Introduction

The relationship between Dante Alighieri and architecture unfolds along two complementary directions: first, the architectural structure of the *Divine Comedy* and architecture as a symbolic repertoire, not only within the poem but also in *De Monarchia*; and second, the figure of Dante and his poem as sources of inspiration for monuments, projects, and architectural reflections over the centuries, culminating in the proposals gathered in the 2018 exhibition Divina Sezione: L'architettura italiana per la *Divina Commedia* (curated by Luca Molinari and Chiara Ingrosso). Dante's poetry constitutes a spatial and visual construction, while Dante's memory becomes civil, religious, and political architecture.

The structural and thematic elements of the poem, such as the symmetry of the cantos or the ascending progression, have often been highlighted, sometimes somewhat superficially, thus facilitating the topos of the poem as a sacred building, a kind of "Gothic cathedral." Similarly, beyond more or less accurate analogies, Dante's universal figure has fostered his cult, which in the architectural realm gave rise to monumental projects in Italy, especially from the Risorgimento to the Mussolini era. These include the Danteum (never realized) as well as various restorations and urban interventions. At times, this process has also generated fanciful interpretations of specific buildings, such as the Palacio Barolo in Buenos Aires, whose supposed celebratory purpose in relation to Dante's work now appears more legendary than factual.

In the Inferno, as Paola Allegretti reminds us in her article, which opens with an analysis of several illustrations of the Inferno by the twin brothers Gaëtan and Paul Brizzi, numerous elements define the space in which Dante moves and which he describes: doors, gateways, walls, bridges, stairs, castles, and cities. Even Lucifer is described as "such a building." This Cantica alone thus offers an architectural repertoire comparable in scope to Villard de Honnecourt's thirteenth-century notebook. However, the monumental quality of the first Cantica serves to evoke terror and to warn of eternal damnation:

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architecture becomes the framework of a horrific landscape, generating a repertoire that does not celebrate but condemns.

In the second Cantica, the mountain of Purgatory, as perceived through Dante's vision or through the descriptions offered by the characters, is composed of terraces and sloping plateaus, embankments, and rocky gateways. Within this setting appear various architectural elements—doors, stairs, battlemented walls—as well as gardens and fountains. The conical structure of the mountain, with all its ridges and recesses, is in fact the exact projection of the infernal abyss from which Dante and Virgil have just emerged. References to *Purgatory* appear in Fagiolo's article, which briefly addresses the different spaces in which Dante's narrative gives form to the three examples of humility (*Pg* X), sculpted by the great "divine smith." This discussion should be supplemented by the reference to "the great palace" with the window from which Micòl, the "mischievous and sorrowful woman," watches the dance of the humble King David, her husband. There is also the reference to the sin of pride in *Pg* XII, where "earthly tombs" are mentioned, such as that depicting "Nimrod at the foot of the great work," that is, the Tower of Babel, or the city of "Troy in ashes."

In the third Cantica, God Himself appears as the Great Architect of the Universe, at one point even depicted holding a compass. The structure of the Empyrean, with its thousand steps, not only evokes the monumentality of the Colosseum but also alludes to Rome and its symbolism as the center of Christianity, as Fagiolo reminds us. The architecture of Paradise is cosmology and geometry: divine order and universal harmony. Therefore, the architecture of the Divine Comedy ultimately coincides with the designs of divine wisdom.

Since the fourteenth century, illustrations of the three Canticas found in important manuscripts, as well as in incunabula and in various editions of the *Divine Comedy*, have highlighted numerous architectural elements related both to the narrative of the Comedy and to its narrative excursuses (similes, metaphors, ekphrasis), thereby assigning them a central function. For the fourteenth century, we may recall Additional MS 31840 and Egerton MS 943, both held at the British Library in London; Altona-Hamburg N.2 Aa 5./7 from the Schulbibliothek des Christianeums; and MS 10057 from the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid. For the fifteenth century, notable examples include Yates Thompson 36 from the British Library and Urbinate Latino 365 from the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, as well as the so-called Dante Vallicelliano in Rome and the drawings for the *Divine Comedy* by Sandro Botticelli, most of which are preserved in the Kupferstichkabinett in Berlin, with a small group (only eight) in the Vatican. Dagmar Korbacher examines the Botticelli drawings

referring to "the great palace" of *Purgatorio* X, while Antonella Ippolito analyses the illustrations dedicated to the Malebolge from the fourteenth century to the end of the sixteenth century.

