1. General

Of the books on D. published in 2006 the broadest in scope, and perhaps boldest in ambition, is Barbara Reynolds, *Dante: The Poet, the Political Thinker, the Man*, London, Tauris, xiv + 466 pp. R. describes her own methodology and achievement thus: ‘I decided to read all his works again, this time with an independent mind […]. I believe that what I present here is a portrait of Dante, the poet, the political thinker and the man, which has not been seen before. Almost every chapter contains new ideas and fresh insights, some of them radical, many controversial.’ Among her eye-catching claims are proposed ‘solutions’ to the ‘conundrums of the veltro and the DVX’ (reached ‘by keeping an open mind’); ‘a totally new view’ of the Letter to Can Grande; an explanation of why D. abandoned the *Cvio* in favour of the *DC*, and of why he mixed styles in the later work; and the suggestion that D. may have taken hallucinogenic drugs and that this may have led him to the vision of the Trinity described in *Par.* XXXIII. Her arguments are stimulating, though not as decisive as her rhetoric often suggests.

Peter S. Hawkins, *Dante: A Brief History*, Oxford, Blackwell, xxvi + 194 pp., is a lucid overview of D.’s life and works, with a particularly valuable discussion of D.’s theology. In spite of the book’s modest remit, H. offers genuinely original and valuable insights. For instance, in posing the question of the *DC*, ‘But where is Christ?’, H. offers an admirably clear account of a crucial, often neglected aspect of D.’s theology. There are also stimulating sections on D.’s ‘afterlife’, not only in literature, but also in unexpected cultural contexts such as television, drama, and comics.

Adriana Diomedi, *Il principio di perfezione nel pensiero dantesco*, Leicester, Troubadour, 2005, xii + 177 pp., is a useful study of the idea of ‘perfection’ in D.’s work, and especially in the *Cvio* and the *DC*. D. argues that the idea of perfection unifies various strands of D.’s thought, including knowledge (the terminology of *conoscenza*, *sapere*, and *sapienza* is examined in meticulous detail), the nature of philosophy,
human happiness; love; and nobility. Her argument throughout has a solid grounding in Scholastic and Aristotelian thought, and leads her to the stimulating conclusion that spiritual and intellectual perfection is the aim of all D.’s work, even when the notion of perfection is not being explicitly addressed.

Gabriele Carletti, *Dante politico. La felicità terrena secondo il pontefice, il filosofo, l’imperatore*, Pescara, Ed. Scientifiche Abruzzesi, 159 pp., is a broad study of D.’s political thought, outlining the most salient features of D.’s idea of an earthly happiness to be pursued under the guidance of the emperor and political authorities, and the major stages in D.’s progression towards that idea. D.’s position on the relationship between papacy and empire, according to C., follows in the tradition of the distinction between *auctoritas sacrata pontificium* and *regalis potestas*, yet is innovative in relation to D.’s own historical context, in which the papacy was making unrelenting and increasingly forceful claims to temporal as well as spiritual authority.

Gennaro Giuseppe Curcio, *Amore passione, amore dilezione. Un confronto-intreccio tra san Tommaso d’Aquino e Dante Alighieri*, Ro, Aracne, 2005, 141 pp., is more a work of philosophy than a piece of literary criticism. It aims to describe the contribution that the theories of love found in the work of Aquinas and of D. can make to current ethical theory. C.’s conclusions are bold, but also a reminder of how crucial aspects of D.’s work may come to life if inserted within the disciplinary and methodological frameworks of philosophy and theology: ‘Dante e san Tommaso [sono] due punti fermi sulla dottrina dell’amore e […] noi tutti, se veramente vogliamo vivere l’amore autentico, non possiamo se non passare attraverso le loro teorie.’ His position is proposed on the basis of analysis of three areas: first, the contemporary state of debates in ethics, with particular emphasis on the prominence of those centred on passion and those centred on virtue; secondly, Aquinas’s theory of love as governed by the principle of ‘dilezione’, the individual’s free election of how to direct one’s desire; and finally, D.’s understanding of how a proper conception of love ought not to undermine the passions in favour of the virtues and rational choice, but rather fully integrate passion and desire into virtue and freedom of choice.

G. Balsamo, ‘Figural literalism: metaphor, altruism and alterity in Dante and Caterina da Siena,’ *Exemplaria*, 18:1–30, argues that the writings of D. and St Catherine can fruitfully be read, and compared, as ‘performative texts of self-expression whose principal peculiarity is this, that the definition of personal identity is predicated in them on the unconditional fusion of the author’s self with the otherness of his/her