

### 3 Adventures in Textuality: Lyric Poetry, the *Tenzone*, and Cino da Pistoia

The tradition of lyric poetry in thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Italy is vast and varied, and the poets who contributed to this great production of literary texts are many and represent a number of regions on the peninsula. In his treatise on language and prosody, *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante demonstrates his awareness of this great patchwork quilt of languages/dialects that constitutes medieval Italy, while simultaneously acknowledging the wide range of poets and styles that characterize the lyric tradition. In this case, as in many others, we know Dante's perspectives on a great many issues, and these, in the absence of other evidence, we gratefully accept, and these opinions have often been raised to canonical status ... rightly or wrongly. To be sure, many of our judgments on early Italian poets are shaped by the views of the Florentine poet, for so powerful is the cult of Dante that few can escape his pervasive influence.

Despite the understanding and insights that we have gleaned from Dante's texts, there are lots of things we do not know about the early Italian poets and about the transmission of lyric texts in the Duecento and early Trecento. About the only thing we know for sure is that much, or most of what survives of the early lyric tradition – and here I refer to the work of those poets who were active at the imperial court of Frederick II and those who were active in Tuscany in the second half of the thirteenth century (the *siculo-toscani*) – is contained in three late thirteenth-century codices compiled in Tuscany: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticano latino 3793; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Banco Rari 217; and Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Redi 9.<sup>1</sup> The transcription of these three principal codices in Tuscan dialect was crucial to the elevation of that dialect, and its Florentine variety in particular, to a position of prestige and cultural



dominance in medieval and early Renaissance Italy. The fact that the so-called three crowns of Florence – Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio – all wrote in this Tuscan/Florentine dialect confirmed its linguistic prominence and authority in literature, just as Luca Boschetto demonstrates in his essay in this volume concerning the language of the notarial documents in the Florentine Mercanzia. Through such means Florence exerted its cultural and linguistic hegemony in the areas of literature and law.

Some of the lyric texts of the Sicilian and *siculo-toscani* poets, as well as the lyrics of the *dolce stilnovisti* (poets of 'the sweet new style') and more popular poets, are also contained in some fourteenth-century manuscripts: for example, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barberini latino 3953 (from 1325 to 1335, organized and written in part by Nicolò dei Rossi);<sup>2</sup> Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Chigi L.VIII.305 (mid-fourteenth century);<sup>3</sup> and Madrid, Real Biblioteca de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, latino e.III.23 (first third of the fourteenth century).<sup>4</sup> We possess only a very small fraction of the Sicilian corpus in what may have been its original linguistic guise, and most of these are found in the so-called *carte Barbieri* (the papers of Giovanni Maria Barbieri, d. 1574).<sup>5</sup> The poetic texts in the three earliest codices all appear in their Tuscanized form, which we believe is the result of their transcription by Tuscan scribes, while the linguistic patina of the Barberiniano codex (Barb. lat. 3953) is decidedly from the Veneto region and most likely from Treviso.

One great mystery, which will probably never be solved, is how the individual poetic texts were identified, transmitted, transformed, and transcribed into these great verse collections.<sup>6</sup> In what form were they when the amanuenses first encountered or 'found' them? Were there several copies or a single one? Did the scribes encounter them in written form? Or did they hear them in the piazza? What was the impact of performance or oral transmission on the process of composition? What ordering or organizational principles were used in the codices? Were poems arranged by poetic genre? By author? Or alphabetically, by incipit? These are just some of the questions that continue to concern us. The complex presence of poems and their sheer numbers – almost one thousand texts in Vat. lat. 3793 alone – present formidable challenges to even the most seasoned and astute textual critic.

In this essay I intend to draw on my earlier research on the origin and development of the Italian sonnet in the first century of its existence,<sup>7</sup> and to a lesser degree on my editorial work for a critical edition and translation of the poetry of Cino da Pistoia.<sup>8</sup> In order to limit the scope

of this essay, however, I will focus on the poetic genre known as the *tenzone* – literally, a poetic duel or contest – a genre that derives from the Occitan *tenso* or *joc partit*, a debate in which poets would compose alternate stanzas of a *canso* or *sirventes* on a particular theme, usually amorous.<sup>9</sup> The *tenzone*, then, in very simple terms, is an exchange of sonnets (and, much more rarely, of *canzoni*)<sup>10</sup> between two (or more) poets on a particular topic – amorous, moral, political, religious, or popular.<sup>11</sup> We should note that *tenzoni* come in two varieties, *tenzoni reali o vere* and *tenzoni fittizie*, and the meaning of these designations should be obvious: 'real' *tenzoni* are the products of at least two individual authors, while 'fictitious' *tenzoni* are the 'exchanges' of sonnets written by the same author. Some scholars have also included in this latter category other poetic genres, such as the *contrasto*, one famous example of which is by Cielo d'Alcamo:<sup>12</sup>

'Rosa fresca aulentis[s]ima, – c'apari inver la state,  
le donne ti disiano – pulzell' e maritate;  
tra[ji]mi de ste focora – se t'este a bolontate;  
per te non aio abento notte e dia,  
penzando pur di voi, madonna mia.'

'Se di mevi trabagliti, – follia lo ti fa fare,  
lo mar potresti arompere, – avanti, a semenare,  
l'abere de sto secolo – tut[t]o quanto asebrare,  
avereme non poteri a esto monno,  
avanti li cavelli m'aritonno.'

'Fresh, most fragrant rose, you appear towards summer, the ladies desire you, both maidens and married women; remove me from these flames, if it pleases you; because of you I have no rest, night or day, thinking only of you, my lady.'

'If you torment yourself over me, folly makes you do so; even if you could plow and seed the sea and gather all the riches of this world, you could not have me in this world; I'd rather cut my hair first.'

Another fine example of the *contrasto* is that of Giacomino Pugliese:<sup>13</sup>

'Donna, di voi mi lamento,  
bella di voi mi richiamo  
di sì grande fallimento:



donastemi auro co ramo.  
 Vostro amor pensai tenere  
 fermo, senza sospicione;  
 or sembra d'altro volere,  
 truovolo in falsa cascione,  
 amore.'

'Meo sir, se tu ti lamenti,  
 tu no ài dritto, nè ragione;  
 per te sono in gran tormenti.  
 Dovresti guardar stagione,  
 ancor ti sforzi la voglia  
 d'amore e la gelosia;  
 con senno porta la doglia,  
 non perder per tua follia  
 amore.'

'Lady, I complain of you, beautiful lady, I accuse you of this great failure: you gave me gold with copper. I thought I had your faithful love without worries; now it seems to be of another mind; I find it to be falsely motivated, my love.'

'My lord, if you complain, you have no right or reason to do so; for you I am in great torment. You should pay better attention, although you may be compelled by love and jealousy. Bear your pain wisely; do not lose love because of your folly.'

Another poetic genre related to the *tenzone* is the sonnet in two voices, or *sonetto dialogato*, as represented in the following example by Cecco Angiolieri:<sup>14</sup>

'Becchin' amor!' 'Che vuo', falso tradito?'  
 'Che mi perdoni.' 'Tu non ne se' degno.'  
 'Merzé, per Deo!' 'Tu vien' molto gecchito.'  
 'E verrò sempre.' 'Che sarammi pegno?'  
 'La buona fé.' 'Tu ne se' mal fornito.'  
 'No inver' di te.' 'Non calmar, ch'i' ne vegno!'  
 'In che fallai?' 'Tu sa' ch'i' l'abbo udito.'  
 'Dimmel, amor.' 'Va', che ti veng' un segno!'  
 'Vuo' pur ch'i' muoia?' 'Anzi mi par mill'anni.'  
 'Tu non di' bene.' 'Tu m'insegnerai.'

'Ed i' morrò.' 'Omè, che tu m'inganni!'  
 'Die tel perdoni.' 'E ché non te ne vai?'  
 'Or potess'io!' 'Tègnoli per li panni?'  
 'Tu tieni 'l cuore.' 'E terrò co' tuo guai.'

