

Italian surety-based justice with theological, philosophical, and iconographic evidence from a variety of European countries is impressive: the work of a scholar in peak form.

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L'“Ytalia” di Dante e dei fiorentini scellerati: Un caso di comunicazione politica nel Trecento. Amedeo De Vincentiis.

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2021 was the seven hundredth anniversary of Dante's death: such an event sent shockwaves through the scientific community, and books, conferences, and papers on the Florentine flooded our bookshelves, with mixed results. Among them, *L'“Ytalia” di Dante* will survive the anecdotic frenzies of the day and will remain not only as an important contribution to Dante's role in fourteenth-century Italy but also as a groundbreaking work on the political culture of the Peninsula in the late Middle Ages.

The book focuses on the long-lasting existence of the widespread idea of an *Italia di Dante* as at once a literary space immediately recognizable by Italians of all ages—the mountains, the cities, the people that everyone knows from school—and an imaginary space created on this basis and molded to suit a political agenda quite far from the Florentine's interests—that is, the nineteenth-century Italian effort toward national unity and the grand narrative that followed its success. This is not the whole story, though: Dante lived in, and fought for, a Peninsular political space in which the network of internal alliances and external influences was defined according to his city's needs and aspirations. The Florentine space foreseen by Dante (which—as he knew all too well—did not necessarily coincide with his fellow citizens' aspirations) conflicted with other projects, imagined and carried out by other actors such as the empire, the papacy, the Angevin kings, and the Northern cities. Starting with the analysis of a specific letter addressed by Dante, already in exile, to his fellow citizens in 1311 and rediscovered in 1837, De Vincentiis builds around this one text the polyhedric story of the political idea(s) lying behind the word *Ytalia* and their use, and at the same time weaves a groundbreaking discourse on political communication and its ways.

The book is organized in six chapters framed by a short introduction and a brief epilogue: the first three chapters are devoted to the *traditio* of the letter (1. *Testimone unico*; 2. *Nella tradizione del comune*; 3. *Le letture dei savi cittadini*), while the last three focus on the main political frameworks of its reception (4. *L'“Ytalia” ricordata*; 5. *L'“Ytalia” in questione*; 6. *La nuova “Ytalia” degli scellerati*). Dante's Letter 6 was among the last writings to be attributed to him. Discovered in the Vatican Library in 1837 by Theodor Heyse, a Saxon young scholar who found it in the *Palatino Latino* 1729 together with the 1311 letter to Henry VII, and after the *De Monarchia* and Petrarch's *Bucolicum liber*.

If the combination of those texts could appear to nineteenth-century scholars as almost accidental, it would instead have been telling indeed for both the man who assembled and transcribed the collection (Francesco Piendibeni, the chancellor of the commune of Perugia in the 1390s) and for those who read it between the end of the fourteenth and the fifteenth century. De Vincentiis starts here his reconstruction *à rebours* of the codicological transmission and the textual analysis of the letter, and the recreation of its stratified cultural background. The letter, an “accusation act against the Guelph regime of the city” (14), probably was, for Dante’s contemporaries, not only politically unacceptable but also almost totally incompatible with the city’s political tradition. In order to understand why, De Vincentiis emphasizes how Dante’s vision was set against a complicated and multilayered cultural and political background composed by the historical memory of the presence and role of the empire in Italy, the invention of a unitary and autonomous political space by the Angevin crown, and the political space devised by the Florentine Guelphs, who were pursuing an idea of the Peninsula that, under the aegis of the church and the kingdom of Sicily, no longer had a space for the empire. De Vincentiis does so by exploring a broad range of texts and by masterfully rereading well-known documentary sources: exemplary of this method is, among others, the analysis of the bull issued in 1265 by Clemens IV to Charles of Anjou. Here, the pope prefigured the various degrees of the king’s authority over the Peninsula under the aegis of the ecclesiastical *libertas*.

De Vincentiis writes an arduous book, and asks a lot from his readers. His unparalleled familiarity with his subject implies that the discourse goes back and forth in time, taking into account men and texts from Brunetto Latini to Remigio de’ Girolami, Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, and many events and political choices, and the author never forgets to deconstruct the power of long-lasting grand narratives. His train of thought, however, is rigorously mastered, and the reader is provided with new cartographical representations of the Peninsula meant to avoid the teleological image of Italy as naturally oriented from North to South. Despite its asperity, therefore, this is a beautifully written book, and De Vincentiis’s fresco is so rich and innovative to be definitely worth the effort of following him to the end.

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Muta eloquenza: Gesti nel Rinascimento e dintorni. Ottavia Niccoli.

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Gestures add layers of meaning to every interaction, yet the cultural connotations of gestures differ and shift depending on location and time. Ottavia Niccoli’s *Muta eloquenza: Gesti nel Rinascimento e dintorni* traces gestures in Renaissance culture by