in his *Summa contra gentiles* (III, 92). In this sense, Mussato's *De lite* offers a window into the encyclopedia of knowledge of early fourteenth-century Europe.

Facchini's philological work, too, deserves to be praised. The edition of the text is based on the two extant manuscript witnesses of the work (Sevilla, Bibliotheca Capitular y Colombina, MS 5. I. 5; Padua, Biblioteca Civica, MS B. P. 2531), which the author describes and accurately collates in the introduction (pp. 62-79). Thanks to this work, Facchini was able to conclude that the two witnesses are related to one another, as they share a number of errors. Specifically, she provides evidence showing that the Sevilla manuscript (C) was the antigraph of the Paduan one (P) (p. 75). As C is the principal witness of the text, the edition is based primarily on this codex. Both manuscripts feature glossae by different hands, which Facchini meticulously describes and compares with one another (pp. 83-94). Finally, both the Italian translation and the accompanying notes contribute to making the text clear and digestible to scholars and students alike.

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Katherine Powlesland.
Narrative Strategies for Participation in Dante's Divine Comedy.
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In recent years, studies on Dante's reception have witnessed a proliferation of contributions, focusing on the most diverse experiences of reading, appropriation and rewriting across the centuries. At the center of any examination of this kind is the reader of the selected text and their personal experience of it through direct or mediated understanding, involvement and participation. In particular, the *Commedia* continues to draw the attention of many readers that engage in conversation with it in different ways and ultimately with personal, varied and unique responses. Katherine Powlesland's monograph, whose title *Narrative Strategies for Participation in Dante's Divine Comedy* is self-explanatory, enters the field of Reception Studies by proposing a narratological analysis of some devices at play in Dante's poem. Throughout her book, the author addresses how the *Commedia* invites active engagement from its readers, who are frequently asked to participate in its virtual reality through specific mechanisms of narration. By drawing from narratology, cognitive neuroscience and video game critical theory, Powlesland sets out a new model for reader participation in printed artefacts that she terms 'first-person participation' and proposes that the *Commedia* explicitly encourages this complementary mode of reading, in interplay with the canonical others.

Powlesland's monograph consists of an introduction and five main chapters with extensive endnotes. The book is well-informed and cohesive, and it frequently engages its reader by presenting a series of reasoned and solid arguments that are either in dialogue or in contrast with scholarship on narratological approaches to

the *Commedia*. Powlesland's style is clear and detailed, and she seamlessly employs data–driven approaches, cognitive neuroscientific theories and video game criticism by providing frequent examples and further specifications in case some concepts or terms may sound bizarre to the reader.

The starting and ending point of the dissertation is Bernard's signal to Dante to look upwards in *Par.* 33.49-54. As already suggested by Singleton (1980), the episode is problematic in terms of narrative perspective, and it may cause an effect of cognitive dissonance on the most conscious readers, who look the wrong way at Bernard at the exact same moment when Dante shifts his gaze to the divine. Powlesland discusses the lag of the sequence through the narrative device of focal view switching and initially suggests – and later demonstrates – that the portion of text is inviting the reader to feel present in the virtual world through embodied and experiential presence rather than just fostering immersion. She argues that the 'I' Bernard invites to look up is, in fact, the reader themselves, who at the end of the poem is trained and skilled enough to electively identify as Bernard's interlocutor.

One of Powlesland's key arguments is that reading the *Commedia* cover to cover works as training for the most receptive reader and their imagination. Throughout the text, they can constantly get better in performing their presence in the virtual reality of the poem. This return to embodiment – Powlesland maintains in Chapter 1 – is in line with the affective turn of the mid–1990s in the Humanities and Social Sciences and challenges the dominant Cartesian separation of mind from body. The author claims that the *Commedia* targets the reader's unconscious mental processes in a way typical of Medieval cognition, eventually leading to the subjective possibility of individual behavioral change.

To frame the *Commedia* as a participatory text at a level of neural embodiment and to investigate its narratological devices prompting an immersive response of presence, the author studies in detail seven strategies employed by Dante that lead to knowing how Dante's journey and manifold experiences feel and ultimately to the spontaneous self–identification in the mobile 'I' of the poem. The tools of cognitive neuroscience and video game critical theory prove useful to the dissertation to discuss immersion and presence in virtual worlds and provide some terminology that is lacking in traditional literary criticism. Powlesland divides these seven strategies into three different types of presence at work in Dante's text, to which she dedicates the three central chapters of the book: spatial presence, social presence and self–presence.

Spatial presence is examined in Chapter 2. Powlesland describes it as the perceptual illusion of being there, building on the idea that space is not just material but relational. She terms the strategy through which Dante encourages spatial presence 'narration through situated body states' and examines it in the narration of vection of the episodes of the descent of Geryon (*Inf.* 17.100-26) and the ascent of the celestial ladder (*Par.* 22.100-11). She analyses how the two episodes do not really describe a physical space, and she lists sensorimotor, visceromotor and somatosensory data that allow the reader to feel themselves located in Dante's world, to know how it feels to descend the abyss on Geryon's back or to ascend to the Heaven of the Fixed Stars by means of the celestial ladder. Powlesland underlines how the two experiences are animated and construct a dynamic pictorial mental model

through the illusion of reciprocal feedback from the environment to the subject, ultimately comparing it to the experience of VR by turning to the video game *Mirror's Edge* (2008) for better understanding.

Then, Powlesland turns to social presence in Chapter 3. She describes it as the sense of perceptual illusion of being with other selves in a shared environment, which also implies being able to recognize the other's intention. She terms the related strategy 'narration through kinaesthetic empathy' and discusses it specifically through an analysis of the bodies of the shades of Hell via the example of Pier della Vigna (*Inf.* 13.31-45) and its prototype episode of Polydorus in *Aeneid* 3. She engages with Barolini (1984) in stating that Dante's story is less incredible than Virgil's, and she concludes that it is because Dante transformed it from a narrative of action to a narrative of gesture, inviting the reader's participation. Physical enactment of kinaesthetic empathy is later discussed briefly in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, too.

Chapter 4 – the longest of the volume – is dedicated to self-presence, which Powlesland characterizes as the sense that, within the text, something is happening to the reader themselves. The related narratological strategies that invite the reader to participate are five. The first strategy is a model of narrating instances that reveals four faces of the narrating Dante, which the author respectively terms 'experiencing I', 'embodied narrator', 'implied author' and 'zero-focalized narration'. These faces balance narration and facilitate the reader's autonomous participation by liberating the poem from being the account of a single person's journey. The second strategy gives the reader the illusion of agency and simulates human vision by directing the reader's line of sight. It is termed 'narration through mobile camera view', and Powlesland discusses it with examples from *Inf.* 4, *Purg.* 12, *Par.* 18 and *Par.* 31. Next, she defines the continuum of invitations to participate, firstly, by extending the work of Auerbach (1953), Gmelin (1951) and Spitzer (1955) on the mechanism of the direct address to the reader (both explicit and implicit), secondly, by proposing that the poem is a model of narrative training, of which she identifies nine exercises, and thirdly, by turning to the strategy of narration through gaps in the text, that unfolds through the devices of similes and auto-indexing ellipses.

Katherine Powlesland's *Narrative Strategies for Participation in Dante's Divine Comedy* is a most engaging study on reading experiences of the *Commedia* and, while proposing the model of 'first-person participation' as a general one for any printed text, it also sheds (new) light on many Dantean narratological devices that expand scholarship through detailed and convincing arguments.

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