'Becchina, my love!' 'What do you want, false traitor?'  
 'That you forgive me.' 'You aren't worthy of it.'  
 'Mercy, by God!' 'You seem so humble.'  
 'And I always will be.' 'What will be my guarantee?'  
 'Good faith.' 'You are poorly supplied with it.'  
 'Not toward you.' 'Don't try to calm me, because I know your tricks!'  
 'Where did I go wrong?' 'You know I heard it.'  
 'Tell me, my love.' 'Go away, may you be struck down!'  
 'You want me to die?' 'You've been around forever.'  
 'You're not telling the truth.' 'And you'll teach me how.'  
 'And I'll die.' 'Oh, how you trick me!'  
 'May God forgive you.' 'Why won't you go away?'  
 'Oh, would that I could!' 'Am I holding on to your clothes?'  
 'You hold my heart.' 'And I'll hold it to your detriment.'

However, we must return to the 'real' *tenzone*. What motivated the earliest Italian poets to write, or, better, to 'initiate,' a *tenzone*? It seems clear that the motivating factor was the desire to communicate, to enter into a conversation with other poets on matters and issues that were deemed important. And, indeed, we might be wise to differentiate between a *tenzone* (a discussion of a specific argument of more general interest) and a simple exchange of sonnets or *rime di corrispondenza* (that is, poems not primarily directed toward the elucidation of a subject, but more toward achieving personal goals: the gaining of friendship, a personal request, and so on). The presence of poems of this latter sort in the manuscripts may provide us with a glimpse into the customs and practices of everyday life in literate circles of society, but by and large, they are more epistolary and conversational in nature. One interesting situation is found in the Rediano codex (Redi 9) that begins with the letters of Guittone d'Arezzo and other Tuscan authors. The epistolary genre obviously has a specific addressee and is intended as the initiation of a dialogue. Indeed, some of these letters contain a sonnet, which then forms the basis of a *tenzone*, thereby doubling the conversational nature and intent of the composition, as we may observe, for example, in the following exchange of letters and attached sonnets by Dotto Reali da Lucca and Meo Abbracciavacca. Dotto Reali's letter begins in this



manner: 'A te, Meo Abracciavacca, Dotto Reali, menimo frate dell'ordine dei Cavalieri di beata Maria, manda salute' (To you, Meo Abbracciavacca, Dotto Reali, most lowly brother of the Order of the Knights of Blessed Mary, sends greetings); and then, after a long paragraph in prose, presents the following sonnet:<sup>15</sup>

Similmente canoscensa move  
lo cor dell'om, che spesso si disforma,  
sì come l'aire face quando plove,  
che per contrario vento si riforma,  
e venta puro, e mostra cose nove  
in occhio d'om per parer, non per forma.  
A simil parlo, per intender prove  
del meo defetto da ciò che più forma.  
E ciò è mezzo, di principio fine  
e di fine principio naturale,  
ch'assai palese mostra, in cui figura.  
Qual d'esti dui più sente, e chi di fine  
intenda, non che porti naturale  
per sé, manda per compier la figura.

Just as knowledge moves man's heart, which often changes because of its restless nature, so is the air, after a period of rain, reconstituted by an opposing wind that purifies the air and reveals to one's eye new things in appearance, not in substance. I offer this simile as a way of showing how far my imperfect state is from the intellect [i.e., the first formal principle]. And this [imperfect state] is halfway between the sensitive life (of which it is virtually the end) and the intellective life (of which it is the beginning), and this is readily evident in whomever it appears. Let me know which one of these two [i.e., the sensitive or intellective] has the greater effect on the will, and which one of these may signify the end (of our existence), aside from what the natural appetite allows for itself, in order that the images [in this sonnet] may be completed.

Meo begins his letter of response to Dotto with the salutation: 'Messer Dotto frate, Meo Abracciavacca salute di bono amore' (Messer Dotto Reali, Meo Abbracciavacca sends greetings with true love); and after an even longer paragraph in prose includes the following sonnet:

Parlare scuro dimandando, dove  
risposta chiare veder chiaro l'orma,

non par mistero che sentenza trove,  
ma del sentir altrui voler[e] norma.  
A ciò che 'ntendo, dico mezo sove  
di primo fine; e di fine storma  
qual nel mezo, difetto, fine s' trove:  
dunqua per fine ten più vizii a torma.  
Così bono tornare pregio chine  
di monte 'n valle del profondo male,  
acciò bisogna di ragione cura.  
Voi conoscete da la rosa spine:  
seguir convene voi a fine tale  
che 'l primo e 'l mezo di lod' agi' altura.

Although one may speak obscurely in asking questions, while a reply requires the ability to understand clearly the subject, it does not appear necessary to reach a determination, but only to understand the other's view. Based on what I understand, I declare that I know a middle ground that is the end of the beginning, and whoever finds his end in this imperfect middle ground strays from the true end: this one, therefore, has a swarm of vices for an end. Thus, I hold in great esteem the movement of the good here on earth from the high mountain to the valley of profound evil, for the care of reason is necessary to accomplish this. You know how to distinguish the rose from the thorns: you must pursue an end such that the beginning and the middle are worthy of praise.

The earliest *tenzoni* were written by the poets at the court of Frederick II, the so-called poets of the Sicilian School (*poeti della scuola siciliana*). The medium of communication was the sonnet, which had been recently invented, probably by Giacomo da Lentini.<sup>16</sup> It was only later in the century that the technical 'rules' governing these poetic exchanges were formulated, and by this I mean the practice that poets followed in responding *per le rime* (i.e., the respondent must use the rhymes of the initial poem in his own composition).

*Tenzoni* present interesting editorial problems, for they are sometimes incomplete, in the sense that we have one sonnet, but not the other, either the proposal or the response. Sometimes we do not even know if we are dealing with a *tenzone* for there is no correspondence among the rhymes and no specific indications in the manuscript that the two poems go together, except in a very general way. Sometimes an interlocutor is named, but a poem by that individual is missing, if indeed it was ever written.



The *tenzone* seems to me to offer interesting opportunities to see textual cultures and textual communities at work, to observe how they function, and to investigate the complications of such enterprises in a manuscript culture. Given the current limited state of our knowledge about the manuscript tradition of thirteenth-century Italian poetry and the evident problems of transmission of specific poems, we are able only to offer some reasonable hypotheses – certainly no definitive statements. Indeed, there are tantalizing questions that may always be with us, given the absence or incomplete nature of documentary materials and archival evidence.

It may be opportune to recall here the apt formulation that Michele Barbi was fond of repeating, almost as a mantra of textual criticism. Following what he had learned from Pio Rajna, Barbi was convinced, and I quote, that 'the philological problem of one text is different from the philological problem of another text.'<sup>17</sup> Even though it may appear to be common sense, this phrase still bears repeating, for it sums up very nicely the principle of the unique ontology of each text and, moreover, provides a cautionary note to those who may wish to formulate general theories of, or 'rules' for, textual editing.

A bit of history may be appropriate at this point. In the early part of the twentieth century Salvatore Santangelo suggested that many, if not all, of the sonnets written by the poets of the Sicilian School, as well as others composed by poets on the peninsula, formed a large number of *tenzoni*, what we might call a great and elaborate conversation among poets.<sup>18</sup> Santangelo argued that the 'rule' of the *tenzone* (the *legge della rispondenza*) was the presence of the same or similar rhymes in two (or more) poems and that sonnets related in this way formed *tenzoni*, one being the proposal and the other the response. This line of reasoning also bolstered his belief that poetic contests (*gare poetiche*) were common events at the court of Frederick II. Santangelo's intriguing argument received harsh criticism,<sup>19</sup> and this was in part merited, since definitive codicological or explicit textual evidence that would support such a view was lacking. Indeed, the material record presented by the manuscripts would contradict Santangelo's view, for *tenzoni* in the early codices are usually indicated as such in the text.<sup>20</sup>

The history of lyric poetry in the Duecento is marked by certain signposts, specific poems, generally *canzoni*, that are generally considered to be major statements of poetic intent or of doctrinal importance. For example, the *canzone* 'Amor non vol ch'io clami' by Giacomo da Lentini has sometimes been viewed as a statement of protest against the stifling influence of the Occitan tradition and perhaps even as a

proclamation of the invention of the sonnet as the new poetic form that will supplant older models.<sup>21</sup>

Amor non vole ch'io clami  
merze[de] c'onn'omo clama,  
né ch[e] io m'avanti c'ami,  
c'ogn'omo s'avanta c'ama;  
che lo servire c'onn'omo  
sape fare nonn-à nomo,  
e no è in pregio di laudare  
quello che sape ciascuno:  
a voi, bella, tal[e] dono  
non vorria apresentare.

