonomo» and are not just preliminary sketches, but he fears that Dante may have declared his derogatory intent toward the freestanding lyrics in the act of excluding them from the *Vita Nova* and *Convivio*. Assuming that the critic is obliged to find a compensatory Dantesque imprimatur to set against the imprimatur of the *Vita Nova*, he ultimately reassures himself by turning to the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* as *auctoritas*, noting that Dante in the treatise cites all his lyrics in the same way, not according lesser status to the poems that remained independent (or, in Cappello’s term, «isolated»).

Cappello’s essay makes clear the stigma that accrues to being left out of the *Vita Nova* in a context in which Dante’s artistic decisions are taken as the ultimate value judgments. From this perspective, the reception accorded the freestanding lyrics is not unlike the reception traditionally accorded the poets, like Guittone d’Arezzo, whom Dante devalues in the *Commedia*: Dante’s value judgments for centuries conditioned the terms of the debate. In the case of the *rime*, the critical agenda was set by decisions of Dante’s that are not even explicit value judgments but that are presumed to be such. Just as Dante’s stated judgments vis-à-vis Guittone...
tone long impacted our reception of the Arethian poet, so Dante's presumed judgments vis-à-vis his poems have impacted the transmission of his lyrics.

The most notable example of the stigmatization caused by Dante's presumed judgment is offered by the canzone *Lo doloroso amor*. Excluded from the *Vita Nova*, this canzone has come down to us in very few manuscripts ("I codici, per questa canzone, non si contano a centinaia come per le altre... bensì sulle dita di una mano" [De Robertis, *Introduzione* 2: 1152]), because it was further excluded by Boccaccio from his tally of Dante's canzoni, and then excluded from the *Giuntina* as well. I believe that the systematic exclusion of this canzone from the canon of Dante's lyrics is the result of the danger it poses to the master narrative, scripted by Dante, of who Dante is: he cannot be the poet who once wrote, in the last verse of the first stanza of *Lo doloroso amor*, "Per quella moro c'ha nome Beatrice". The anthologists who excluded *Lo doloroso amor* are merely doing what Dante's interpreters have always done: whether vis-à-vis figures in the *Commedia* or Dante himself, we read in ways that conform to the authorized narrative. The history of the transmission of *Lo doloroso amor*, a canzone De Robertis aptly calls "estravagante tra le estravaganti" (*Introduzione* 2: 756), is one more illustration of the importance that Dante's presumed judgments — and then judgments about his judgments — have always exerted. From this perspective, we could think of De Robertis's misplaced allegiance to "diritti del filologo contro diritti dell'autore" as an understandable reaction to the excessive deference given to Dante's will throughout the editorial history of the *rime*. By contrast, Contini's edition seems to mask this unspoken deference, according to which commingling the poems of the *Vita Nova* with other lyrics constitutes a kind of desecration.

The cultural embeddedness of these issues is confirmed by the most recent participant in this debate, Gorni, when he wonders whether De Robertis's enterprise, "per le difficoltà che comporta, non rischi di essere mal recepito, specie all'estero e presso chi guarda alla filologia come un mondo a sé" (597). What an odd remark, with its suggestion, despite the example of Foster and Boyd, that the "outside" world will fail to understand a philological contribution to the editorial history of Dante's *rime*. The scrupulous contribution of Foster and Boyd — who respond to their precursors in
ways that fulfill the implications of the Giuntina and Barbi – shows us that the tradition has transcended national boundaries (as has long been the case with the Commedia). Most of all, Gorni seems to forget that De Robertis's innovation, if it can be called that, is not based in philology. As Gorni well knows, the innovations of the De Robertis edition are «di ordinamento piuttosto che di lezione, di forma (in senso tecnico) piuttosto che di sostanza» (577). The ordinamento of the rime is not an issue that is susceptible to a once-and-for-all philological solution; that is precisely the problem. Had the issue been soluble through philology, De Robertis would have solved it; since it was not, he has returned to the arbitrary conventions of the past.

Barbi's inclusion of all of Dante's lyrics in his edition respects the history that matters most to Dante's readers, which is the full and complete poetic history of the lyric poet who would eventually write the Commedia. Therefore, although I would much rather deal with 54 poems (or 62, if consensus emerges to accept the 8 poems that De Robertis has added to the canon) than with 88 (or 96), and despite the fact that I am much more interested, as a critic, in the late poems than in the early and stilnovo lyrics that ended up in the Vita Nova, I feel an obligation to include every lyric poem Dante wrote. My commentary will be less historical and philological than those of my illustrious predecessors, and more interpretive; the project as I see it is to continue Contini's mandate to read the poems, to interpret them. For the task of interpretation is not complete with respect to these poems; indeed, it has barely begun.

We have a story to uncover, a history to write. The story of Dante's becoming requires a chronological arc, and therefore we must accept the responsibility of a chronologically ordered edition.

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Currently available to the Italian audience is an institutionalization of Contini's choices and viewpoint, in the useful paperback edition of Piero Cudini, Le rime, Milano, Garzanti, 1979. Since the story of a given commentary is necessarily inscribed into the sequence one confers upon the poems, and the sequence is by definition a subjective enterprise for each commentator to undertake anew, my order is not identical to anyone else's, although it is closest to Foster-Boye because of my commitment to their innovative inclusion of the dispersed Vita Nova poems. One could go even further than Foster-Boye in dismantling the structure constituted by the Vita Nova by not preserving its order; I considered this, but have not pursued it because the gain seems more ideological than historical, especially in that the Vita Nova itself adopts a chronological template.
despite the lacunae in our knowledge and despite the likelihood of variations between editions. (These variations are not as critical as they would be if we habitually used numbers to refer to these poems.) The lyrics afford us an unparalleled opportunity to trace the twists and turns in Dante’s ideological and spiritual development, and to gauge how far from complacent and overdetermined his journey was. They harbor implicit and at times explicit debates on issues of great immediacy for Dante and his audience: the nature of cortesia and nobility, the desire for wealth and its relationship to other types of desire, the limits and constraints of political loyalty, the male/female dichotomy and the construction of gender, the lack of justice in human life.31 Like Barbi, I believe that these poems can communicate most effectively when presented to the reader in an order that accepts – with the requisite humility – the task of reconstructing Dante’s development chronologically, of illuminating for the reader the poetic, philosophical, and psychological paths he took on his way to *il mezzo del cammin*. How Dante became Dante is the story told by his lyrics, but they cannot tell their story unless we let them speak.

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31 As a result, I will devote particular attention to making connections between the rime and the *Commedia*. For examples of this kind of lectura, see my *Guittone’s Ora par- tìa*, *Dante’s Doglia mi reca*, and *the Commedia’s Anatomy of Desire*, in *Seminario Dante- sco Internazionale: International Dante Seminar* 1, ed. Z. Baranski, Firenze, Le Lettere, 1997, pp. 3-23; *Beyond (Courtly) Dualism: Thinking about Gender in Dante’s Lyrics*, in *Dante for the New Millennium*, eds. T. Barolini and H. W. Storey, New York, Fordham U. Press, 2003, pp. 65-89; and the cappelli introduttivi to *La dispietata mente*, *Sonar braccetti*, and *Guido, i’ vorrei* cited in the first note above.