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READING DANTE IN RENAISSANCE ITALY

Simon Gilson's new volume provides the first in-depth account of the critical and editorial reception in Renaissance Italy, particularly Florence, Venice and Padua, of the work of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). Gilson investigates a range of textual frameworks and related contexts that influenced the way in which Dante's work was produced and circulated, from editing and translation to commentaries, criticism and public lectures. In so doing he modifies the received notion that Dante and his work were eclipsed during the Renaissance. Central themes of investigation include the contestation of Dante's authority as a 'classic' writer and the various forms of attack and defence employed by his detractors and partisans. The book pays close attention not only to the *Divine Comedy* but also to the *Convivio* and other of Dante's writings, and explores the ways in which the reception of these works was affected by contemporary developments in philology, literary theory, philosophy, theology, science and printing.

SIMON GILSON is Agnelli-Serena Professor of Italian in the University of Oxford and Fellow of Magdalen College. He is the author of *Dante and Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, 2005).

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Florence, Venice and the 'Divine Poet'

SIMON GILSON

University of Oxford



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To my wife Julie and to our daughters, Lauren and Sofia.

mentre che egli di ciascuna delle sette arti e della filosofia e, oltre acciò, di tutte le cristiane cose maestro ha voluto mostrar d'essere nel suo poema, egli men sommo e meno perfetto è stato nella poesia. Con ciò sia cosa che affine di poter di qualunque cosa scrivere, che ad animo gli veniva, quantunque poco acconcia e malagevole a caper nel verso, egli molto spesso ora le latine voci, ora le straniere, che non sono state dalla Toscana ricevute, ora le vecchie del tutto e tralasciate, ora le non usate e rozze, ora le immonde e brutte, ora le durissime usando, e allo 'ncontro le pure e gentili alcuna volta mutando e guastando, e talora, senza alcuna scielta o regola, da sé formandone e fingendone, ha in maniera operato che si può la sua Comedia giustamente rassomigliare ad un bello e spazioso campo di grano, che sia tutto d'avene e di logli e d'erbe sterili e dannose mescolato.

in wanting to show himself to be, in his poem, the master of each of the seven liberal arts and of philosophy, and of all Christian things, he was less supreme and perfect in the field of poetry. For, in order to write on all matters that came to his mind, however ill-fitting or awkward to capture in verse, he very often used now Latin words, now foreign ones that have not entered into currency in Tuscany, now completely old and forgotten words, now archaic and rough ones, now vulgar and ugly ones, and very harsh sounding ones; and, on the other hand, he changed and ruined pure and noble words; and at other times, without any discrimination or rule, he created and invented words by himself. He has thus acted in such a way that his *Comedy* may justifiably be compared to a beautiful spacious field of wheat which is interspersed all over with oats, tares, and sterile, harmful grasses. (Pietro Bembo)

E la fama di Dante al succedere del Petrarca non s'arrestò anch'ella?

Did not Dante's fame stop with the coming of Petrarch? (Niccolò Franco)

Veramente quando io considero la *Commedia* di Dante io non vi veggio altro che un miscuglio, un zibaldone et un guazzabuglio delle lezioni che egli doveva udir da questo frate e da quello [...] in quell'opera non è scelta di parole, né osservanza di grammatica, né rispetto o verecundia di vocabuli, né freno alcuno che lo ritenga. Usa ogni sporco vocabolo, usa ogni licenza nello storpiar le voci, empie que' suoi canti di parole hor pedantesche, hor barbare di qualsivoglia linguaggio [...] la *Comedia* di Dante non è poema.

Truly, when I consider Dante's *Comedy* I see nothing but a medley, a hotch-potch, a jumbled mishmash of the lectures that Dante must have heard from some friar or other [...] and in that work there is no discrimination in the use of words, no adherence to grammar, no sense of propriety in the use of lexis, no limit beyond which he will not stray. He uses every possible dirty word, every freedom in twisting words, he fills up his cantos with words that are now pedantic, now barbarous and that come from all languages [...] Dante's *Comedy* is not a poem. (Ridolfo Castravilla)

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Abbreviations

Short titles are used in referencing in the notes; the reader is referred to the bibliography for full publication details. The following abbreviations are used in the notes and bibliography:

Works by Dante

<i>Con.</i>	<i>Convivio</i>
<i>Dve</i>	<i>De vulgari eloquentia</i>
<i>Inf.</i>	<i>Inferno</i>
<i>Mon.</i>	<i>Monarchia</i>
<i>Par.</i>	<i>Paradiso</i>
<i>Purg.</i>	<i>Purgatorio</i>
<i>VN</i>	<i>Vita nova</i>

Works by Petrarch

<i>Rvf</i>	<i>Rerum vulgarium fragmenta</i>
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Other Publications

<i>ASI</i>	<i>Archivio storico italiano</i>
<i>BHR</i>	<i>Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance</i>
<i>B&C</i>	<i>Bruniana&Campanelliana</i>
<i>CdT</i>	<i>Critica del testo</i>
<i>DBI</i>	<i>Dizionario Biografico degli italiani</i>
<i>DS</i>	<i>Dante Studies</i>
<i>ED</i>	<i>Enciclopedia Dantesca</i>
<i>F&L</i>	<i>Filologia e Letteratura</i>
<i>GSLI</i>	<i>Giornale storico della letteratura italiana</i>

<i>IMU</i>	<i>Italia medioevale e umanistica</i>
<i>IS</i>	<i>Italian Studies</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JWCI</i>	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
<i>LI</i>	<i>Lettere italiane</i>
<i>LIA</i>	<i>Letteratura Italiana Antica. Rivista annuale di testi e studi</i>
<i>MeR</i>	<i>Medioevo e Rinascimento</i>
<i>NRLI</i>	<i>Nuova rivista di letteratura italiana</i>
<i>RdEI</i>	<i>Revue des études italiennes</i>
<i>RLI</i>	<i>Rivista di linguistica italiana</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Renaissance Quarterly</i>
<i>RS</i>	<i>Renaissance Studies</i>
<i>RSD</i>	<i>Rivista di studi danteschi</i>
<i>SBoc</i>	<i>Studi sul Boccaccio</i>
<i>SD</i>	<i>Studi danteschi</i>
<i>SFI</i>	<i>Studi di filologia italiana</i>
<i>SLI</i>	<i>Studi di lessicografia italiana</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studi petrarcheschi</i>
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studi rinascimentali</i>