Love doesn't want me to ask for mercy for which every man asks, nor does he want me to boast that I love, for every man boasts that he loves. The service that every man knows how to give has no name, and it is not held in esteem to praise what everyone knows: to you, beautiful one, such a gift I would not wish to present.

In a similar fashion, Guittone d'Arezzo (who is now identified in the manuscript rubric as *fra Guittone* and not simply as *Guittone*) announces in his *canzone* 'Ora parrà s'io saverò cantare' the new religious and moral direction that his poetry will take. The position of this *canzone* in the Laurentian Rediano codex (it is the first poem following a series of letters) attests to that moment of changeover from one poetic style and theme to another. In much the same way, the *canzoni* by Guido Guinizzelli ('Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore'), Guido Cavalcanti ('Donna me prega perch'io voglio dire'), and Dante ('Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore') are signposts that mark the new directions of lyric poetry in the second half of the thirteenth century, although their placement in the codices does not generally reflect this status.

Just as the *canzoni* cited above, certain *tenzoni* have played similar roles in Italian literary history. Some *tenzoni* have become cultural markers, indicating spatial-temporal boundaries and representing those particular and decisive moments of change in the literary history in the Duecento. As time passes, attitudes toward a given topic change, and the struggle between the old and the new, between accepted notions and newfangled ideas, manifests itself. Poets themselves undergo change and transformation; the poetry of their later years generally demonstrates a maturity that their earlier lyrics did not possess. One poet in



particular – Guido Guinizzelli – displays in his lyrics the dramatic change in his attitude toward love and toward the very concept of how poetry should be written. Two of Guido's poetic exchanges, first with Guittone d'Arezzo and then with Bonagiunta da Lucca, clearly mark the progress of his evolution as a poet and can also serve to indicate at least one major turning point, or watershed moment, in the development of the lyric tradition. In the first *tenzone* Guinizzelli addresses a sonnet to Guittone, in which he acknowledges the latter's leadership role and prestigious position among the peninsular poets, addressing him with the 'voi' form and calling him reverently 'padre meo':<sup>22</sup>

Guido Guinizzelli a Guittone d'Arezzo<sup>23</sup>

[O] caro padre meo, de vostra laude  
non bisogna ch'alcun omo se 'mbarchi,  
ché 'n vostra mente intrar vizio non aude,  
che for de sé vostro saver non l'archi.  
A ciascun rëo sì la porta claude,  
che, sembr', ha più via che Venezi' ha Marchi;  
entr' a' Gaudenti ben vostr' alma gaude,  
ch'al me' parer li gaudii han sovr'alarchi.  
Prendete la canzon, la qual io porgo  
al saver vostro, che l'aguinchi e cimi,  
ch'a voi ciò solo com' a mastr' accorgo,  
ch'ell' è congiunta certo a debel' vimi:  
però mirate di lei ciascun borgo  
per vostra correzion lo vizio limi.

O my dear father, no man needs to undertake your praises, since evil dares not enter your mind without your wisdom thrusting it away. It closes the gate to all sins, which seem to outnumber the Marks in Venice; your spirit is buoyed among the Joyous Brethren who delight, to my eyes, in overwhelming joy. Receive my song, which I offer for your judgment, to shape and cut; I entrust it to you alone as my master, for no doubt it is joined by weak bonds. So examine every part of it: correct the fault with your revisions.

To judge from verse 9, 'Prendete la canzon' (Receive my song), Guido is evidently sending a *canzone* (perhaps his 'Lo fin pregi' avanzato') together with the sonnet, for he asks that Guittone subject it to his highly refined critical eye and work his stylistic magic on it.<sup>24</sup> As we might imagine, Guittone basks in this adoration, as is evident in his response:

Guittone a Guido Guinizzelli

Figlio mio diletto, in faccia laude  
non con descrezion, sembrate, m'archi:  
lauda sua volonter non saggio l'aude,  
se tutto laudator giusto ben marchi;  
per che laudar me te non cor me laude,  
tutto che laude meriti e laude marchi:  
laudando sparte bon de valor laude,  
legge orrando di saggi e non di marchi.  
Ma se che degno sia figlio m'acorgo,  
no amo certo guaire a tte dicimi,  
ché volonteri a la tua lauda accorgo.  
La grazia tūa che 'padre' dicimi,  
ch'è figlio tale assai pago, corgo,  
purché vera sapienza a ppoder cimi.

My delightful son, not with prudence, I think, do you direct your praises to me: a wise man does not gladly hear his own praise, even if a just praiser does it well; and so my heart doesn't dare to praise you, though you merit praise and send it. A good man, when he praises, separates praise from worth, honouring the laws of the wise and not the foolish. But if, though you are a worthy son, I make corrections, I do not wish at all to lessen your praise, since I freely turn to your compliment. I welcome your devotion in calling me father, for such a son well satisfies, and you shape true wisdom where you can.

Not too many years after this poetic exchange, we would imagine, Bonagiunta da Lucca addresses a sonnet to Guido, in which he takes him to task for 'having changed the way of writing love lyrics' – a clear reference to what has become known as Guido's doctrinal *canzone* 'Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore.' Bonagiunta complains that Guinizzelli has moved from simple and direct forms of poetic expression to a style steeped in learning and subtlety:<sup>25</sup>

Bonagiunta Orbicciani a Guido Guinizzelli

Voi, ch'avetè mutata la mainera  
de li plagenti ditti de l'amore  
de la forma dell'esser là dov'era,  
per avansare ogn'altro trovatore,  
avete fatto como la lumera,



ch'a le scure partite dà sprendore,  
 ma non quine ove luce l'alta spera,  
 la quale avansa e passa di chiarore.  
 Così passate voi di sottigliansa,  
 e non si può trovar chi ben ispogna,  
 cotant' è iscura vostra parlatura.  
 Ed è tenuta gran dissimigliansa,  
 ancor che 'l senno vegna da Bologna,  
 traier canson per forza di scrittura.

You, who have changed the style of the pleasing love lyrics from the essential form they once had so that you could surpass every other poet, have become like the light that sheds brightness in dark corners; but not here where the sublime light shines which surpasses and outshines yours in brightness. You are thus preeminent in subtlety, and no man can be found to explain your language, so obscure is it. And it's thought a curious thing, though learning comes from Bologna, to drag song by force out of writing.

Ever civil and seemingly unruffled by these accusations, Guinizzelli responds with the gentlest of putdowns for the older, more traditionally minded poet from Lucca, essentially saying that one should not criticize what one does not understand. We should also note that in his answering sonnet Guinizzelli consistently uses the impersonal third person and not the more direct second person, either *tu* or *voi*. While there are still interpretive problems associated with this *tenzone*, one thing is clear: important changes are taking place in the literary tradition, and this exchange of sonnets captures that particular moment in time very well.<sup>26</sup>

Guido Guinizzelli a Bonagiunta Orbicciani

Omo ch'è saggio non corre leggero,  
 ma a passo grada sì com' vol misura:  
 quand' ha pensato, riten su' pensero  
 infin a tanto che 'l ver l'asigura.  
 Foll' è chi crede sol veder lo vero  
 e non pensare che altri i pogna cura:  
 non se dev' omo tener troppo altero,  
 ma dé guardar so stato e sua natura.  
 Volan ausel' per air di straine guise  
 ed han diversi loro operamenti,

né tutti d'un volar né d'un ardire.  
 Deo natura e 'l mondo in grado mise,  
 e fe' despari senni e intendimenti:  
 perzò ciò ch'omo pensa non dé dire.

