Simon Gilson. *Dante and Renaissance Florence*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. xii, 323 pp. ISBN 0-521-84165-8 US\$80 (paper)

Simon Gilson's recent volume, *Dante and Renaissance Florence* considers the reception of Dante in Florence during a period that extends from the first meeting of Boccaccio and Petrarch in 1350 to Cristoforo Landino's 1481 commentary on the *Commedia*. Gilson, a Senior Lecturer in Italian at the University of Warwick, has for some time been concerned with Dante's commentary tradition and his reception in the Renaissance. Not surprisingly then, this work is comprehensive, well considered and marvelously authoritative.

Following a brief introduction, the book is divided into three parts. Part I covers the period from 1350 to 1430 and examines what the author terms "competing cults," that is, the legacy of the Trecento in confrontation with the impact of Humanism in the early decades of the fifteenth-century. The standard conventions and common points of reference in the debate, notes Gilson, find their origin in the literary dialogue of Boccaccio and Petrarch. In particular, the issues of Dante's use of the vernacular and his treatment of the classical tradition form the basis of a debate which, to a certain extent, effected the polarization of early-fifteenth-century critics into two camps, those who saw great value in the civic ideals of the *Commedia* and the advancement in vernacular literature that it represented, and those who could not see past what they considered to be the work of an author whose Latin was sub-standard and whose knowledge of antiquity was extremely flawed.

The second part of the book, "New directions and the rise of the vernacular" considers both Dante as a civic and linguistic model and the role his works in the development of what he refers to as "vernacular humanism." Gilson's examination of the contributions of Angelo Poliziano, Cristoforo Landino and Lorenzo de' Medici in promoting vernacular humanism provides substantial insight into the shift away from the fourteenth-century debate and the movement towards a more politically motivated species of reception. Gilson starts with a thorough examination of the use made of Dante by Francesco Filelfo, Leonardo Bruni and Matteo Palmieri, all of whom superimpose Dante onto a developing civic template, interpreting him as an ideal model of committed Florentine citizenship. Gilson's study suggests that by the latter half of the fifteenth-century, the figure of Dante had become not only somewhat mythologized, but had also passed into the realm of public domain, open to exploitation by a variety of often competing interests. Filelfo's "overtly idealized" treatment of Dante directed against the Medici party and its supporters underscores the extent to which, by Filelfo's time, the value of Dante was often found outside of its literary virtuosity. Gilson points out, for example, that Lorenzo de' Medici looked to Dante in support of his efforts to promote Tuscan as part of a greater cultural project, linking the *volgare* to the political standing and intellectual prestige of the Florentine state. At the same time, however, Gilson also makes it clear that, while Filelfo used Dante to oppose the Medici, the subsequent Medici adaptation of Dante for their own purposes is not so much responsive (or even ironic) but rather, simply indicative of the extraordinary mutability of the Dante persona.

Gilson concludes his study with an entire section devoted to Cristoforo Landino and his *Comento sopra la Comedia*. While placing such great focus on one scholar in particular in a study that has, up to this point, provided what is in essence a survey (albeit a richly detailed and comprehensive survey), might seem inconsistent with the structure of the overall organization of the book, a thorough reading of the Landino section reveals it to be an apt conclusion. The 1481 production of the Landino *Comento* encapsulates and represents the culmination of the various projects and movements outlined and surveyed in the earlier chapters. Gilson characterizes Landino's work as having borrowed from "an intricate web of earlier authorities," from contemporary Florentine discussions and debates, and from idiosyncratic adaptations. The chapters on Landino's work then confirm what the earlier chapters have been suggesting and which the author himself concludes. The astonishing longevity of Dante's works is not attributable exclusively to their literary merit, but rather to their enormous utility in supporting and espousing a variety of political and cultural positions. Notwithstanding the enormous energy Dante put into the construction of a literary and political persona, and to shaping his readers' perception of him, his efforts in this regard, suggests Gilson, had little effect on Renaissance readers who were intent on reshaping Dante in whatever form best suited their cultural and political exigencies.

What Gilson, therefore, has done successfully in this volume is to present a cogent and revealing study of the factors and paradigms fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florentines employed in constructing their own figure of Dante. While Gilson's work considers how Dante's persona and his writing were reordered, shifted, and distorted in Renaissance Florence, the processes at play are equally relevant to scholars concerned with reception theory in general and to scholars fascinated by the intertwining of culture and politics. It is well worth the read.

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Sebregondi, Ludovica. *Iconografia di Girolamo Savonarola 1498-1998*. Savonarola e la Toscana, Atti e Documenti, 19. Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo per la Fondazione Ezio Franceschini, 2004. lxxxi, 598 pp., 38 colour and 341 b/w illustrations. 77 Euros. ISBN 88-8450-044-3

The 500th anniversary of Girolamo Savonarola's execution (1498-1998) gave rise to an array of excellent scholarly work on the Ferrarese friar, both in advance of and in the wake of the recurrence. Ludovica Sebregondi's masterful examination of the iconology of Savonarola over the course of this last half millennium and the rich treasury of images that she has collected are most welcomed contributions to this bounty. The product of ten full years of extensive research, international contacts and cooperation, not to mention meticulous study, the voluminous catalogue raisonné she has assembled is both impressive and easy to consult.

The volume opens with a preliminary section that includes three different bibliographies (archival and manuscript sources, incunabula, and general bibliog-