

*Dante: Fifty Books*. Margherita Palumbo, Filippo Rotundo, and Christian Yves Dupont.

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*Dante: Fifty Books* is a catalogue of manuscripts and printed editions of the works of Dante Alighieri and a few related authors, such as Virgil and Jorge Luis Borges (with the autograph copy of one of his Dante essays), exhibited in New York. A majority of the items come from the collection of the Italian bibliophile Livio Ambrogio, the largest private Dante collection today. The catalogue has been printed in a limited edition of 250 copies. Each entry provides a codicological description of the item, a list of previous owners, and a brief commentary that focuses on the importance of the item in the history of the book and in the transmission of Dante's text. Every book is illustrated by at least one color reproduction.

The first section, devoted to "Virgil, the Guide," includes two extremely fine items: a Florentine 1460s manuscript of Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Georgics* in humanist script, subscribed by the prolific copyist Nicolò de' Ricci, and an exceptionally well-preserved copy of the Aldine Virgil printed in 1501. The second and largest section, entirely devoted to Dante's *Commedia*, includes manuscripts and prints, as well translations (most notably, Dumas père's autograph translation of the first canto) and rarities relating to the poem (such as a Roman Lactantius [1468] containing two *terzine* from the *Inferno*). Alongside two fourteenth-century fragments in chancery script (one ascribed to the copyist of MS Ricc. 2137), particularly noteworthy are two unrecorded manuscript copies of the poem (one accompanied by Brunetti's *vite* of Dante and Petrarch, and other minor texts, such as summaries of the poem). Lyrical poems and the *Vita nova* are outstandingly represented by a fifteenth-century manuscript copy of the anthology edited by Saviozzo. Printed items include virtually all the most important incunabula and fifteenth-century editions: among them, the princeps (1472); a peculiar item of the first edition of Landino's commentary (1481), with the first two engravings colored by a contemporary hand; the milestone Aldine of 1502; and the princeps of the *Convivio* (1490).

The attention paid by both the collector Livio Ambrogio and the authors of the catalogue to the provenance of each item (provenances are listed in a final index) is probably the finest and most interesting feature of this precious book. As the introductory pages point out, Ambrogio's collection is remarkable for the history of book collecting in general, including items coming from the prestigious libraries of Earl G. J. Spencer, G. G. Trivulzio, John Rylands, J. W. Vernon, Horace de Landau, and Leo Olschki. Noteworthy are the cases of the Alinari *Commedia* in the copy belonging to Vittorio Alinari, or Dorè's drawings of the *Inferno* in the copy owned by Rudolf Nureyev. What is more, some items are truly significant in the history of the reception of Dante's works. The manuscript section enlists a *Commedia* owned in the sixteenth century by a Florentine silk weaver, who possibly had it from a colleague who worked

as a copyist as well, Francesco Filipetri: this is a primary example of the long-lasting interest of Florentine artisans in Dante. Printed editions of the *Commedia* also include some outstanding items: the rare Mantua edition of 1472, in the presentation copy annotated by the dedicatee himself, the humanist Filippo Nuvoloni, and later owned by Giovanni Jacopo Dioniso (who happened to also possess the aforementioned manuscript with Bruni's biographies) and by the prominent politician Sidney Sonnino; the Giolito edition of 1477 owned by Vincenzo Buonanni; the one printed Brescia in 1487 with the commentary by Landino, in the copy owned by the tutor of Isabella d'Este, Sigismondo Golfi; the Crusca edition (1595) in the copy owned by the secretary of the Accademia, Bastiano de' Rossi; the edition by Dolce in 1554–55 in the copy presented by Orazio Morandi to Galileo; and an eighteenth-century copy presented by Wordsworth to Coleridge. Among minor works is a copy of Trissino's translation of the *De vulgari eloquentia* owned by Giovanni Brevio.

Collectors and antiquarians will certainly enjoy *Dante: Fifty Books*, while scholars will find new outstanding items that will enrich our knowledge of the circulation of Dante's texts, as well as of Renaissance libraries and reading habits.

Anna Pegoretti, *University Rome 3*

*Dante: The Story of His Life.* Marco Santagata.

Trans. Richard Dixon. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016. ix + 486 pp. \$35.

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The documentary records relating to the life of Dante Alighieri are notoriously sparse and unevenly distributed. Reconstructing a biography from these patchy sources can take the form of Giorgio Inglese's recent, excellent volume, *Vita di Dante: Una biografia possibile* (2015), with that "possible" in the title indicating the difficulties involved. An alternative approach comprises a certain degree of imaginative historical re-creation—perhaps, too, of creative license. Marco Santagata's skills as a novelist have been put to good use, and the author's original Italian title suggests as much: *il romanzo della sua vita*, the novel of Dante's life. The book thus teems with vivid characters, some well known, others much less so. The book is divided into two parts: the first, "Florence," deals with Dante's life up to the fateful year 1302, and the second, "Exile," runs from that year up to his death in 1321. This division emphasizes how Dante's banishment from the city of his birth was the great trauma of his life, coloring everything that happened to him subsequently. It also creates a subtle sense of foreshadowing in considering Dante's life in Florence, as he inexorably approaches this reset button.

The section "Florence" comprises four chapters, covering Dante's early life ("Childhood, 1265–1283") and providing some historical context on the city of Florence and