A wise man doesn't run ahead lightly but proceeds step by step, as reason demands: when he has thought it through, he conceals his thought until he's certain of the truth. A foolish man believes he alone sees the truth and doesn't think that others search for it: a man shouldn't hold himself too high but should regard his status and his own nature. Birds of all different kinds fly through the air and have their differing traits – not all of one flight nor all of a single intent. God set nature and the world in degrees and made different intelligences and understandings. And so a man shouldn't blurt out what he thinks.<sup>27</sup>

It was undoubtedly his reading of the *tenzone* between Bonagiunta and Guinizzelli that caused Dante, in canto 24 of *Purgatorio*, to give the poet from Lucca the role of presenting the historical overview of the several historical periods of poetic schools in the Duecento. Here in the *Commedia* Bonagiunta recognizes and identifies Dante as the author of the first *canzone* in the *Vita nuova*, 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore':

'Ma dí s'ì' veggio qui colui che fore  
 trasse le nove rime, cominciando  
 "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore."'" (Purg. 24.49–51)

'But tell me if I see here him who brought forth the new rhymes,  
 beginning: "Ladies that have understanding of love?"'"<sup>28</sup>

In his response to these words Dante, as it were, provides the definition of his distinctive poetic voice by describing his sublime inspiration:

E io a lui: 'T' mi son un che, quando  
 Amor mi spira, noto, e a quel modo  
 ch'e' ditta dentro vo significando.' (Purg. 24.52–4)

And I to him, 'I am one who, when Love inspires me, takes note, and goes setting it forth after the fashion which he dictates within me.'

Bonagiunta's reaction to and commentary on what Dante says provide both the solution to and the problem of the 'mystery' of the *Dolce stil*



*novo*, for it is here, in these verses, that we find for the first – and only – time these famous three words:

'O frate, issa vegg' io, 'diss' elli, 'il nodo  
che 'l Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne  
di qua dal dolce stil novo ch' i' odo!  
Io veggio ben come le vostre penne  
di retro al dittator sen vanno strette,  
che de le nostre certo non avvenne;  
e qual più a gradire oltre si mette,  
non vede più da l'uno a l'altro stilo.' (*Purg.* 29.55–62)

'O brother,' he said, 'now I see the knot which kept the Notary, and Guittone, and me short of the sweet new style that I hear. Clearly I see how your pens follow close after him who dictates, which certainly befell not with ours – and he who sets himself to seek farther can see no other difference between the one style and the other.'

On the basis of this passage it has been argued that Bonagiunta is identifying a group of poets consisting of Guido Guinizzelli, Guido Cavalcanti, Lapo Gianni, Gianni degli Alfini, Dino Frescobaldi, Cino da Pistoia, and Dante himself. However, it has also been suggested that this passage in *Purgatorio* represents the definition that Dante gives of his own particular poetics. On the one hand, then, the *Dolce stil novo* would indicate a 'school of poets' and, on the other hand, a single poet, whose virtuosity and subject matter would far surpass all of the others. However this may be, we see in the words Dante puts into his character Bonagiunta's mouth a retrospective ordering of thirteenth-century poetic production whereby Bonagiunta's poetry and that of Giacomo da Lentini (the 'Notary') and Guittone d'Arezzo are distinct, both stylistically and thematically, from the lyrics of this new 'school.' Equally clear from this passage is the recognition both of Dante's *canzone*, 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore,' as marking a major turning point in his own poetic itinerary and of the new conception of the personified figure of Love as the 'dittator' (one who dictates). The identity of Love, not as Cupid but as the Holy Spirit who provides the inspiration for a higher, more refined amorous poetry, then sets the stage for the theologizing of love and woman, ideas that began with the poetics of praise of Guido Guinizzelli and that were elaborated and refined by Dante first in the *Vita nuova* and then, in a definitive manner, in the *Commedia*.<sup>29</sup>

Other *tenzoni* have suffered critical neglect or scorn at the hands of some scholars because they deal with unseemly matters. For example, the famous – some might say infamous – sonnet exchange between Dante and Forese Donati has been the subject of many attempts to disprove its authenticity, in part because the subject matter, language, style, and tone are, according to some critics, not worthy of Dante, because they are an embarrassment to the great poet of the *Vita nuova* and *Commedia*. The desire to 'protect' Dante, to 'save his reputation,' may stem from the highest and finest of motives, but this blatantly disregards the manuscript evidence that clearly attributes these poems to Dante.<sup>30</sup> Independent validation of their authenticity is provided in canto 23 of *Purgatorio*, where Dante meets Forese, and the intent of that passage is, among other things, to put their earlier scabrous sonnet exchange into perspective and to consider it a bygone episode of their 'misspent' youth.<sup>31</sup> The first two sonnets in the *tenzone* are as follows:<sup>32</sup>

Dante a Forese

Chi udisse tossir la malfatata  
moglie di Bicci vocato Forese,  
potrebbe dir ch'ell'ha forse vernata  
ove si fa 'l cristallo, in quel paese.  
Di mezzo agosto la truovi infreddata:  
or sappi che de' far d'ogni altro mese ...;  
e non le val perché dorma calzata,  
merzé del copertoio c'ha cortonese.  
La tosse, 'l freddo e l'altra mala voglia  
no l'addovien per omor' ch'abbia vecchi,  
ma per difetto ch'ella sente al nido.  
Piange la madre, c'ha più d'una doglia,  
dicendo: 'Lassa, che per fichi secchi  
messa l'avre' 'n casa del conte Guido.'

Anyone who heard the coughing of the luckless wife of Bicci, called Forese, might say that maybe she'd passed the winter in the land where crystal is made. You'll find her frozen in mid-August – so guess how she must fare in any other month! And it's no use her keeping her stockings on – the bedclothes are too short. The coughing and cold and other troubles – these don't come to her from ageing humours, but from the gap she feels in the nest. Her mother, who has more than one



affliction, weeps saying: 'Alas, for dried figs I could have married her to Count Guido!'

Forese a Dante

L'altra notte mi venne una gran tosse,  
perch'ì non avea che tener a dosso;  
ma incontamente che fu dí, fui mosso  
per gir a guadagnar ove che fosse.  
Udite la fortuna ove m'addosse:  
ch'ì credetti trovar perle in un bosso  
e be' fiorin' conati d'oro rosso;  
ed i' trovai Alaghier tra le fosse,  
legato a nodo ch'ì non saccio 'l nome,  
se fu di Salamone o d'altro saggio.  
Allora mi segna' verso 'l levante:  
e que' mi disse: 'Per amor di Dante,  
scio' mi.' Ed i' non potti veder come:  
tornai a dietro, e compie' mi' viaggio.

The other night I had a great fit of coughing, because I'd nothing to put over me; but as soon as day came I went off to look for money, wherever it might be found. Hear where luck led me! For I thought I'd find pearls in a wooden box and fine coined florins of red gold, but I found Alighieri among the graves, tied by some knot – I don't know if the one called Solomon's, or some other sage's. Then I made a sign of the cross facing east. And he said to me: 'For the love of Dante, release me.' But I couldn't see how – so turned back and came home.

The accusations lodged by Dante suggest that Forese is not keeping up with his husbandly duties – indeed, that he may be sexually inadequate – and leaves his wife cold and abandoned in bed to the eternal lament of her mother. Forese does not respond *per le rime*, but takes his cue from the verb *tossir* (to cough) in verse 1 of Dante's sonnet, rendering it in its substantive form *tosse* (a cough) in the first verse of his. Forese's attack centres on the likely sin – usury – of Dante's father, whose soul needs assistance either from his son or from Forese for salvation. Whether these two sonnets have any historical basis is of secondary importance to the evidence they provide of a dynamic, intellectualized culture in which literary artefacts provide an ideal, restricted space for the staging of a sort of duel whose sole weapons are words and ideas.

One of the earliest *tenzoni* in the thirteenth century features three sonnets, the initial one written by Jacopo Mostacci ('Solicitando un poco meo sapere'), who proposes the general topic on the nature of love and on the existence of the god of Love, Amore. To this invitation Pier delle Vigne ('Però c'Amore no se pò vedere') and Giacomo da Lentini responded, and the latter's sonnet provides the classic description of the operation of love:<sup>33</sup>

Amor è un[o] desio che ven da core  
per abondanza di gran piacimento;  
e li occhi in prima genera[n] l'amore  
e lo core li dà nutrimento.  
Ben è alcuna fiata om amatore  
senza vedere so 'namoramento,  
ma quell'amor che stringe con furore  
da la vista de li occhi à nas[ci]mento.  
Che li occhi rapresenta[n] a lo core  
d'onni cosa che veden bono e rio,  
com'è formata natural[e]mente;  
e lo cor, che di zo è concepitore,  
imagina, e piace quel desio:  
e questo amore regna fra la gente.

