

Francesca's story in Canto 5 of *Inferno*, another form—although possibly corrupted—of an in-between literary existence and reality.

There is much more in this very well-thought-out book, and Lombardi does try to encompass the various and multifaced themes of women reading, from different perspectives. The result is a text that is rich in all of its parts, that does not limit the study to one single tradition but tries to tie the connections between what was a shared cultural space. *Imagining the woman reader* is therefore an ally for all those scholars and enthusiasts interested in the complexity of a dense yet necessary discourse on entangled genders.

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Fabio A. Camilletti.

The Portrait of Beatrice. Dante, D.G. Rossetti, and the Imaginary Lady. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. 258 pp. \$50.

The Portrait of Beatrice has a defined aim: to adopt a double gaze in approaching the works of Dante and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The volume has as its focus the two authors' different responses to a crucial aspect of Western culture, namely the convoluted relationship between word and image, literature and the visual arts. Fabio Camilletti sets out to examine "the intellectual dialogue between Dante and Rossetti" by investigating ways in which each deals with the complex issue of figurability. Seeking to avoid "becoming trapped within the binary, hierarchizing, and implicitly judgmental opposition between original and later work, and between the author's 'will' and the 'distortions' of his interpreters" (p. 9), Camilletti's analysis ultimately endeavors to emphasize how Dante's and Rossetti's respective responses to the same problem, when considered in parallel, can be seen to enlighten one another.

The figure of Beatrice – without any doubts, in Camilletti's observation, "one of the most elusive characters in literary history" (p. 4) – has given rise over the centuries to almost ceaseless critical debate aimed at exploring her identity, evidencing her life, probing her existence. Whilst this search reached its (almost neurotic) peak in the context of Romanticism and later Positivism, Beatrice's very absence, to quote Camilletti, turned into "an incentive toward the visionary re-creation of the beloved's ideal beauty" (p. 4), thus shifting the domain of the *quête* from the external materiality of documentation and historical evidence to the inner domain of the self. Viewing the intergenerational dialogue between Dante and Rossetti through the lens of this precise cultural interstice allows the discussion of the book "to move beyond the outworn debate about [Beatrice's] actual existence and instead to focus on her quiddity, of a miracle made into flesh, that the poetic word seeks incessantly to grasp" (p. 9).

The imaginary portrait of Beatrice realized by Dante in chapter 23 of the *Vita Nuova*, together with the portrait Rossetti obsessively evokes throughout his

oeuvre, are thus the objects of the volume's analysis. In the book's double focus, with its simultaneous glancing at the verbal and the visual, Giorgio Agamben's reassessment of the Warburgian notion of *Pathosformel* constitutes the privileged perspective of Camilletti's analysis, whose inquiry frequently returns to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytical categories. With the adjective "imaginary", Camilletti alludes both to the non-existence of the portrait (with direct reference to the literary genre of the imaginary portrait) and to the Lacanian realm, a privileged and powerful lens through which the author addresses the dichotomy. One of the greatest strengths of the volume is thus its quintessentially interdisciplinary perspective, magnified by Camilletti's attentive and illuminating gaze on the radically different context of the two authors at issue, never seeking to oversimplify or force his analysis but instead elegantly conveying the richness of complexities of its readings instead.

Camilletti's investigation of the dialogue between Dante and Rossetti takes wing from his insightful reflections on the aforementioned episode in the *Vita Nuova*, an episode experimental in terms of intermediality. In moving from a mental image of the beloved to poetic writing, from the sensible domain to the materiality of the written sign, Dante's approach is strongly rooted in the philosophical and medical culture of the Middle Ages that Camilletti references and discusses. The diffractive movement recalled by Dante and inserted into the narrative of his *libello*, as the author of the volume emphasizes, emblemizes a crucial tension, already anticipating the manifold ambiguities which will later bring about the metamorphosis of the image-word dichotomy, whilst radicalising it.

