

Claudia Di Fonzo. *Dante tra diritto, teologia ed esegesi antica*. Napoli: Edises, 2012. Pp. 188. ISBN 9788879597449. € 15.*

In her new volume (*Dante between jurisprudence, theology and ancient exegesis*) Claudia Di Fonzo—who in 2008 edited the *L'ultima forma dell'Ottimo commento*—discusses the legacy of the Supreme Poet with an innovative approach. Di Fonzo analyzes some important traits of Alighieri's work by inserting it in a context in which she intends to reconstruct the connections between jurisprudence, eschatology, hermeneutics and poetry in Dante's political-theological conception. The author re-reads Dante's texts not only in function of some new results in philological investigations, but also in an attempt to reveal new ways in Dante's interpretation. As Di Fonzo sustains, the *Comedy* and Dante's treatises are special synthesis of certain "roving concepts" ("motivi vaganti") of the European Middle Ages, reformulated by the poetic power of the man who is considered by Eliot as the greatest among the poets of modern languages (p.4).

The book is divided in seven chapters, the titles indicate clearly the hermeneutic itineraries that Di Fonzo intends to accomplish. The thematic definitions are quite *dense* (for example, *Ordinamento cosmologico e ordinamento giuridico: una specularità ordinata* [*Cosmological and juridical order: an ordered specularity*]; *Giusti son due e non vi sono intesi: giusto naturale e giusto legale* [*Two men are just, but no one pays them heed: natural and legal justice*]; etc.), and evolve in some complex reflections, but unfortunately don't close in a general conclusion at the end of the volume (no matter the fact the Di Fonzo characterizes as "conclusive" the final chapter entitled *Disarmonia infernale, liturgia astripeta e polifonia celeste* [*Infernal disharmony, liturgy oriented toward the stars and celestial polyphony*; "astripeta" refers to "astripetam aquilam", in *De vulgari eloquentia* II/IV/11]; p.6). To the reader it might seem that the beautiful iconographic figures (pp.123-131) serve to substitute the conclusion, even if the analysis of the iconographic aspects of Dantesque texts can be found in the penultimate chapter, *Dante maestro di felicità: risemantizzazione di una iconografia sacra* [*Dante, master of happiness: semantics of a sacred iconography*]. Nevertheless, these unusual aspects don't diminish the value of Di Fonzo's impressive work, which – as it is clear also in base of the bibliography – has as an objective the renewal of the exegesis of Dante's works.

The necessity to compare jurisprudence and literature is outlined—in the introductory chapter, *Un palinsesto dantesco* [*A Dantesque palimpsest*]*—*in the following way. "Literature becomes the authoritative source of jurisprudence, and law itself assumes, in certain cases, some literary role. The Medieval jurist reads [...] Dante's *Convivio*, and he uses it as an authoritative foundation for a juridical commentary: in the specific case Dante becomes the authority, on which law and its interpretation are founded" (p.7). Di Fonzo goes on asserting that in the case of Dante, Cino da Pistoia and Bartolo da Sassoferrato the linkage between literature and jurisprudence is paradigmatic: literature is authoritative for the law, jurispru-

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dence is often formulated in a literary form, commentators and poets frequently are jurists, and “common law” in that period was a basic factor for the cultural unification of Europe (p.8). According to the preliminary conclusion, the *Comedy* is to be considered as the greatest juridical fiction in literature: we can witness in it the acts and deeds of a trial which takes place in close connection with universal history (but effectively outside history) by the experiences of Dante, in front of God as the judge, and with Christ and Mary as attorneys (p.11). The theoretical-juridical reflection appears more clearly in the second chapter (*Ordinamento cosmologico...*) by the following statements. The cosmological and juridical order is reduplicated in the human being, because Christ cured man’s nature and made possible for him to pursue this way. In the canto of Marco Lombardo (*Purgatorio* XVI) the link between natural order (imprinted in the human being) and legal order gives the foundation of social life (p.20). Following the reflections on the relationship between the sovereign and the subjects (taking in consideration some thesis of the *De regimine principum* of Thomas Aquinas, moreover of Dante’s *Convivio* and *Monarchia*) Di Fonzo reiterates in her provisional conclusion that the individuals are subject to the emperor by the operations required by the law, which is emanated by the human beings themselves, and to which all humans are subjected, including the emperor by his excellence (p.26).