Love is a desire that comes from the heart through abundance of great beauty; and the eyes first generate love, and the heart gives them nourishment. Sometimes a man becomes a lover without seeing his beloved, but the love that grips with fury is born from the sight of the eyes; for the eyes represent to the heart everything they see, both good or bad, and how they are naturally formed; and the heart, that conceives it, forms an image, and is pleased by that desire: and this love reigns among the people.

It is a curious fact that this *tenzone* is not contained in the Vatican manuscript (Vat. lat. 3793), which is the source of most of the Sicilian lyrics. Rather it is found uniquely in the Barberiniano manuscript (Barb. lat. 3953), a codex noted more for its gathering of the poetic production of the latter half of the thirteenth century. We wonder about its long itinerary from Sicily to the Veneto.

Another *tenzone* involves Giacomo da Lentini, whom the Abbot of Tivoli engaged in a poetic contest. This poetic exchange is formed of five sonnets, all of which are found in the Vatican codex (Vat. lat. 3793), the



premier manuscript for the early Italian lyric, composed in the last decades of the thirteenth century. It is noteworthy that this *tenzone* opens the section of sonnets in that manuscript. It is often very instructive to observe how codices open and close, how they are structured, how the *mise-en-page* varies, and how compositions are grouped. The very first composition in Vat. lat. 3793 is a *canzone* by Giacomo da Lentini, 'Madonna, dir vi voglio,' and this incipit, addressed to the poet's lady, is as it were an invitation to dialogue, to initiate a conversation, but one that remains a monologue on the part of the poet. Nevertheless, the important element is the initial vocative ('Madonna') that opens the conversation. The second part of the codex Vat. lat. 3793 begins on fol. 111r with the *tenzone* between the Abbot of Tivoli and Giacomo da Lentini. Once again, we have a major section of the codex opening with a conversation. The rubric reads 'tenzone v' indicating that it is a *tenzone* composed of five sonnets. In other codices *tenzoni* are indicated with rubrics noting the names of the initial correspondent and the respondent.

In addition to those poems that lack the name of an author, one of the great codicological mysteries is the presence of a number of sonnets that are obviously directed to another poet, but for which we have, apparently, no extant response. I think in particular of the three sonnets written by Cecco Angiolieri and addressed to Dante Alighieri: 'Dante Alighier, s'i' so' buon begolaro,' 'Lassar vo' lo trovare de Becchina,' and 'Dante Alighier, Cecco, tu' serv'e amico.' However, despite Cecco's attempts to engage him in poetic conversation, Dante, as far we know, never responded, at least not in sonnet form. And this is a pity, for in 'Dante Alighier, Cecco tu' serv'e amico,' Cecco shows awareness of the last sonnet in Dante's *Vita nuova*, which runs:<sup>34</sup>

Oltre la spera che più larga gira  
passa 'l sospiro ch'esce del mio core:  
intelligenza nova, che l'Amore  
piangendo mette in lui, pur su lo tira.  
Quand'elli è giunto là dove disira,  
vede una donna, che riceve onore,  
e luce sì, che per lo suo splendore  
lo peregrino spirito la mira.  
Vedela tal, che quando 'l mi ridice,  
io no lo intendo, sì parla sottile  
al cor dolente, che lo fa parlare.  
So io che parla di quella gentile,

però che spesso ricorda Beatrice,  
sì ch'io lo 'ntendo ben, donne mie care.

Beyond the sphere that makes the widest round, passes the sigh arisen from my heart; a new intelligence that Love in tears endowed it with is urging it on high. Once having reached the place of its desiring it sees a lady held in reverence, splendid in light, and through her radiance the pilgrim spirit looks upon her being. But when it tries to tell me what it saw, I cannot understand the subtle words it speaks to the sad heart that makes it speak. I know it tells of that most gracious one, for I often hear the name of Beatrice. This much, at least, is clear to me, dear ladies.

Repeating three of Dante's rhymes (-ore, -ice, and -are) in his sonnet, Cecco questions the internal consistency of Dante's sonnet:<sup>35</sup>

Dante Alighier, Cecco, tu' serv'e amico,  
sì raccomand'a te com'a signore;  
e sì ti prego per lo dio d'Amore,  
il qual è stat'un tu' signor antico,  
che mi perdoni s'i' spiacer ti dico,  
ché mi dà sicurtà 'l tu' gentil cuore.  
Quel ch'i' vo' dire è di questo tenore:  
ch'al tu' sonetto in parte contradico.  
Ch'al meo parer ne l'una muta dice  
che non intendi su' sottil parlare,  
di que' che vide la tua Beatrice;  
e puoi hai detto a le tue donne care  
che ben lo 'ntendi: e dunque contradice  
a sé medesmo questo tu' trovare.

Dante Alighieri, your servant and friend Cecco commends himself to you as to his lord: and by the god of Love – your lord of old – I beg your pardon if I say something disagreeable – your gentle heart gives me confidence to speak. What I say comes to this, that in part I contradict your sonnet. For it seems to me that in one tercet you say you don't understand the subtle speech of him who saw your Beatrice; after which you told your dear ladies that you understood it: therefore this poem of yours contradicts itself.

This contemporary acknowledgment and questioning of Dante's works is a precious document, for it gives evidence that his poems were in



circulation. If we were to find Dante's response (assuming that there is one), we would have a fascinating record of how criticism was handled in the medieval period. However, we do possess a response of sorts, for in the prose accompaniment to the last sonnet of the *Vita nuova*, Dante does attempt to correct this possible misinterpretation of his poem. There Dante takes care to note that the double use of the verb *intendere* does not necessarily indicate an internal contradiction, and he glosses the first occurrence by using the verb *comprendere*. The fact that Dante says 'cioè a dire' (that is to say) is sufficient to suggest his conscious correction based on Cecco's criticism. If anything, Dante did not want his text to be misunderstood.<sup>36</sup>

Ne la quarta dico come elli la vede tale, cioè in tale qualitate, che io non lo posso *intendere*, cioè a dire che lo mio pensiero sale ne la qualitate di costei in grado che lo mio intelletto no lo puote *comprendere* ...  
Ne la quinta dico che, avvegna che io non possa intendere là ove lo pensiero mi trae, cioè a la sua mirabile qualitate, almeno intendo questo, cioè che tutto è lo cotale pensare de la mia donna però ch'io sento lo suo nome spesso nel mio pensiero.

In the fourth I tell how it sees her to be such, that is of such a nature, that I cannot understand it: that is to say that my thought ascends into the nature of this lady to such a degree that my mind cannot grasp it ...  
In the fifth part I say that, even though I cannot understand what my thought has taken me to see, that is, her miraculous nature, at least I understand this much: this thought of mine is entirely about my lady, for many times when it comes to my mind, I hear her name.

This is an amazing account of the dynamics of textual interaction whereby criticism is launched in a poem and the unacknowledged response is made quietly in the final, presumably revised version of the text.

We will conclude with a few words on Cino da Pistoia, who, in many respects, was the major poetic link between the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian lyric traditions, for he was an acquaintance not only of Dante and the poets of the *Dolce stil novo*, but also of Petrarch and Boccaccio. Because of his extreme poetic versatility and longevity, Cino mediated among various 'schools' and individual poets, composed lyrics in a number of modes and styles, and ultimately benefited from and contributed directly to the several major literary currents of his age.<sup>37</sup>

Cino wrote a number of *tenzoni*, many of which were addressed to relatively minor figures – Bernardo da Bologna, Guelfo Taviani, Binduccio da Firenze, Mula da Pistoia, Gherarduccio da Bologna, among others – but others were sent to well-known poets such as Dante and Guido Cavalcanti. To the latter he wrote what appears to be a response to a no longer extant composition in which Guido may have accused him of plagiarism:<sup>38</sup>

Cino a Guido Cavalcanti

Qua' son le cose vostre ch'io vi tolgo,  
Guido, che fate di me sì vil ladro?  
Certo bel motto volentier ricolgo:  
ma funne vostro mai nessun leggiadro?  
Guardate ben, chéd ogni carta volgo;  
se dite il vero, i' non sarò bugiadro.  
Queste cosette mie, dov'io le sciolgo,  
ben le sa Amor, innanzi a cui le squadro.  
Ciò è palese: ch'io non sono artista,  
né cuopro mia ignoranza con disdegno,  
ancor che 'l mondo guardi pur la vista;  
ma sono un uom cotal di basso 'ngegno  
che vo piangendo, tant'ho l'alma trista,  
per un cor, lasso, ch'è fuor d'esto regno.

