



Dante and the Victorians

Alison Milbank

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In this text Alison Milbank explains why a comprehension of the Victorian reception of Dante is essential for a full understanding of Victorianism as a whole. Her focus on this topic allows her to reconfigure the British 19th century understanding of history, nationalism, aesthetics and gender, and their often strange intersections. The account also build towards a demonstration that the modernist perpetuation of the Dante obsession reveals an equal continuity with many aspects of Victorianism. The book provides not only an introduction to these important cultural themes, but also a re-reading of the genealogy of literature in the modern period. Instead of the Victorian realism challenged by modernist symbolism's attempts to transcend linear time, Milbank offers us a contrary, continuous "Danteism". For both the Victorians and the modernists Dante is the first writer to historicize, fictionalize and humanize the eternal role, and he becomes paradoxically the means by which history, secularised fiction and a positivist humanism could be reconnected to a lost transcendent.

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