At the end of the fifteenth century, illustrated editions were published in Brescia (1487) and Venice (1491), both accompanied by Landino's commentary. For the sixteenth century, the edition edited by Vellutello (Venice, 1544) stands out. Also noteworthy are the series of drawings executed in Spain by Federico Zuccari around 1587, in which architectural elements play a prominent role. The same applies to the drawings by Giovanni Stradano, intended for an illustrated edition of the *Divine Comedy* that was never completed. In addition, several fourteenth- and fifteenth-century frescoes assign a significant role to architecture, most notably the frescoes of the Strozzi Chapel by Nardo di Cione in Santa Maria Novella, Florence, and Domenico di Michelino's painting in the Duomo of Florence, executed in 1465, in which architectural structure is fully articulated and plays a primary role (cf. Marcello Fagiolo).

Among the most significant interests of Renaissance scholars in Dante's work was the topography of the Afterlife, particularly, if not exclusively, that of Hell. To this topographical analysis, Raffaele Giannantonio devotes an article presenting maps and the interpretative frameworks underlying them, developed by renowned Florentine scholars and architects such as Filippo Brunelleschi, Antonio Manetti, Cristoforo Landino, Girolamo Benivieni, and Pierfrancesco Giambullari. Also noteworthy is the geometric interpretation of Hell elaborated in 1544 by the Lucchese Alessandro Vellutello, which differs markedly from that of Manetti and stands in open and polemical opposition to Benivieni's model. The controversies sparked by Vellutello's proposal were such that, in 1587, the Florentine Academy commissioned Galileo Galilei to deliver two lectures on the subject.

Within the broader context of renewed interest in Dante's work since the late eighteenth century, and more specifically in relation to the Gothic sensibility of the period (one might think, for instance, of the Gothic setting in which Dante Gabriel Rossetti situates his Beatrice), this dossier brings together contributions that highlight several still underexplored aspects of Dante's reception. One of these concerns John Ruskin, who identified Dante and Giotto as medieval minds capable of truly "seeing" and who elevated Gothic architecture to the realm of the sacred (cf. Rossano De Laurentiis). Other themes are revisited and expanded, including the numerous events organized around the sixth centenary of Dante's birth, together with the controversies that accompanied them, and the proliferation of statues dedicated to Dante that began to appear in squares and streets throughout Italy (cf. Matteo

Petriccione). The dossier also addresses several monumental and architectural projects for Florence and Rome that ultimately remained unrealized, revealing the strong tensions generated both by the symbolic ambitions of their promoters and by the political constraints of the time (cf. Thomas Renard). As a symbolic and iconographic figure of the Italian nation, Dante became the focus of intense cultural and political debate, at least until the advent of the Mussolini era. This did not prevent the much-criticized monument in Ravenna housing the tomb of the Divine Poet from acquiring, over time, a certain sacred aura and becoming the object of numerous proposals for its revaluation through radical transformations. During the Fascist period, it was even placed within a so-called "silent zone."

In contrast to the contributions collected in this dossier, Mariano Pérez Carrasco demonstrates that Dante's alleged connection to the architecture of an emblematic building such as the Palacio Barolo in Buenos Aires is based entirely on a legend that emerged in the 1990s.

Thus, Dante and the art of Vitruvius have maintained a continuous and intense dialogue across the centuries, extending into the present: on the one hand, the *Divine Comedy* as an architectural construction of imaginary spaces; on the other, the sustained interest of artists and scholars of all periods in Dante's work, often drawing inspiration from it to conceive buildings and monuments. We conclude by observing that the architectural monumentality of Hell, the sacred architecture of Paradise, the artistic interpretations, and the urban projects discussed in this dossier demonstrate how Dante has been received not only as the author of a universal masterpiece but also as a symbolic architect of the World and of Civilization.