What are those things of yours that I have taken from you, Guido, such that you call me a vile thief? A well turned phrase I gladly take, but was ever any one of yours so delightful? Be careful, for I turn and read every page. If you are telling the truth, I will not be a liar. Love knows where I write these little things [i.e., in my heart], and in his presence I compose them. This much is clear: I am not an artist, nor do I veil my ignorance with pride, although the world looks only at the appearance. However, I am of such lowly talent that I go about weeping, so saddened is my soul by my heart that is, alas, outside this realm.

What is fascinating about this poem is the use of the word 'artista' in verse 9 (perhaps the first occurrence of the term in Italian literature)<sup>39</sup> and the rare rhyme 'squadro' in verse 8 (which is used by Dante in *Inferno* 25, the episode of Vanni Fucci, the thief from Pistoia). Given that Dante's concern in this canto of the *Commedia* is with *ingegno* (artistic/poetic virtuosity) it seems plausible that we may be witnessing an



intertextual debate on the relative values of poetic invention, imitation, and emulation.

Both Dante and Petrarch appreciated the melodious style of Cino. The former, in addition to exchanging a number of sonnets with him, cites him frequently in *De vulgari eloquentia*, while the latter wrote a fine sonnet lamenting his death:<sup>40</sup>

Piangete, donne, et con voi pianga Amore;  
piangete, amanti, per ciascun paese,  
poi ch'è morto collui che tutto intese  
in farvi, mentre visse, al mondo honore.  
Io per me prego il mio acerbo dolore,  
non sian da lui le lagrime contese,  
et mi sia di sospir' tanto cortese,  
quanto bisogna a disfogare il core.  
Piangan le rime anchor, piangano i versi,  
perché 'l nostro amoroso messer Cino  
novellamente s'è da noi partito.  
Pianga Pistoia, e i citadin perversi  
che perduto ànno sì dolce vicino;  
et rallegresi il cielo, ov'ello è gito.

Weep, Ladies, and let Love weep with you; weep, Lovers, in every land,  
since he is dead who was all intent to do you honour while he lived in  
the world. For myself, I pray my cruel sorrow that it not prevent my  
tears and that it be so courteous as to let me sigh as much as is needful  
to unburden my heart. Let rhymes weep also, let verses weep, for our  
loving Messer Cino has recently departed from us. Let Pistoia weep and  
her wicked citizens, who have lost so sweet a neighbour; and let Heaven  
be glad, where he has gone.

A defining characteristic of Cino's lyrics is their phonic quality; for example, he is able to convey the sorrow induced by love through use of mournful notes, as in the following two sonnets, which could be considered a sort of false *tenzone*: 'Omo smarruto che pensoso vai' and 'Signori, i' son colui che vidi Amore.' Cino succeeds in representing aurally the lover's lament through repeated use of the vowel *o*, especially in rhyme position (e.g., 'Signori, i' son colui che vidi Amore / che mi ferì sì ch'io non camperò / e sol però così pensoso voe'). The first sonnet contains the questions directed by the 'pietosa gente' (the compassionate people) to the grieving lover, while the second presents Cino's response to their solicitations:<sup>41</sup>

'Omo smarruto che pensoso vai,  
or che ha' tu che se' così dolente?  
e che va' ragionando con la mente,  
traendo ne' sospiri spesso guai?  
Ched e' non par che tu vedessi mai  
di ben alcun che core in vita sente;  
anzi par[e] che mori duramente,  
negli atti e ne' sembianti che tu fai.  
E s' tu non ti conforti, tu cadrai  
in disperanza sì malvagiamente,  
che questo mondo e l'altro perderai.  
Deh, or vuo' tu morir così vilmente?  
Chiama mercede, e tu camperai.'  
Questo mi dice la pietosa gente.

'O bewildered soul, who proceeds immersed in weighty thoughts, what is the reason for your great sorrow? And in your mental ramblings why do you so often combine laments with sighs? For it does not seem that you ever saw any good that a heart feels in life; rather, it seems you're dying harshly, given your gestures and appearance. And if you are not comforted, you will fall into a state of despair so horrible that you'll lose this world and the next. We ask, do you wish to die so ignobly? Ask for mercy, and you will escape.' This is what the compassionate people tell me.

The second sonnet reads as follows:

Signori, i' son colui che vidi Amore  
che mi ferì sì ch'io non camperò,  
e sol però così pensoso voe  
tenendomi la man presso a lo core;  
ch'i' sento in quella parte tal dolore,  
che spesse volte dico: 'Ora morrò';  
e li atti e li sembianti ched i' foe  
son come d'om che 'n gravitate more.  
I' moro in verità, ch'Amor m'ancide,  
che m'asalisce con tanti sospiri  
che l'anima ne va di fuor fuggendo;  
e s'i' la 'ntendo ben, dice che vide  
una donna apparire a' miei disiri  
tanto sdegnosa, che ne va piangendo.



My lords, I am the one who saw Love, who wounded me so badly that I cannot escape, and for this reason alone I proceed with weighty thoughts, keeping my hand near my heart; for I feel in that region such sorrow that I often say: 'Now I will die'; and my gestures and appearance are those of a man who dies in grief. In truth I die, for Love kills me, assailing me with so many sighs that my soul flees; and if I understand it well, it says it saw a woman appear before my desires, who was so disdainful that it departs in tears.

In one of his several *tenzoni* with Cino, Dante accuses him of inconstancy in amorous matters, to which Cino responds by noting how his 'volubility' is only apparent: he finds pleasure in many women only in so far as their beauty reminds him of his lady's (Selvaggia's) supreme beauty. The historical circumstances are clear: both poets are in exile, thus a date between 1303 and 1306. The problems of transmission of these sonnets may be linked to the difficulties encountered in their initial composition and delivery; since both poets were outside their native city, what address did they use? Where were they residing? The topic, however, is a traditional one: can one love, truly love, more than one person simultaneously? And the mode of response is a delicate blend of the personal and the universal, of the subjective and the objective.<sup>42</sup>

Dante a Cino

Io mi credea del tutto esser partito  
da queste nostre rime, messer Cino,  
ché si conviene omai altro cammino  
a la mia nave più lungi dal lito;  
ma perch'ì ho di voi più volte udito  
che pigliar vi lasciate a ogni uncino,  
piacemi di prestare un pocolino  
a questa penna lo stancato dito.  
Chi s'innamora sì come voi fate,  
or qua or là, e sé lega e dissolve,  
mostra ch'Amor leggermente il saetti.  
Però, se leggier cor così vi volve,  
priego che con virtù il correggiate,  
sì che s'accordi i fatti a' dolci detti.

I thought, Messer Cino, that I had quite abandoned this poetry of ours;  
for now my ship must hold a different course, being further from the

shore. But since I have heard more than once that you let yourself be caught on every hook, I feel moved to put my tired fingers briefly to this pen. One who falls in love as you do, now here, now there, and both binds and looses himself, shows that Love wounds him but lightly. So, if a fickle heart thus whirls you around, I beg you to correct it with virtue, so that your deeds accord with your sweet words.

Cino a Dante

Poi ch'ì fui, Dante, dal mio natal sito  
fatto per greve essilio pellegrino,  
e lontanato dal piacer più fino  
che mai formasse il Piacer infinito,  
io son piangendo per lo mondo gito  
sdegnato del morir come meschino;  
e s'ho trovato a lui simil vicino,  
dett'ho che questi m'ha lo cor ferito.  
Né da le prime braccia dispietate,  
onde 'l fermato disperar m'assolve,  
son mosso perch'aiuto non aspetti:  
ch'un piacer sempre me lega ed involve,  
il qual conven che, a simil di beltate,  
in molte donne sparte mi diletta.

