



Dante's Reforming Mission and Women in 'The Comedy' (Troubador Italian Studies)

Diana Glenn

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This is a new perspective on Dante's poetic mission of reform through the lens of the female characters. It should be of interest to Dante scholars, teachers and students of the Comedy. General readers with an understanding of Dante's major poetic work will also be interested in this volume. This book offers a rich and comprehensive analysis of the presence and significance of female characters in Dante's Comedy. Commencing with the tabulations of women listed in Inferno IV and Purgatorio XXII, to which may be added the grouping in Paradiso XXXII, the author traces the symmetry and symbolic import of these clusters. Also central to her study are the lucid expositions of major figures in the poem, such as Francesca, Pia, Sapia, Matelda, Piccarda, Beatrice and the Virgin Mary. Dante's representations of women in the Comedy signal women's special role in the recovery of spiritual values through mediation and the embodiment of community-oriented values. Tracing the conceptualisation of women in the Comedy, the author shows how Dante invests key women with the freight of salvific virtues linked to his secular goals for the poem. Through the vibrant oral narratives and narrative ordering of the female characters, the Comedy offers a unifying framework for a salient consideration of women's socialising virtues within the context of Dante's redemptive poetics, and endorses women's role as active agents in the salvific process. In the representation of their earthly and divine properties and the socialising virtues that they embody, the female characters in the Comedy carry out an important function as mediators and moral agents in Dante's poetic mission of reform.

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