

the word *pensent*, which was either itself partially illegible or had perhaps been legibly miscopied, in the form *tensent* or *tendent*, from a manuscript that was in its turn partially illegible,—either of which forms may be supposed to have given pause even to the ignorance of the much-abused scribe of Digby 23.

It may be of interest to point out that a similar use of *pensar* occurs a number of times in the *Poema del Cid*; cf., e. g., verses 2609, 2644:

Myo Cid y los otros de cavalgar pensavan;

Piennsan se de yr los yfantes de Carrion;

and is to be found also in Old Provençal; cf. Appel, *Chrest.*, 9, 20:

Tantost pessem del retornar.

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THE MEANING OF *VITA NUOVA*

IN a brief note under the heading *The Meaning of Vita Nuova* (*Mod. Lang. Notes*, 1909, pp. 227-8), Professor F. J. A. Davidson returns to the subjective methods of the elder Rossetti, which, while of little scientific value, are not without stimulating interest. He suggests that *nova* may mean "strange," "mystic." *Mystic* as a synonym for *strange* is unfortunate: for the critics who adopt the regenerative idea of "new" normally incline to "mystic" as the descriptive adjective for the new life led. The exactest interpreter of this point of view is Giuliani (for whom *vita nova* is *vita d'amore*, purely and simply), just as D. G. Rossetti is the vaguest and most "mystic." It requires some *aplomb* to consider the theory of *youthful* "effectually disposed of" by Witte in 1852, after that idea has been defended at such length by Prudenziario (1856),² by Cossio (1907),³ and by such a distinguished critic as Casini in repeated editions. Professor Davidson adduces in favor of his suggestion three points: a nine-year-old boy is incapable of spiritual regeneration; "new" does not connote regeneration; then, positively, Dante uses *nuovo* for

¹ Curcio, *Studi sulla V. N.*, Venezia, Olschki, 1892, p. 10.

² *La V. N. di D. A.*, Napoli, Guerrero, 1856, pp. 3-6.

³ *Sulla V. N. di D.*, Firenze, Olschki, 1907, pp. 18-9.

"mystic." But the *Vita nova* is not the work of a nine-year-old boy. *Nezu* is an indeterminate word, and may take on any connotation whatsoever. The philological argument has two defects: it is needless, in that "strange" is a very frequent old Italian meaning for *nuovo*, but not more frequent than the ordinary sense; Professor Davidson's citations prove at best not more than this. Then this argument may be used, as actually was done by Prudenziario and others, to prove the other points of view. It establishes merely a possibility, which can derive support only from evidence of an exegetical nature. Here the obstacles seem insuperable. We should also expect this idea to have occurred to some early commentator, familiar currently with this alleged sense of *nuovo*. To go here into the question whether the title is Latin or Italian is scarcely worth while; it may be either.

Karl Federn in his translation of the *Vita Nuova* hints vaguely at the meaning suggested:⁴ to Dante, Beatrice was "ein liebliches wunder, ein novum, ein neun." Here too we have associated *novum* with *novem*, a query which Professor Davidson also proposes. The debate might include as well *Paradiso* II, v. 8,⁵ and Ovid, *Metam.*, 14, 58:

Obscurum verborum ambage novorum
Ter novies carmen magico demurmurat ore.

Whether the two words were actually associated in Dante's mind we of course can never know, unless direct testimony be discovered. I may recall that Dr. Levi Leonard Conant⁶ insists that this association is universal: "Between the Latin words *novus*, 'new' and *novem*, 'nine,' there exists a resemblance so close that it may well be more than accidental. Nine is then the *new* number, that is the first number on a *new* count of which eight must originally have been the base. Pursuing this thought by investigation into different languages the same resemblance is found there." If the association has occurred to Mr. Conant and Professor Davidson, why not to Dante? Everything is grist that comes to the imagi-

⁴*Das Neue Leben des D. A.*, Halle, Hendel, p. 26.

⁵Poletto, *Dizionario Dantesco*, 1886, vol. III, pp. 366-7.

⁶*The number concept, its origin and development*, MacMillan, 1898. See *Athenaeum*, 1898, Part II, p. 326.

native mill: the elder Rossetti insisted that in the Ghibelline *gergo* "il ghibellinismo fu detto *vita* ed il guelfismo *morte*; perciò Dante chiamò la *V. N.* il nuovo corso di sua vita politica, e nascimento l'istante in cui v' entrò!"⁷ We need not mention that grotesque interpretation of M. Clecner (Sinowitz) for whom Beatrice is an allegory of the Talmud and the *Vita Nova* a source book of cabalistic symbolism.⁸

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THE SUFFIXES -ASTER, -IGNUS, ETC., IN NOUNS OF RELATIONSHIP

IN an article on the *Interchange of suffixes -aster, -ignus and -icus* (*Mod. Lang. Notes*, 1909, 241-3), Mr. S. G. Patterson sustains that, in words of step-relationship, in addition to the endings *-aster* and *-ignus* (of Lat. *privignus*¹), the termination *-icus* (of Lat. *vitricus*) survives, not only in Sard. *bidrigu*, etc. and Rum. *vitrigu*, etc., but also in O. Fr. *serorge*, etc. (Godefroy) and in Neapol. *matreye* and *patreye*.

After considering the diffusion of *-aster* and *-ignus*, the author summarizes: "Enough examples have been given to show the constant interchange of *-ignus* and *-aster* in these words of quasi-kinship . . . in several dialects the same stem is found compounded indifferently with either suffix (cf. Venet.)." He doubtless means rather alternation than interchange; for no real interchange is demonstrated: the diffusion of Ven. *pareastro* is not precisely the same as that of *paregno*; Boerio limits the first to Chioggia.² We need similar light on the Raetian *madrastra, -igna*. We should have documentary proof of Meyer Lübke's citation of "*patrigno, matrigna* refaits à l'époque romaine déjà sur *privignus*." That we have here a case of irradiation (in Bréal's diction) is doubtful, in that the suffix *-ineus* of *sanguineus, consanguineus, stamineus*,

⁷ Cf. Prudenziario, *op. cit.* p. 33, after Rossetti's *Commento*, vol. II, p. 355.

⁸ Michael Sinowitz, *Schlüssel zu D. A.'s Werke: Das Neue Leben*, Zürich, Clecner, 1905.

¹ Cf. Festus, *De Significatione Verborum*, s. v.

² *Diz. del dialetto veneziano*, Venezia, 1856, s. v. *pareastro*.