

Dissertation Defense: Anthony Nussmeier

M. GUIDO GVINIZELLI,
o Ghisfolieri da Bologna.

Donna, lamor mi sforza,
Chio vi deggia cantare,
Com io fo innamorato:
Et ciafian giorno inferza,
La mia voglia d'amare;
Pur fuffio mentato:
Sacciate in veritate
Ch'esi prefio e il mio core
* * *
Che more, ai picolate:
Et confumar mi fate.

H v

Thursday, May 3, 2012
10:00 am
Redbud Room, IMU

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE

H. Wayne Storey, Chair
(French & Italian)

Marco Arnaudo,
(French & Italian)

Massimo Scalabrini,
(French & Italian)

Carl Ipsen,
(History)

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

THE POLITICS OF LITERARY SCRIPT: *DE VULGARI ELOQUENTIA* 1303-1589

In medieval Italy numerous factors exerted pressure on the promotion and creation of poetry. The fortune of a poem often hinged on the beguilingly simple act of copying, or choosing not to copy, either due to the vagaries of textual transmission or an ideological preference. Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* (*DVE*) embodies better than any other medieval work the concept of promotion and proscription. Indeed, its critical pronouncements helped to establish the reputation and even reception of many early Italian vernacular poets. Numerous scholars have studied Dante's judgments and their relation to similar moments in the *Commedia*, but criticism has yet to explore fully the impact of Dante's organization of lyric history on the transmission and dissemination of those same poets. The "political" part of this dissertation is therefore multifarious, moving from a reading of the *DVE* as an Aristotelian political allegory and the ongoing interaction between politico-institutional writing and incipient vernacular lyric, to Dante's orientation to poetry as an ideological undertaking and the transmission of medieval vernacular poetry.

This dissertation makes two contributions to the study of early Italian vernacular lyric. It reviews generic classifications of the *DVE* and distinguishes between its formal properties and its contents, identifying in Dante's vernacular *exempla* many characteristics of the lyric anthology. Second, it analyzes Dante's anthological selections and literary evaluations in order to trace the *DVE* in the post-Dantean lyric anthologies responsible for cementing the Italian canon (s). Despite having circulated only posthumously and been effectively unknown for centuries, the *DVE* is a viable historical referent for the transmission of medieval Italian poetry. So paradigmatic are Dante's poetic selections that his critical work forms the most significant "vanishing point" in Italian literary history.

