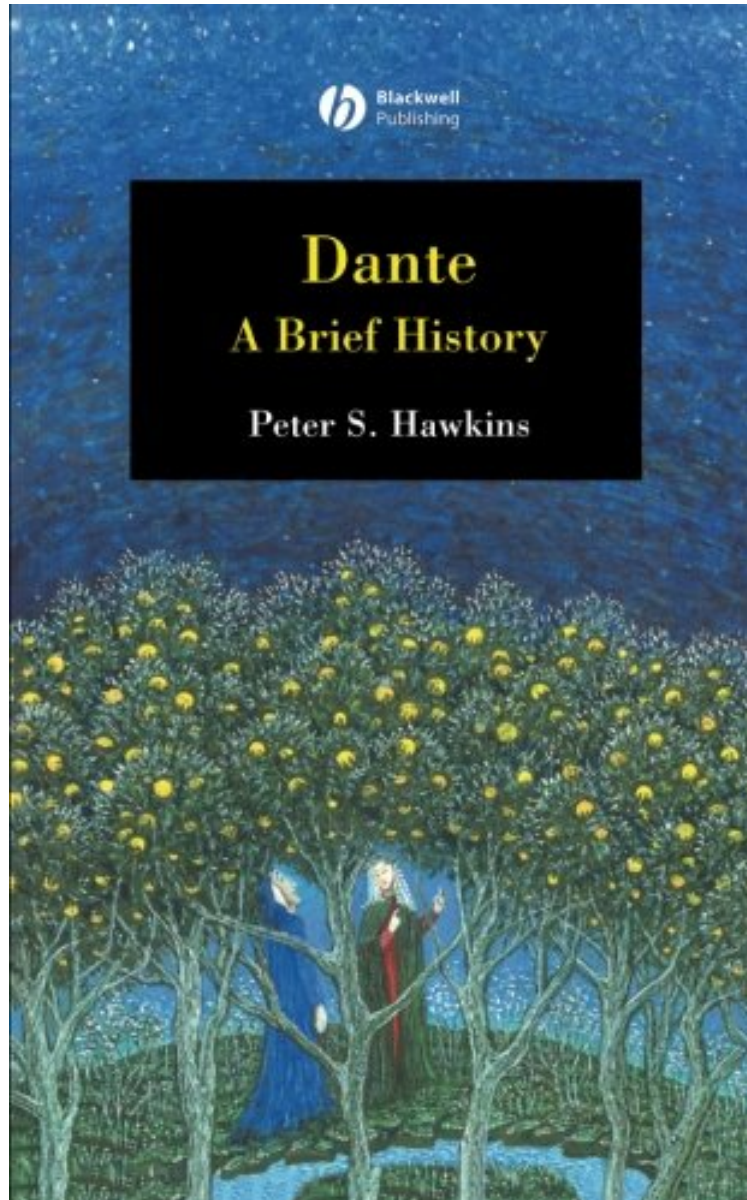


Dante: A Brief History

Peter S. Hawkins

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the following review helpful. Best Intro to Dante By Catherine I This is my favorite introduction to Dante. I recommend the Divine Comedy to a lot of people, and right along with it I recommend this book. Dante is a difficult poet, and most people get discouraged and give up when they try to read the Comedy without help. This short book provides accessible context, and it highlights the most important themes in a way that helps new readers navigate the very complicated poem. It's also entertaining and moving all on its own, and it summarizes well all of the reasons I love Dante so much.

For over seven centuries, Dante and his masterpiece, The Divine Comedy, have held a special place in Western culture. The poem is at once a vivid journey through hell to heaven, a poignant love story, and a picture of humanity's relationship to God. It is so richly imaginative that a first reading can be bewildering. In response, Peter Hawkins has written an inspiring introduction to the poet, his greatest work, and its abiding influence. His knowledge of Dante and enthusiasm for his vision make him an expert guide for the willing reader.

Hawkins' book has been written with students and teachers in mind, and having used it in the classroom, I can say that in this it succeeds signally. (Theology, September 2009) Peter Hawkins offers us a learned but highly original study, unapologetically personal in perspective, that soars beyond the 'brief, accessible, and lively accounts' enjoined by the Blackwell series. (Religion and the Arts, November 2008) The medieval Italian poet Dante is one of those literary 'greats' that many believe only really clever, highly-educated people can access and enjoy. Fortunately, self-confessed Dante lover, Peter Hawkins, has written a little gem of a book which gives us less scholarly types a glimpse [It] represents his effort to transition a lifetime's passion and scholarship into a highly readable, most satisfying encounter with this master artist/theologian. Anyone who has ever contemplated life, death and beyond, will find treasures and wisdom for life's journey in this slim, 194 pages volume. (Methodist Recorder) "An accessible writing style, small format and attractive contemporary art will make the book appealing to readers new to Dante. Those already proficient will delight in the many new perspectives and insights the author provides." (America: The National Catholic Weekly) "Peter Hawkins unveils Dante the writer and the person. He does so not only with impeccable scholarship but also with emotion, common sense, and empathy - all expressed in beautifully clear prose. Moreover, Hawkins reminds us that Dante does not belong exclusively to scholars and specialists: here, new 'pilgrims' are welcomed aboard. Those who revisit the Commedia under his guidance will be reminded anew why the poet remains prominently on our shelves, and will place this volume right alongside it." Matthew Pearl, author of The Dante Club "Peter Hawkins knowledge of and passion for Dante shines through every page of this elegantly written book. He writes, moreover, with passion and precision. This is not only a superb introduction to Dante, but a work which will move and enlighten those thoroughly steeped in a poet who remains, seven centuries after his death, still very much our contemporary." Gabriel Josipovici, University of Sussex "A wonderful book for the awe and wonder that the author brings to his personal reading of the poem and which he also inspires in the reader. His perceptions convey the 'aliveness' not only of Dante's poem but equally of his own critical imagination." Richard Lansing, Brandeis University "Anyone who makes Dante and his genius more available to modern readers deserves our thanks. Peter Hawkins careful reading and meticulous scholarship not only brings Dante to life but also shows how he has touched and enlivened readers throughout the ages. Dantes vision never ceases to challenge and deepen us and the Commedia speaks to our age as much as it did to his. The great thing about this book is that it makes one want to go out and read or re-read the original story. Readers tend to project their own prejudices and longings onto the poet. But Dante is always ahead of us, as if to say with Beatrice, 'Look and look well,' you will never get to the bottom of things. A timely message in a dangerous age of raucous certainties." Alan Jones, Dean of Grace Cathedral, San Francisco and author of The Souls Journey: The Three Passages of the Spiritual Life with Dante as Guide "A tour-de-force of compression, offering passionate engagement with Dante in all aspects of the Divine Comedy. It is absolutely freshly imagined and moving." Alison Milbank, University of Nottingham From the Back Cover For over seven centuries, Dante and his masterpiece, The Divine Comedy, have held a special place in Western culture. The poem is at once a vivid journey through hell to heaven, a poignant love story, and a picture of humanity's relationship to God. It is so richly imaginative that a first reading can be bewildering. In response, Peter Hawkins has written an inspiring introduction to the poet, his greatest work, and its abiding influence. His knowledge of Dante and enthusiasm for his vision make him an expert guide for the willing reader.