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Dante's "Comedy": Introductory Readings of Selected Cantos by Uberto Limentani

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hood. In repudiating his original child bride the king had put policy ahead of conscience, and the failure to produce a healthy heir left a cloud over his marriage with Anne. Charles was a very pious individual, and he almost equaled his father in seeking the counsel of prophets and holy men.

Given his upbringing and temperament, it is not surprising that Charles VIII grew keenly aware of the historic stance of French monarchs as reformers of the church. He was equally aware of the Ottoman threat to Italy and central Europe and knew that the crusades had been dominated by French leadership. He also believed that he was the proper heir to the kingdom of Naples, and he was besieged by Italian embassies and exiles who presented various self-interested arguments for French intervention in the peninsula. This set of circumstances led to the celebrated invasion of 1494. After elaborate preparations Charles enjoyed extraordinary success at first, reaching Naples with very little opposition. Then, of course, the European powers rushed into anti-French coalitions, which included the Habsburg-Hispanic marriages that would have such consequences for the future.

After fighting his way back from Naples, Charles never really had time to resume his grand designs. In 1498 he suffered a blow on the forehead that should not have had serious consequences, yet he died soon after. Despite his vigorous pursuit of campaigning, hunting, and tennis, he must have suffered from serious health problems.

In portraying this monarch of high hopes, great plans, and disappointed expectations, Yvonne Labande-Mailfert has succeeded well. One finishes this book with a sense of having a better knowledge of this royal personage than was possible heretofore. The book has an excellent bibliography, which the author has updated with a sort of bibliographical essay in her preface. She is particularly up to date on works dealing with ceremonial, a subject of great importance in the last century of the Valois monarchy and one that has generated a good deal of recent scholarship. This book makes good reading and should interest specialists as well as the more general audience.

JOHN BELL HENNEMAN, Princeton University Library

UBERTO LIMENTANI, *Dante's "Comedy": Introductory Readings of Selected Cantos*. Cambridge, Eng., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Pp. viii, 164. \$29.95.

The ten readings in this slim volume were originally given as *lecturae Dantis* at the University of Cambridge between 1969 and 1984. Limentani seems to favor transitional and political cantos (the readings chosen are *Inferno* 1, 6, 8, 17; *Purgatorio* 1, 5, 8; *Paradiso* 1, 6, 17); he is adept at noting the canto's position within the poem as a whole. His method is to give an overview of the canto that follows its own organization, proceeding from one block of verses to the next; his style melds a willingness to offer an "impressionistic" reaction (for instance, regarding *Inferno* 1: "This vagueness as to details adds to the Canto the air of a dream-like scene that I myself find very appealing" [p. 2]) with a certain amount of textual precision (shortly before offering the above comment, he pointed out that "the words 'parea' and 'sembiava' appear three times between lines 46 and 50" [p. 1]). The *lectura* of *Inferno* 6 is particularly satisfying for its stress on the link between gluttony and Florentine politics; Limentani also makes the interesting point that this canto is, with *Inferno* 11, the shortest in the poem. Indeed, most useful, from this reader's perspective, were the occasional observations that set one thinking of the poem as a whole: thus Limentani informs us

that *Inferno* 17 contains more similes than any other canto, notes that "If Purgatory is the antechamber of Paradise, Ante-Purgatory is the antechamber of the antechamber" (p. 81), and reminds us that there is no Roman emperor in hell.

On the other hand, philological and interpretative problems are kept to a minimum as Limentani makes his calm way through these cantos; although every now and then he informs the reader that a passage has caused critical controversy, he invariably makes his exegetical choice without detailing the issue or naming any of the contestants in the debate. This is, therefore, a book without any pretensions at swelling the scholarly literature on the cantos; it provides, as its subtitle indicates, "introductory readings." Some readers will find this lack of engagement disappointing (I kept wishing that Limentani would give us the benefit of the erudition he keeps beneath the surface), but although I wonder about its intended audience (do the neophytes to whom it is addressed search out this type of book or go to the nearest standard commentary?), the author succeeds in providing what he set out to provide.

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JOSÉ MATTOSO, *Identificação de um país: Ensaio sobre as origens de Portugal, 1096–1325*. 2 vols. (Imprensa Universitária, 45, 46.) Lisbon: Estampa, 1985. Paper. 1: pp. 457; maps. 2: pp. 324; maps. Esc 850.

This impressive study, winner of the Pimenta Prize in history, synthesizes a broad array of scholarship on medieval Portugal. Professor Mattoso incorporates findings from his recent works, including *A nobreza medieval portuguesa: A família e o poder* (1982; 2nd ed., 1985) and *Religião e cultura na idade média portuguesa* (1982). Though it is not the primary aim of the author, the present study constitutes a valuable survey of one of the better-worked fields of Portuguese historiography.

Identificação de um país is kin to the *Annales* school of writing on Portuguese history that has emerged during the last three decades; but unlike some studies of that school, it is not laden with undigested detail. The work is, as the subtitle indicates, an extended essay on the origins of Portuguese nationhood.

Mattoso begins with an examination of the north-south dichotomy of Portugal and argues that the complementarity of the two regions ultimately contributed to the rise of a sense of nationality. He then briefly discusses the nature of familial ties, agricultural and maritime technology, and north-south linguistic divergence. After addressing the question of feudalism in Portugal — it never amounted to much, thanks to the precocious consolidation of royal authority — Mattoso moves on to the most exhaustive section in his essay, an extended delineation of the various social groupings in eleventh–fourteenth-century Portugal. Volume 1, which he denotes "oposição," is focused primarily on impediments to national unification posed by disparate interests and how various groups evolved during the period under consideration. Mattoso utilizes Marxian class analysis, but he is not bound by it. His judicious examination of privileged and unprivileged groups advances our knowledge of the distinctions between categories such as *infanções* and *fili benenatorum*.

In his second volume, denoted "composição," Mattoso concentrates on the factors contributing to a sense of national identity. He admits that by venturing into discussion of the emergence of an ideology of nationhood he is entering "terrain crowded with ambiguity and imprecision" (2:197.) By citing various phrasings supportive of royal authority in extant documentation, he shows that clerics and court intellectuals were particularly important in promoting the idea of nationhood. In 1142, for example, a