

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

weaving together images, archival sources, and textual descriptions. Though focused on Renaissance Italy, the origins of gestures in the ancient world and their changing meaning over time are explored. Beyond temporal analysis, Niccoli considers a wider geographical scope to explore comparative representations from Europe and the Americas (especially chapter 10).

A historiography of gesture studies is established in the introduction and chapter 1. Niccoli emphasizes distinctions between emotive gesture and conventional gesture (20) and encourages attentiveness to semiotic aspects that accompany gesture, which may reveal emotional state, national origins, social class, political affiliations, etc. (34). Niccoli identifies three different, but often interrelated, factors that influenced the language of the body in the Renaissance: religious belief, classical precedent, and political associations (32–33), which are explored throughout the book, beginning with expressions of power (chapter 2).

Conveying authority is linked to ritual and gesture; in fact, rituals are a series of organized gestures (37). Political rituals are performed to not only express control, but also to create solidarity and collective identity (39). Chapter 3 moves to religious ritual in its analysis of Passion iconography and associated practices of prayer, which were influenced by devotional treatises, such as Saint Dominic's nine gestures of prayer in *De modo orandi* (thirteenth century). The case study of the gestures of the Virgin Annunciate and Archangel Gabriel would be invaluable when teaching Annunciation scenes to novice art historians (chapter 4). Chapter 5 considers how iconic gesture (gestural formulae in religious artworks) modeled both exaggerated emotions and gestures used to express quotidian emotions.

While chapter 6 employs Visitation scenes alongside prescriptive literature like Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo* to explore gestures of greeting, conversation, and discussion, chapter 7 considers gestures of agreement or peace, like the kiss of peace or the handshake. Returning to prescriptive literature, chapter 8 explores how gestures of daily life were demonstrated from an early age by parents and learnt from written guides. Chapter 8 considers the "*il corpo disciplinato* [the disciplined body]," (115) while chapter 9 focuses on correcting "*il corpo indisciplinato* [the undisciplined body]" of the sick and possessed through gestures of healing, magic, superstition, and exorcism. Chapter 10 focuses on "*culture diverse, paesi lontani* [diverse cultures, faraway lands]," relying mostly on European accounts, particularly of explorers, missionaries, and inquisitors; however, Niccoli acknowledges divergences between account and reality, emphasizing that European interpretation of gestures differed from the meaning in cultures under observation (128).

The final section of the book returns to ritual by analyzing the history and development of gestures of mourning, distinguishing between the roles of grieving assigned to different people, particularly women (weeping) and priests (performing official ceremonies) (chapter 11). In the penultimate chapter, Niccoli nuances our understanding of gestures stereotypically associated with Italian culture in popular thought—insults. The

book concludes with a discussion of women, considering both gestures that signify modesty and comportment as well as those that subvert traditional ideals of women's roles, particularly through representations in popular print (chapter 13).

*Muta eloquenza* brings together an array of scholarship on the language of gesture, and is valuable for art historians, social and cultural historians, particularly those focusing on religious history and the history of emotions, as well as political historians and historical anthropologists. While the images and sources that accompany the text are varied, the book's analysis could also be applied to material culture, which was lacking in representation. When handshakes agreements were discussed in chapter 7, analysis of *mani in fede* symbolism on *fede* rings and other objects, such as Renaissance majolica, would further strengthen Niccoli's argument. Objects, too, could serve as mediators for gesture, such as the use of touch-pieces to convey a ruler's healing power (chapter 2).

While this material was outside the scope of this book, Niccoli's arguments could be expanded upon and applied by scholars working in these fields. *Muta eloquenza* effectively aggregates and successfully expands upon past scholarship on Renaissance gesture, while providing a comprehensive guide to understanding a variety of Renaissance gestures utilizing an impressive range of primary sources.

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*Niccolò di Lorenzo della Magna and the Social World of Florentine Printing, ca. 1470–93*. Lorenz Böninger.

I Tatti Studies in Italian Renaissance History. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021. 209 pp. \$49.95.

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This slim volume explores the complex networks of financial, business, and humanist relationships in late fifteenth-century Florence that intersected with the career of a printer, Niccolò di Lorenzo della Magna. Lorenzo was connected to another network—German bureaucrats—due to his origins in Breslau. Around 1480, he had four presses operating simultaneously and about ten craftsmen in his shop, of whom nothing is known. As with the development of printing in other areas of Europe, many early Florentine printers were gold or metal smiths, a number of them having been employed in the Florence mint. Entire families were involved in all stages of the early printing process as authors, editors, translators, punch cutters, printers, and stationers. One member of the Cennini family worked in the mint and assisted Ghiberti in crafting the bronze doors of the Baptistery before becoming a punch cutter in the family's printing business. The author also traces several fonts of type belonging to Lorenzo through various editions and print shops.