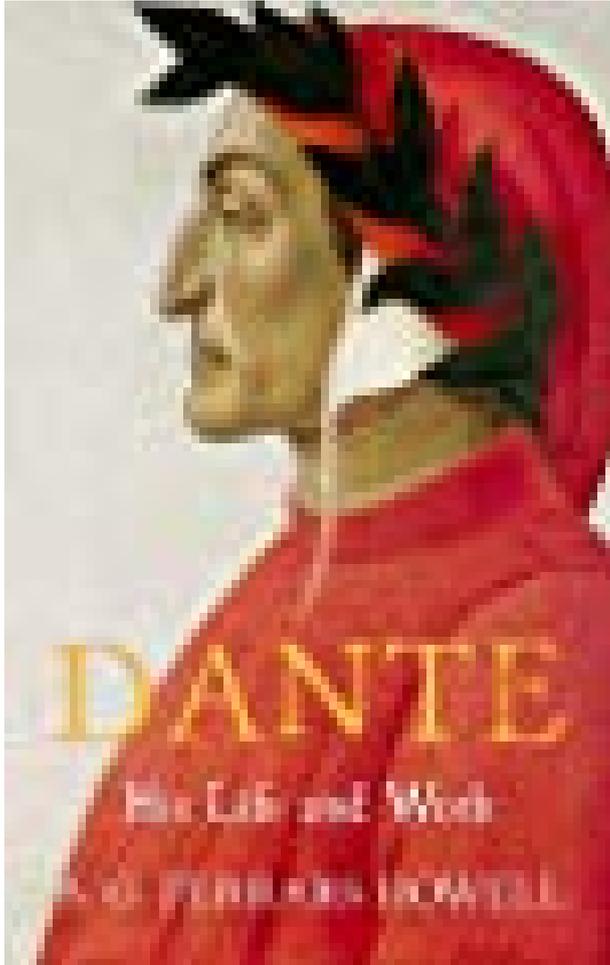


# Dante



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Dante Alighieri Dante is one of the greatest writers to have ever lived. As T. S. Eliot wrote, “Dante and Shakespeare divide the world between them, there is no third.” Dante was born Durante Alighieri in Florence, Italy, in 1265. At twelve years old, he was betrothed to Gemma di Manetto Donati, though he had already fallen in love with someone else. In 1274, when Dante was nine years old, occurred the event which exercised a paramount and unique influence on his life — his first meeting with Beatrice Portinari. Nine years later he began to write lyrics in her honour, a large number of which he collected after her death at the age of twenty-four in the book the ‘Vita Nuova’, or New Life.

The nature of his devotion to Beatrice is thus described by a well-known writer on Dante: “For him, Love and Beatrice are one thing only, he feels her approach as that of a deity ... she is no human creature, but yet in the poet’s heart ever a woman.” The period which succeeded Beatrice’s death was, so far as Dante’s inward life was concerned, a period of moral decline. The political condition of Florence became increasingly unstable and, after picking the wrong side to support, Dante was exiled for life from Florence in 1302. His political career being apparently ended, he determined to serve his generation by his pen. Departing from the classic poems of Homer and Virgil who focussed on telling the great stories of their people’s history, Dante turned to

semi-autobiographical writing for his masterpiece 'The Divine Comedy'. It follows Dante's own allegorical journey through Hell (Inferno), Purgatory (Purgatorio), and Paradise (Paradiso). Guided at first by the character of Virgil, and later by his beloved Beatrice, Dante wrote of his own path to salvation, offering philosophical and moral judgments along the way. But how much did he draw from life? And what made him such a monumental poet? A.G. Ferrers Howell explores Dante's life to shed light on his works on literature in this informative classic study. Alan George Ferrers Howell, (1855-1928) was a historian and a biographer.