THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO DANTE’S COMMEDIA

This newly commissioned volume presents a focused overview of Dante’s masterpiece, the Commedia, offering Dante’s readers of today wide-ranging insights into the poem and its core features. Leading scholars discuss matters of structure, narrative, language and style, characterization, doctrine, and politics, in chapters that make their own contributions to Dante criticism by raising problems and questions that call for renewed attention, while investigating contextual concerns as well as the current state of criticism about the poem. The Commedia is also placed in a variety of cultural and historical contexts through accounts of the poem’s transmission and reception that explore both its contemporary influence and its continuing legacy today. With its accessible approach, its unstinting focus on the poem and its attention to matters that have not always received adequate critical assessment, this volume will be of value to all students and scholars of Dante’s great poem.

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO DANTÉ’S COMMEDIA

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For our children, Anna and Ed, Lauren and Sofia
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ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

The following editions and translations are used throughout, unless otherwise stated.


Fiore Il Fiore, pp. 1–467.

The Fiore, pp. 35–499.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

Inf. Inferno.

Par. Paradiso.
Purg. Purgatorio.

Questio Questio de aqua et terra, ed. F. Mazzoni, in Opere minori, II, 693–880.


All translations from classical Latin authors, unless stated otherwise, are taken from the Loeb Classical Library. All other translations are noted in the individual chapters.
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<td>1250</td>
<td>Death of Emperor Frederick II.</td>
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<td>1252</td>
<td>First gold florin coined in Florence.</td>
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<td>1260</td>
<td>Battle of Montaperti. Banished Florentine Ghibellines defeat Guelfs.</td>
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<td>1265</td>
<td>May/June Dante born in Florence.</td>
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<td>1266</td>
<td>Charles of Anjou enters Italy</td>
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<td>1270–73</td>
<td>Dante’s mother, Bella, dies.</td>
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<td>1274</td>
<td>May: first encounter with Beatrice.</td>
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<td>1277</td>
<td>9 January: marriage contract with Gemma Donati.</td>
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<td>1282</td>
<td>Dante’s father, Alighiero di Bellincione, dies.</td>
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<td>1283</td>
<td>Dante publishes first poem. Friendship with Guido Cavalcanti</td>
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<td>1285</td>
<td>Marriage to Gemma Donati</td>
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<td>1287</td>
<td>Dante in Bologna? Beatrice marries Simone de’ Bardi</td>
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<td>Dante writes the <em>Fiore</em> and <em>Detto d’Amore</em> (?)</td>
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<td>1287</td>
<td>Birth of first child, Giovanni (?)</td>
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<td>1289</td>
<td>Dante at the battle of Campaldino against Arezzo. Son Jacopo is born (?)</td>
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<td>1290</td>
<td>Death of Beatrice. Son Pietro is born (?)</td>
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<td>1294</td>
<td>December, Pope Celestine V abdicates five months after his election. Boniface VIII becomes pope.</td>
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**1295** Dante enrolls in the Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries and enters political life. From November he is a member of the Council of Thirty-Six.

**1296** Dante member of the Council of the Hundred.

**1299** Daughter Antonia is born (?)

**1300** Easter week: Dante’s fictional journey to the realms of the afterlife.
- April: Pope Boniface proclaims the Jubilee Year.
- May: Florentine Guelfs split into Blacks and Whites.
- May: Dante ambassador to San Gimignano on behalf of the Guelfs.

15 June–15 August: Dante serves as Prior; signs warrant sending Guido Cavalcanti into exile; Guido dies in the Summer.

**1301** April–September: Dante member of the Council of the Hundred.
- October: Sent on a diplomatic mission to Pope Boniface VIII in Rome.
- November: Charles of Valois enters Florence; Black Guelph coup d’état.

**1302** 27 January: While on his way back to Florence, Dante is fined 5000 florins and excluded from public office for two years; refuses to pay fine.
- 10 March: sentence confirmed; if caught, Dante will be burnt at the stake.
- Dante joins exiled White Guelfs in a leading position.
- Boniface VIII’s bull *Unam sanctam*, proclaiming supreme authority.

**1303** Dante in Verona, guest of Bartolomeo della Scala. Probably visits Treviso, Venice, and Padua. Begins *Convivio* and *De vulgari eloquentia*.

**1304** July: Benedict XI dies.
- Dante in Arezzo. Letter to cardinal Niccolò da Prato on behalf of the Whites.
- Dante in Bologna, works on *Convivio* and *De vulgari eloquentia* (?)

**1305** Bertrand De Got elected pope with the name of Clement V.
Dante in Lunigiana, guest of Moroello Malaspina. He starts writing the *Commedia* and continues until 1320/1.

Dante in Casentino: letter and canzone (*Rime* CXVI) to Moroello Malaspina.

Henry of Luxembourg chosen to be next emperor. Dante in Lucca.

Henry crowned emperor as Henry VII at Aix-La-Chapelle (Aachen)

Clement V moves the papacy to Avignon, France, where it remains until 1377.

Robert of Anjou, king of Naples.

October. Henry VII in Italy. Dante in Poppio, near Arezzo, guest of Guido da Battifolle, writes an open letter to rulers and people of Italy urging them to welcome Henry.

Henry VII crowned in Milan.

31 March: Dante writes letter urging the Florentines to open the city to Henry VII.

17 April: Dante writes to Henry VII exhorting him to attack Florence.

Henry VII crowned in Rome, but not in St Peter’s.

Dante settles in Verona as guest of Cangrande della Scala. He writes or begins writing *Monarchia* (?).

August: Henry dies of malaria in Buonconvento, near Siena.

Pope Clement V dies. Dante writes open letter to Italian Cardinals urging them to elect an Italian pope. Conclave closes for two years.

June: Amnesty offered to Florentine exiles; Dante rejects offer. October: Florence reconfirms Dante’s exile and extends it to his children.

Conclave reopens in Lyons. Frenchman Jacques Duèse is elected pope as John XXII.

Dante writes or begins writing *Monarchia* (?).

Dante leaves Verona and settles in Ravenna as guest of Guido Novello da Polenta.

Dante writes two Latin eclogues to Giovanni del Virgilio and the *Questio de aqua et terra*.

20 January. Dante reads the *Questio de aqua et terra* in a public lecture in Verona. Completes *Paradiso* between 1320 and 1321.

Dante is sent on a diplomatic mission to Venice by Guido Novello. On his return, he dies of malaria on the night between
CHRONOLOGY 1250–1340

13 and 14 September and is buried in Ravenna in the church of San Pier Maggiore, now San Francesco.

1322  Commentary to the *Inferno* in Italian by Jacopo, son of Dante.
1324  Commentary to the *Inferno* in Latin by Graziolo Bambaglioli, Bologna.
1324–8  Commentary to the full *Commedia* in Italian by Iacomo della Lana, Bologna.
1334  *Ottimo Commento*, full commentary in Italian.
1335–40  Commentary to *Inferno* in Latin by Guido da Pisa, Pisa (?).
1340  *Comentum* in Latin by Pietro Alighieri, Verona.
Map 1. Dante’s Italy around 1300
Figure 1. A Schematic Representation of Dante's Hell
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Figure 2. A Schematic Representation of Dante’s Purgatory
Figure 3. A Schematic Representation of Dante’s Paradise