Introduction

The illuminated codex Yates Thompson 36 is one of the most beautiful and most studied copies of the Commedia, one of the few that contains a great number of miniatures for the three canticles, a material of high artistic value. It is precisely for its rich and complex iconographic heritage that the issue no. 8 of Dante e l’Arte is dedicated to Alfonso d’Aragona’s Commedia, with the aim of offering some new interpretations. The collected contributions offer new considerations and suggestions, deepening, for example, the study of the relationship text-image, pertaining to the illustrative tradition in which the Commedia is set, and the artistic period of two major artists who depicted the first two Canticles (the anonymous Maestro) and the third (Giovanni di Paolo).

The issue opens with a detailed description of the codex and its history made by Donatella Buovolo. Marcello Ciccuto studies the components of the visionary imagination of the Sienese artist Giovanni di Paolo who, by using elements of immateriality and anti-naturalistic abstraction, spiritualises the reading of the episodes of Paradiso. Then, Elisa Orsi traces the history of the reception of the London manuscript. She focuses on the beginning, in the second half of the last century, of a new research on the illuminated manuscripts of the Commedia oriented to study the exegetical value of the illustrative material; a research that offers a new perspective on Dante’s figurative tradition, based on the reconstruction of the material and cultural history of the codex. Laura Pasquini analyses the miniature by Giovanni di Paolo on f. 177r of the Yates Thompson 36, which depicts the invective of Saint Peter in Pd XXVII, 19-66. In his miniature, the artist provides a figurative interpretation pertinent to the text, demonstrating his adherence to the medieval figurative tradition of papal prophecies also mentioned several times in the Commedia. Gianni Pittiglio studies the visual representations of rhetorical figures in Dante’s text. In the miniatures of Yates Thompson 36, single words or more complex concepts are frequently given physical substance, inspiring compositions that would not seem to have any connection with the Commedia. Chiara Ponchia aims at improving the current knowledge of the Yates Thompson 36, and of Dante’s illustrations in
general, through an iconographic analysis of some infernal characters carried out in a comparative perspective that takes into account the main figurative choices of others illuminated manuscripts of the poem. Finally, Giulia Puma examines the recurring representation in the *Paradiso* of the book as an object, present in ten miniatures, but absent in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. These texts are mentioned by Dante in the poem as books of wisdom and moral wisdom; their presence explains the visual intelligence of the painter, and the bookish taste of the patron.