Dante, ever since harsh exile made me a wanderer from my birthplace and put a distance between me and the most exquisite beauty that ever the infinite Beauty fashioned, I have gone grieving about the world, a poor wretch disdained by death; but when I've found near me any beauty like to *that* one, I've said it was *this* one that wounded my heart. Nor (though I expect no help) have I ever left those first pitiless arms from which a well-grounded despair releases me: for it is always one and the same beauty that binds and trammels me; and this perforce delights me in whatever is like it in beauty in many different women.

The *tenzone* is usually considered a minor genre, one that is more occasional in nature and thus not among the better or more privileged works of a poet, either stylistically or thematically. Given the contemporary interest in everyday life and in textual communities, the *tenzone* would seem to be a very promising genre to investigate, for it may be less bound to literary conventions and thus closer to the quotidian reality of Duecento and Trecento society. The subject matter varies



widely, from serious discourses on the nature of love and the condition of lovers, to moral, religious, and political themes, and to vituperative attacks on other individuals. I would suggest, in conclusion, that scholars should look more closely at this generally neglected genre, for despite the textual problems that these poems present, the *tenzone* in its myriad manifestations may lead us to view the literary and social history of medieval Italy in a different, innovative, and ultimately beneficial way.

## NOTES

Unless otherwise noted, the translations are mine. I would like to thank my research assistant Chad Shorter for his help with the translations.

- 1 For facsimile editions of these three manuscripts plus a volume of studies devoted to them, see *I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini*, ed. Lino Leonardi, 4 vols: vol. 1, *Il canzoniere vaticano*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 3793; vol. 2, *Il canzoniere laurenziano*, Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Redi 9; vol. 3, *Il canzoniere palatino*, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Banco Rari 217, ex Palatino 418; vol. 4, *Studi critici* (Tavarnuzze: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2000–1).
- 2 For a study of this manuscript see Gino Lega, *Il canzoniere Vaticano Barberino latino 3953* (Bologna: Romagnoli-Dall'Acqua, 1905).
- 3 In addition to the early study of this manuscript by Ernesto Monaci, 'Chigiano L.VIII.305,' *Propugnatore* 10.1 (1877): 128–63, 289–342; 10.2 (1887): 335–413; 11.1 (1888): 199–264, 303–32, see the meticulously edited volume by Giovanni Borriero, *Canzonieri italiani*, vol. 1, *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: Ch (Chig. L.VIII. 305)*, Intavolare 3 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2006).
- 4 For fine recent studies of the Escorial codex (with pertinent bibliographical references), see Roberta Capelli, 'Nuove indagini sulla raccolta di rime italiane del ms. Escorial e.III.23,' *Medioevo letterario d'Italia* 1 (2004): 73–113, and *Sull'Escorialense (lat. e.III.23): Problemi e proposte di edizione* (Verona: Fiorini, 2006).
- 5 Barbieri transcribed from the so-called *libro siciliano* the Sicilian dialect versions of several poems: a *canzone* by Stefano Protonotaro in its entirety ('Pir meu cori alligrari'), the first stanza of Guido delle Colonne's 'Gioiosamente canto,' and some thirty verses of Re Enzo's *canzone* 'S'eo trovasse Pietanza' (vv. 39–70), as well as his seven-verse fragment 'Alegru cori plenu.' Recently Giuseppina Brunetti has published her

- discovery of a poem by Giacomino Pugliese in dialectal garb in *Il frammento inedito 'R]esplendente stella de albur' di Giacomino Pugliese e la poesia italiana delle origini* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000).
- 6 These topics have been addressed by numerous scholars, among whom, more recently, H. Wayne Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric* (New York: Garland, 1993); Olivia Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); and Justin Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante: Urban Readers and Writers in Late Medieval Italy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).
  - 7 Christopher Kleinhenz, *The Early Italian Sonnet: The First Century (1220–1321)* (Lecce: Milella, 1986).
  - 8 Although the edition is still in progress, see my essay, 'Cino da Pistoia and the Italian Lyric Tradition,' in *L'imaginaire courtois et son double*, ed. Giovanna Angeli and Luciano Formisano (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1992), 147–63.
  - 9 For a very fine collection of recent studies on the *tenzone*, see *Il genere 'tenzone' nelle letterature romanze delle origini*, ed. Matteo Pedroni and Antonio Stäuble (Ravenna: Longo, 1999), as well as the studies by Claudio Giunta, *Due saggi sulla tenzone* (Rome: Antenore, 2002), and *Versi a un destinatario: Saggio sulla poesia italiana del Medioevo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002).
  - 10 In Vat. lat. 3793 the only poem by Dante is 'Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore,' and this *canzone* is followed by one, 'Ben aggia l'amoroso et dolce chore,' that responds to it *per le rime*; it is attributed to the 'Amico di Dante' and written in the voice of the ladies whom Dante addressed in his *canzone*; see Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, 13ff.
  - 11 This last category includes some very comical but equally crude repar-tees, as, for example, the *tenzone* between Dante Alighieri and Forese Donati.
  - 12 Cielo d'Alcamo, 'Rosa fresca aulentissima c'apari inver la state,' vv. 1–10. The text follows the edition of Bruno Panvini, ed., *Le rime della scuola siciliana*, Biblioteca dell' Archivum Romanicum, ser. 1, 65 (Florence: Olschki, 1962), 169–76 at 169. For studies on the *contrasto*, see, among others, *Contrasti amorosi nella poesia italiana antica*, ed. Antonia Arveda (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1992).
  - 13 Giacomino Pugliese, 'Donna di voi mi lamento,' vv. 1–18. The text follows Panvini, ed., *Le rime della scuola siciliana*, 189–91 at 189.
  - 14 The text follows Cecco Angiolieri, *Le rime*, ed. Antonio Lanza (Rome: Archivio Guido Izzo, 1990), 86–7.



- 15 The text for both sonnets follows the edition found in *La prosa del Duecento*, ed. Cesare Segre and Mario Marti (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1959), 98–101. In the last line of his short letter Dotto asks Meo to ‘show it [i.e., the sonnet] to brother Gaddo and to Finfo’ (mostralo a frate Gaddo e a Finfo), thus effectively enlarging the audience for their ‘conversation.’ This sonnet and Meo’s response present many interpretive problems, and I have relied heavily on the notes in the Segre and Marti edition.
- 16 For the history of the sonnet, see, among others, Kleinhenz, *Early Italian Sonnet*.
- 17 ‘Il problema filologico di un testo è diverso dal problema filologico di un altro testo’; cited in Luigi Russo, ‘Discorso commemorativo,’ in *Commemorazione di Michele Barbi*, ed. Alberto Chiari (Florence: Sansoni, 1943), 11–36 at 25 [also published as ‘Michele Barbi,’ *Annali manzoniani* 3 (1942): 5–30].
- 18 Salvatore Santangelo, *Le tenzoni poetiche nella letteratura italiana delle origini*, Biblioteca dell’Archivum Romanicum, ser. 1, 9 (Geneva: Olschki, 1928).
- 19 Against the criticism of Santangelo lodged by Gianfranco Contini, *Poeti del Duecento* (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1960), 1:82, and others, some scholars have recently looked more objectively at the question; see Michelangelo Picone, ‘La tenzone “de amore” fra Iacopo Mostacci, Pier della Vigna e il Notaio,’ in *Il genere ‘tenzone,’* ed. Pedroni and Stäuble, 13–31; and Roberto Antonelli, ‘“Non truovo chi mi dica chi sia amore”: L’ *Eneas* in Sicilia,’ in *Studi di filologia e letteratura italiana in onore di Maria Picchio Simonelli*, ed. Pietro Frassica (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 1992), 1–10.
- 20 For example, in Vat. lat. 3793 the *tenzone* between the Abbot of Tivoli and Giacomo da Lentini (fol. 111r) is preceded by the rubric ‘tenzone v,’ in which the ‘v’ indicates that it is composed of five sonnets.
- 21 Giacomo di Lentini, ‘Amor non vole ch’io clami,’ vv. 1–10. The text follows Giacomo da Lentini, *Poesie*, ed. Roberto Antonelli (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1979), 57–68 at 64. See Christopher Kleinhenz, ‘Giacomo da Lentino and the Advent of the Sonnet: Divergent Patterns in Early Italian Poetry,’ *Forum Italicum* 10 (1976): 218–32.
- 22 While this is the traditional view (with which I am in general agreement), some scholars have argued that Guinizzelli’s tone is here ironic; see, among others, Antonello Borra, *Guittone d’Arezzo e le maschere del poeta: La lirica cortese tra ironia e palinodia* (Ravenna: Longo, 2000), 10; Paolo Borsa, ‘La tenzone tra Guido Guinizzelli e frate Guittone d’Arezzo,’