It’s a main motive in Di Fonzo’s volume the supposition of a historical debate between “orthodox” and “avant-garde” commentaries to Dante’s texts: according to this view Benvenuto da Imola (in connection to Alighieri’s pluri-stylism), Guido da Pisa (by reaffirming the relevance of Aristotle’s *Ethics*), Pietro di Dante (for having identified the classical and juridical sources) and the last form of the *Ottimo commento* (in which the authors stress Alighieri’s polemic tone against the confusion of political and spiritual power) are to be considered as “avant-garde” commentators, and this has a particular importance with regard the already mentioned *Purgatorio* XVI (pp.30-31).

In the chapter entitled *La legittimazione dell’impero romano presso Dante* [*The legitimacy of the Roman Empire in Dante’s theory*] Di Fonzo stresses that Alighieri is not celebrating the Roman Empire itself, but he is an interpreter of its history, as of the pagan poetic and speculative tradition of Virgil. For Dante the Empire is the place of the fulfillment of Roman law, of the actualization of human intellect in function of the specific historical moment of *incarnation* (p.45). Under this aspect the connection between the Empire and the remedial-redeeming action of Christ in chapter XI of the second treatise of *Monarchia* is crucial (pp.50-51): God forgave, through his son, Jesus, the disobedience of his other son, Adam (p.53).

It is well known the intertextual presence of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* in Dante’s works. In the chapter *Giusti son due...* Di Fonzo, concerning *Inferno* VI 73, underlines that the formulation of the “two just men” can be led back to a determinate passage of the *Ethics*, and it refers to natural justice and to legal justice (a distinction made by Thomas Aquinas in his commentary to the fifth book of the *Ethics*; pp.56-57). As an example, in the tragedy of Pier delle Vigne (*Inferno* XIII, 55-108) we can witness the contrast of these two type of justices in one personality (p.70), and Dante—from this point of view—is the “anti-Pier delle Vigne” (p.73).

In the chapter entitled *La parola ornata e la donna gentile: un connubio cicero-niano* [*The adorned word and the gentle woman: a bond with Cicero*] the author gives an overview of the linguistic theory of Alighieri, and highlights the importance of Dante's *philosophical* option for the vernacular language: this choice gives the foundation of the legitimacy of the Roman Empire and—simultaneously—of the supremacy of the Roman people. By the other hand, in Dante's political vision the Prince, cleared from *cupiditas*, is not exclusively an *executor iustitiae*, but, by using the language of his own people, restores political communication, per-meated by the lie of sin (p.76).

In the final chapter of her book (*Disarmonia infernale...*) Di Fonzo reaffirms a hypothesis according to which Alighieri in the process of the draft of the *Comedy* could have been influenced by some Medieval musical theories—and that seems to be obvious in Dante's "polyphonic" description of the vision of God (p.121).

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The Early Extant Manuscripts of Baldassar Castiglione's Il libro del cortegiano in digital format. Transcribed by Olga Pugliese et al. Toronto: University of Toronto Library T-space Faculty Publications. <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/32401>

Several years ago I was fortunate enough to see Raffaello's famous portrait of Baldassar Castiglione on display at the High Museum in Atlanta. I was there for a conference where I was presenting my recent research on Italian Renaissance literary responses to the New World project.

The portrait reminded me of Theodore Cachey's take on the subject in his pivotal work, the "Invention of America" where he suggests that if Renaissance Italy was not in a position to assert control over an increasingly nationalized Europe or their holdings beyond the Atlantic, then it certainly could advise these new nations on how to build and preserve their newly won dominions. Indeed, it is clear that in the sixteenth century, the Italians comfortably assumed the role of "Pan European" (Cachey's phrase) counselors, whose "how to books" on statesmanship and courtly behavior provided guidebooks for navigating this barely charted, and in some cases, yet uncharted territory.

The portrait thus stands as a visual confirmation of the importance and authoritative nature of Castiglione's most famous work, *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*), for who, seeing this dashing courtier, his hat tipped just so, his clothing impeccable, could doubt that he knew exactly of what he wrote? Immortalized by Raphael, artist to popes and princes, Castiglione's eyes are keen but cautious and one gets the sense that Castiglione's greatest strengths were his power to see that the world was changing and his ability to adapt to altered paradigms.

I was also struck by the wonders of our own new world where a painting nearly five hundred years old could travel across a vast ocean to a country barely imagined at the time of the *Courtier's* publication in 1528. I had the same sense of wonder when I opened the link to Olga Pugliese's online publication *The Early*