

## Introduction



The dossier of the present issue 11 (2024) of *Dante e l'Arte* is dedicated to the study of the link between Pre-Raphaelitism and Dante's work. The enduring imbrication of art and literature materialized in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's interest in Dante is explored in the multidisciplinary approach of the various contributions to the dossier applied to different spheres of influence: literary, artistic, theoretical-poetic and cultural-historical; these are not restricted to a single geographical area.

The focus is placed on the very central role that Dante played in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's artistic production, but also in his personal and family affairs. Gianni Oliva's article informs us indeed how pivotal this bond was for the entire Rossetti family. He also delivers a review of the most recent studies produced by the "European Center for Rossetti Studies" operating in Vasto since 2008. The theme of the centrality of Dante is taken up and developed by Deirdre O'Grady who, by re-examining Rossetti's famous depictions of two female Dantean characters, Francesca da Rimini and Pia dei Tolomei, brings an interpretation of them in terms of innovation: Dante's poetic purity merges into the decadent symbolism in which Rossetti moves. Paolo De Ventura's contribution reminds us of how the immediate Dante-Rossetti connection goes beyond the translator's sphere and is rather ascribable to a kind of appropriation of styles and inspirational motifs, as well as to Rossetti's mirroring in a romantically reenacted biographical paradigm. From the analysis of two sonnets, one being a translation of a Dantean sonnet and the other a Rossettian original, the continuity between translator and poet emerges, and the thread from the translation to the original composition is unravelled.

The ensuing papers take into consideration other aspects and characters. Anne-Florence Gillard-Estrada focuses on the different representations of Paolo and Francesca within the Pre-Raphaelite and 'aesthetic' movements. Rossetti's would constitute a decisive breakthrough in that it transcends the feminine modesty with which the scene was usually treated, to emphasize its strong

sensual undertones in the lovers' embrace. The scene was taken up by several aesthetic painters who, nonetheless, nullified its passionate dimension in favour of pure sentimentality. Emilia Di Rocco's essay examines Marie Spartali Stillman's paintings inspired by Dante, in which Spartali Stillman's personality is delineated through her works, which not only testify to the influence exerted by the Pre-Raphaelites with respect to Dante, but also enter fully into the canon of an iconography that until that point had been mostly male-oriented. The artistic practice also becomes an attempt to search for a style of one's own, for an emancipation from "fathers" and for a recognition as an artist and as a woman in Victorian England. In her contribution, Silvia Arcara takes as her starting point the intricacies of the figure of Beatrice as she appears in the poetic and pictorial work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and moves on to examine some examples from the poetic production of Elizabeth Siddal and Christina Rossetti. She then confronts them, according to a proto-feminist perspective, to the figure of the beloved woman as the inspiring muse of male artistic genius. The woman who is the love object of the male tradition thus becomes the subject of the love lyric. In this way, the Christian vision inspiring Christina's lyric allows her to be more faithful to the Dantesque spirit than her brother, Dante Gabriel, and his aestheticizing Pre-Raphaelite Beatrice.

Three texts that explore other aspects of the influence exerted by Pre-Raphaelite Dantism close the dossier. Fabio Cammilletti refers to the role of medium that the nineteenth century credited to Dante as being attributable to a certain vision of the poet distinctive of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Indeed, the mediation of the Pre-Raphaelites with respect to the spiritist movement's appropriation of Dante suggests that Rossetti promoted not so much a 'spiritual' Dantism as a true 'Dantean' spiritualism. On the other hand, the events that link Rossetti's works to Dante provide in themselves interesting insights into some of the paintings that belong to this sphere. Yannick Le Pappe, who has studied both private and public collections largely British or North American, argues that the works these collections contain reflect as much Victorian imagery as changes in the art market in the second half of the nineteenth century. Finally, the last text of the dossier explores James Joyce's Dantism from a Rossettian perspective. Between 1912 and 1915, the Irish author acquired a copy of the prestigious reprint of the *Vita Nuova* with Rossetti's paintings as illustrations. Valentina Mele probes the influence that the so-called "Pre-Raphaelite" edition of Dante's *libello* had on Joycean imagery through an analysis of the complex figure of Gerty, the Nausicaa whom Bloom meets on Sandymount beach. Proving, in this way, that Pre-Raphaelite Dantism played a fundamental role of utmost historical relevance in the processes of reception

and reappropriation of Dante for both the culture of the time and that which came after it, as well as in a broad range of artistic fields.

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*Editorial team*