From his analysis of the first of Rossetti's works inspired by this crucial moment in Dante's narrative, the artwork *The First Anniversary of the Death of Beatrice* (Rossetti's first "appropriation" of Dante and of his work), to the unfinished *St Agnes of Intercession*, and faithful to the aims and methodology of the study, Camilletti proceeds with extreme critical sensibility and an engaging point of view. It is in this mode that he emphasizes phenomena of fracture as well as the several contradictions intrinsic in Rossetti's own responses to the issue of figurability through his own engagement with Dante's text. As progressively emerges from Camilletti's reading of "The Portrait of Beatrice", Rossetti's dealing with the image-word fracture in engaging with Dante's work implies, first of all, the difficult process of coming to terms with his own Italian legacy and his lineage. Rossetti's perspective, as Camilletti emphasizes early on, is formed through his privileging of the *Vita Nuova* over other of Dante's works, as well as his representation of Dante as both artist and painter, aiding Rossetti's own coming to terms with the intellectual inheritance of his father and with his own personal life (and, above all, with Elizabeth Siddal) and constituting, ultimately, a means by which he can construct a precise authorial identity within the context of Victorian London and the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The volume's elegant structure progressively uncovers this process, culminating in the concluding Chapter, "Veils", which, in revealing these numerous complexities retrogressively, illuminates earlier discussions in the book, adding nuances and inviting questions, rather than coercing the discussion towards any forced, monolithic conclusions.

Fabio Camilletti's "The Portrait of Beatrice", with its highly intriguing, penetrating, and sophisticated perspective, is an important contribution in both Dante and Rossetti scholarship, and at the same time inscribes itself within that body of

critical studies which has looked at appropriations of Dante's work over the centuries, adopting what Camilletti poignantly defines "alinear patterns of enquiry", among which we might list the volume *Metamorphosing Dante: Appropriations, Manipulations, and Rewritings in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*, co-edited by Camilletti, Manuele Gagnolati, and Fabian Lampart, (Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2010), as well as single-author critical studies, such as Manuele Gagnolati's *Amor che move: Linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2013), Jennifer Rushworth's *Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch, and Proust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), or Julia Caterina Hartley's *Reading Dante and Proust by Analogy* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2019). Demonstrating the productiveness of such a dynamic critical approach, Camilletti's contribution opens new paths for further exploration of Dante and Rossetti, whilst testifying to the vast potential of its own methodological approach.

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Ethics, Politics and Justice in Dante.

Giulia Gaimari and Catherine Keen, eds.

London: UCL Press, 2019. 176 pp. £17.99.

In their introduction to this collection of nine essays, editors Giulia Gaimari and Catherine Keen state the main goal is to provide "new readings of multiple aspects of Dante's ethical, political and legal meditations" based on "one of the most recurrent encouragements emerging from Dante's *oeuvre* as a whole" which concerns "the urgency of keeping justice in the heart, and of guaranteeing equity by doing justice to others – in service of both worldly and otherworldly peace and happiness for the individual and the community alike" (12). The essays cover the three areas listed within the title (ethics, politics, and justice) but rather than analyzing texts where political theory is most explicitly treated, such as *Monarchia*, the essays engage with Dante's evolution as a poet, focusing on *Convivio*, *Commedia*, and *Eclogues*. One of the many strengths of this compilation is that, even as they engage with passages which have been frequently discussed in the scholarship, the essays offer fresh perspectives and bring together significant new contributions to the debate.

Most of the essays within the volume examine Dante's historical and intellectual context, focusing mainly on written medieval sources such as encyclopaediae, Aristotelian and biblical commentaries, homiletic practices, and civic statutes. The opening four essays look to sources within Florence and during Dante's lifetime to provide new interpretations of the text. In the first, Anna Pegoretti analyses the relationship between grammar and justice in the well-known excerpt from *Convivio*, 2.12. 1-7. She approaches it in a new way by considering how ideas of morality are tied to language by comparing this passage to the education system of Dante's Florence, and specifically how *arte de gramatica* was defined within this