

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.

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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

system. Similarly, Nicolò Maldina considers the Franciscan friar, Servasanto da Faenza, who preached at Santa Croce during the last decade of the thirteenth century, and how his sermon on St. Bartholomew and friendship conveys the same cultural context that Beatrice uses to describe Dante as “l’amico mio, e non da la ventura” (*Inf.* 2.61). Though the line is commonly thought to be inspired by Ovid, Brunetto Latini or Abelard, Maldini argues that “none of them offers a solid reference to the real sense of Dante’s verse” whereas Servasanto does (38). Thirdly, Giuseppe Ledda compares contemporary scholastic interpretations of the four animals in *Inf.* 1 with encyclopaediae and bestiaries. His method draws on the polysemy of the poem and interprets the beasts as moral and political symbols rather than following the most common interpretation of them as religious symbols. It would be fascinating to explore the arguments further by considering visual material culture in addition to the written sources. For example, does the representation of the *lonza* in visual culture corroborate Ledda’s argument and those found in the written sources? Finally, Nicolò Crisafi and Elena Lombardi also consider a popular episode, that of Paolo and Francesca. Their fresh methodological approach considers ideas of testimony and legal practices. They argue that Francesca is an authoritative and active character who testifies on her own behalf, a role reserved only for men in medieval Florence; thus, creating a role reversal where “Francesca takes up the role of main witness while the men in the canto learn to listen” (76).

The next two essays turn instead to classical and biblical sources. Justin Steinberg argues that describing the moral system by which souls in Hell are punished as *contrapasso* is incorrect and rather, by returning to Aristotle’s definition of *contrapassum*, we can see that *contrapasso* is limited and cannot speak to God’s divine justice. Instead we can read *Inf.* 28 as ironic, where Bertran de Born does not understand his punishment because it goes beyond *contrapasso*. Filippo Gianferrari’s essay also takes a frequently commented-on canto, *Par.* 25 and goes back to the Bible as source. He considers the different sections of St. James’ epistle and the similar imagery used by Dante in the canto such as flames and agricultural motifs in connection with Dante naming himself a *poeta* (*Par.* 25.8); arguing that St. James allows Dante to legitimize himself as a *poeta*.

Sabrina Ferrara offers a different perspective, by exploring the least commented-on work of Dante, his *Eclogues*. She traces Dante’s ethical evolution and the role ethics plays in the *Eclogues* in comparison to the *Commedia*; stating that Dante argues for poetry to always be ethical, regardless of language and that it should be accessible to the non-learned as well, a counter-argument to del Virgilio and his group of poets.

The final two chapters analyse Dante in later contexts to consider the different methods of Dante scholarship and reception in Italy and Britain. Catherine Keen’s essay traces the history of popular and scholarly responses to Dante such as the *Lectura Dantis* from 1373 to the present. She argues, similar to the previous essays, especially Ferrara’s, that Dante has always been accessible and popular but that we should also remember Petrarch’s concern that popularity leads to misunderstanding. This is particularly important when considering, for example, Dante’s adoption by the Italian Fascist regime. Keen traces many of these movements and their uses of Dante, demonstrating his continuing relevance.

The final essay by Claire Honess and Matthew Treherne traces the impact of the public outreach element of their AHRC-funded project on Dante and Late-Medieval Florence (Leeds-Warwick, 2011-2017). The project is an example of “how specialist and non-specialist Dante audiences were able to come together in creative ways” (144) through, for example, reflections on the meaning of community within their contemporary city, bringing the landscapes of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise to life with poetry and art. These two culminating chapters offer stimulating reflections on Dante’s enduring accessibility and how he can still speak to audiences today.

The volume offers new methodological approaches to consider Dante’s depictions and understandings of ethics, politics, and justice, offering fresh readings on both popular and less widely considered passages of Dante’s poetic works.

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Thomas Persico.

*Le parole e la musica. Poesia ed esecuzione dalla Vita nuova alla Divina Commedia.*

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Thomas Persico’s monograph is the most recent publication delving into the role of music in Dante’s poetics. This remarkable contribution enters the long-standing heated debate between two groups of scholars: those accepting the theory of an Italian divorce between music and poetry, and those who have called for a reappraisal and reassessment of the relationship between them. Persico’s studies bring order to this intricate conversation and, through rigorous textual and lexical analyses, shed new light on the topic.

The first chapter provides a thorough and lucid account of the scholarly debate around Dante and music. Persico demonstrates deep knowledge of 150 years of studies carried out by Italian and international scholars alike. His concise review is highly informative and well-documented: the impressive footnotes alone will be valuable to anyone researching the same topics. What emerges from this chapter and inspires the following ones is the need for a better appreciation of the role of musical performance in Dante’s poetry. Some of the studies he engages with revolve around the different connotations of Occitan and Italian poets and singers, the *vexata questio* of the Italian divorce between poetry and music, and the interpretations of Casella’s episode in *Purgatorio* 2. The closing paragraphs assess the studies of scholars who combine literary and musicological competences. In the past twenty years, many brilliant contributions, such as those by Maria Sofia Lannutti and Maria Clotilde Camboni for instance, have successfully tried to debunk the notion that music is not essential to late medieval Italian poets. Persico joins forces with them and confirms the fruitfulness of their multidisciplinary approach.