

*Reading Dante in Renaissance Italy: Florence, Venice and the "Divine Poet."*

Simon Gilson.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. xiv + 434 pp. \$120.

While there have been excellent anglophone studies of the reception of Petrarch and Ariosto in the sixteenth century, such as William Kennedy's *Authorizing Petrarch* (1994) and Daniel Javitch's *Proclaiming a Classic* (1991), Dante's reception in the period had not yet benefited from such a comprehensive treatment. Gilson's *Reading Dante in Renaissance Italy* fills this gap, offering a rich and meticulous map of Dante's sixteenth-century fortunes in Italy. Earlier scholars have investigated Dante commentaries or his place in key literary debates, such as the *questione della lingua*, but Gilson's volume offers a more complete picture of Dante's fortune, investigating a fuller range of critical responses, including less well-known discussions, specific publishing initiatives, and regional rivalries between Florence and Venice. Along the way, it provides the reader useful summaries of major authorities such as Landino, Bembo, Varchi, Borghini, Vellutello, and Aretino, while also shedding new light on less familiar commentators such as Benivieni, Giambullari, and Giovan Battista Gelli. If you want to understand the context of a Cinquecento edition of Dante, this volume will be the first place to look, both for Gilson's own contextualization and the generous notes.

Italian scholars such as Michele Barbi, Carlo Dionisotti, and Corrado Bologna have laid the foundations for the study of Dante's fortune in this period, and Gilson productively expands on their treatments, providing readers with close considerations of both the commentaries and contexts for major and minor figures. To unite these multifarious discourses, Gilson uses the linked concepts of "words" and "things," which he uses to refer to Dante's verbal form and philosophical content, respectively. Both elements of Dante, Gilson argues, exercise critics, though in different measure, during this period. Although Gilson sees this "dichotomous critical thinking" as responsible for the fall in Dante's fortunes in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, it would have been interesting to read his reflections on the potential link between these sixteenth-century debates and modern Dante studies, where Croce's dichotomous *poesia/non-poesia* held sway for so long. Given the number of editors, publishers, academicians, and *poligrafi* that Gilson lucidly treats in this volume, one can understand the omission not only in terms of textual space but also in terms of Gilson's dedication to examining historical context at a granular level, being careful not to impose our contemporary critical categories onto the past. To discuss Croce in Gilson's terms, then, would have required understanding the circumstances in which his ideas emerged. Readers will nonetheless find plenty of salutary parallels between the episodes Gilson recounts and modern critical problems and approaches. The practice of reading Dante with Dante, for example, is one of very long standing.

Building on his earlier *Dante and Renaissance Florence* (2005), Gilson's move into the sixteenth century entails a geographic expansion to include the major publishing center of Venice. Chapters 1 and 2 chart the dynamic exchanges between the two cities

in the first half of the century (ca. 1481–1540), highlighting key editions, such as Landino's, and critical interventions, including Bembo's. Chapters 3 and 4 then investigate Dante's place in Florentine academies in the second half of the century, while chapters 5 and 6 explore Venetian print culture and commentary in the same period. Throughout these chapters, Gilson brings new attention to Dante's non-*Commedia* works, especially the *Convivio*, illuminating the significance of the various paratextual features that distinguish different editions. The examination of these publishing contexts reveals the intriguing mix of liturgical, philosophical, and literary contexts in which Dante circulated and the specific audiences for whom editions were produced, including female readers. Gilson is especially adept at identifying unspoken engagements, such as when a given commentator criticizes another interpretation without explicitly mentioning the source. Examining the impact of the *questione della lingua*, religious reform, and Neo-Aristotelian classicism on Dante's reception, this analysis of Dante's *fortuna* in sixteenth-century Florence and Venice offers both a valuable guide and a stimulus for future research.

Martin Eisner, *Duke University*  
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*Reconsidering Boccaccio: Medieval Contexts and Global Intertexts.*

Olivia Holmes and Dana E. Stewart, eds.

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This new collection of essays on the life, works, and legacy of Giovanni Boccaccio is comprised of papers presented at the conference Boccaccio at 700: Medieval Contexts and Global Intertexts, held in 2013 at the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies of Binghamton University. It brings together the work of important scholars from a variety of disciplines, interests, and methodologies. There are some excellent essays, many on topics that have been little explored that will interest Boccaccio scholars and medievalists generally. While there is no central issue or approach that unites the contributions, the editors have organized them under rubrics that suggest ways they might be considered together: "Material Contexts"; "Social Contexts: Friendship"; "Social Contexts: Gender, Marriage, and the Law"; "Political, Authorial Contexts: On Famous Women"; and "Literary Contexts and Intertexts."

Two essays comprise the section "Material Contexts." The first, by K. P. Clarke, suggests that Boccaccio's illustrated catchwords in his autograph Berlin manuscript (Hamilton 90) not only connect the quires as ordinary catchwords do, but that the characters depicted in them add to the story that came before and open onto what will follow, underscoring how the manuscript book will come together. In the second essay, Rhiannon Daniels studies the many paratexts in Boccaccio's works, his authorial