- zo,’ *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 65 (2002): 47–88; and Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, 37.
- 23 The text of this *tenzone* follows Contini, ed. *Poeti del Duecento*, 2:484–5. The translations follow, with slight modifications, those of Robert Edwards, ed. and trans., *The Poetry of Guido Guinizzelli* (New York: Garland, 1987), 62–5.
- 24 A modern analogy would be T.S. Eliot’s sending a draft of *The Waste-land* to Ezra Pound for his consideration and revision. And it is not for nothing that, in his eventual dedication of that volume, Eliot calls Pound ‘il miglior fabbro,’ reproducing the phrase that Dante has Guido Guinizzelli use in the *Purgatorio* 26.117 to refer to the troubadour Arnaut Daniel. Some scholars have argued that the *canzone* accompanying the sonnet was Guinizzelli’s doctrinal ‘Al cor gentil repaira sempre amore’; for this view, see, among others, Marian Papahagi, ‘Guido Guinizzelli e Guittone d’Arezzo: Contributo a una ridefinizione dello spazio poetico predantesco,’ in *Guittone d’Arezzo nel settimo centenario della morte*, ed. Michelangelo Picone (Florence: Franco Cesati, 1995), 269–93; and Michelangelo Picone, ‘Guittone, Guinizzelli e Dante,’ in *Intorno a Guido Guinizzelli*, ed. Luciano Rossi and Sara Alloatti Boller (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2002), 73–88.
- 25 The text of this *tenzone* follows Contini, ed. *Poeti del Duecento*, 2:481–3; translations follow Edwards, *Poetry of Guido Guinizzelli*, 58–61.
- 26 The textual transmission of this *tenzone* is intriguing and presents interesting interpretive possibilities. One curious fact is its double appearance in the Laurentian Rediano codex (Redi 9), once in a Pisan hand and once in a Florentine hand. Another is the repetition of Guinizzelli’s sonnet eight times (!) in the *Memoriali Bolognesi*, in which the sonnet by Bonagiunta does not appear at all; moreover, Guittone’s poems are absent as well. The choice of poems copied in the *Memoriali Bolognesi* by the notaries would suggest, as Steinberg says, ‘an inclusiveness that corresponds to Guinizzelli’s defenses of poetic variety against the narrower vision of Guittone and Bonagiunta’ (*Accounting for Dante*, 45). The interaction of literary and legal cultures in medieval Bologna is a fascinating topic (with connections to Luca Boschetto’s discussion of the Florentine Mercanzia in this volume) and suggests the presence of a dynamic textual community. For more on this topic, see Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics*, esp. 111–70, and Steinberg, *Accounting for Dante*, 17–60. The poems found in the *Memoriali Bolognesi* have recently been edited by Sandro Orlando, *Rime due e trecentesche*



- tratte dall'Archivio di Stato di Bologna (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 2005).
- 27 Contini, ed., *Poeti del Duecento*; Edwards, trans., *Poetry of Guido Guinizzelli*, 58–61.
  - 28 The text follows the edition in Giorgio Petrocchi, ed. *La commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, by Dante Alighieri (Milan: Mondadori, 1966–7). The translation follows that of Charles S. Singleton, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatorio*, by Dante Alighieri, vol. 1, *Italian Text and Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).
  - 29 The bibliography on this particular matter is extensive. See, among others, the following: Giorgio Petrocchi, 'Il dolce stil novo,' in *Le origini e il Duecento*, ed. Emilio Cecchi and Natalino Sapegno (Milan: Garzanti, 1965), 729–74; Mark Musa, 'Le ali di Dante (e il Dolce stil novo): Purg. xxiv,' *Convivium* 34 (1966): 361–7; Antonio Enzo Quaglio, 'Gli stilnovisti,' in *Lo stilnovo e la poesia religiosa*, ed. Emilio Pasquini and Antonio Enzo Quaglio (Bari: Laterza, 1971), 9–148; Mario Marti, *Storia dello stil nuovo*, 2 vols (Lecce: Milella, 1973); Guido Favati, *Inchiesta sul dolce stil nuovo* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1975); Guglielmo Gorni, *Il nodo della lingua e il verbo d'amore: Studi su Dante e altri duecentisti* (Florence: Olschki, 1981); Italo Bertelli, *La poesia di Guido Guinizzelli e la poetica del 'dolce stil nuovo'* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1983); and Lino Pertile, 'Il nodo di Bonagiunta, le penne di Dante e il Dolce Stil Novo,' *Lettere italiane* 46 (1994): 44–75.
  - 30 Fabian Alfie has most recently used manuscript evidence to counter the claims of those who would want to deny the historical validity of this poetic exchange: 'For Want of a Nail: The Guerri-Lanza-Cursietti Argument Regarding the *Tenzone*,' *Dante Studies* 116 (1998): 141–59 (with bibliography). Alfie is currently completing a monograph on the questions surrounding the *tenzone*.
  - 31 Any rancour between them would appear to have been a literary construct, given the poignant verses that Dante the Pilgrim addresses to Forese in *Purgatorio* 23.115–17: 'Se tu riduci a mente / qual fosti meco, e qual io teco fui, / ancor fia grave il memorar presente' (If you bring back to mind what you have been with me and what I have been with you, the present memory will still be grievous). This is also an obvious literary construct.
  - 32 The text for this *tenzone* follows Dante Alighieri, *Rime*, ed. Gianfranco Contini, 2nd ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), 26. The translation follows that of Kenelm Foster and Patrick Boyde, trans., *Dante's Lyric Poetry*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 1:149–51.
  - 33 The text follows Giacomo da Lentini, *Poesie*, ed. Antonelli, 275.

- 34 The text follows Dante Alighieri, *Vita nuova*, ed. Domenico De Robertis, in *Opere minori*, vol. 1, tom. 1 (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1995). The translation follows Mark Musa, trans., *Vita Nuova*, in *The Portable Dante* (New York: Penguin, 1995).
- 35 The text follows Cecco Angiolieri, *Le rime*, ed. Lanza, 217–18; the translation follows that of Foster and Boyde, trans., *Dante's Lyric Poetry*, 1:99.
- 36 Dante, *Vita nuova*, ed. Robertis; trans. Musa; emphasis mine. In addition to the commentary in Lanza's edition, see the discussion of Cecco's sonnet and Dante's subtle reaction in Fabian Alfie, *Comedy and Culture: Cecco Angiolieri's Poetry and Late Medieval Society* (Leeds: Northern Universities Press, 2001), 155–8.
- 37 Because of his long career as a lyric poet and because his style displays few alterations over time, I like to think of Cino as a sort of 'medieval Mick Jagger.'
- 38 The text follows Mario Marti, ed., *Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1969), 746–7.
- 39 The word 'artista' occurs four times in Dante's *Commedia*, all in the *Paradiso* (13.77, 16.51, 18.51, and 30.33) but these are later attestations.
- 40 The text follows the edition of Marco Santagata, ed., *Canzoniere*, by Francesco Petrarca (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), 448 (no. 92). The translation is that of Robert M. Durling, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The 'Rime sparse' and Other Lyrics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 194.
- 41 The text of both sonnets follows Marti, ed., *Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo*.
- 42 The text follows Marti, ed., *Poeti del Dolce stil nuovo*, 742–5; Foster and Boyde, trans., *Dante's Lyric Poetry*, 203–5.