



Dante and His Circle

Rossetti, Guido Cavalcanti, Cino da Pistoia, Cecco Angiolieri, Giotto di Bondone, Guido Guinicelli, Giovanni Boccaccio, a dozen more poets

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As a young poet, Dante Alighieri was at the center of a new attitude sweeping through Italy and southern France. Poets and artists were awakening from a thousand-year yoke we now call the Middle Ages. Giotto showed the way in art by painting real people in his allegorical scenes; Dante used vernacular or street language to write down his actual feelings. And a new subject drove these and other passionate artists: Love. Who were the poets of Dante's circle? This edition of *Dante and His Circle* is based upon an imaginative recreation of a cultural and intellectual ferment at the birth of a national literature. Dante Gabriel Rossetti brought together poetry of the friends and antagonists of Dante—in particular the poems of the flamboyant Guido Cavalcanti, the staid Cino da Pistoia, and the outrageous Cecco Angiolieri, with many others—and including the curious work of the youthful Dante called the *Vita Nuova* (The New Life, or My Young Life; available separately), which itself is the subject of comments by Dante's poetic friends. Dante's putative subject is Beatrice/Love—but the *Vita Nuova* is really an exercise in poetry: Dante sets the emotional scene for a poem, then he writes the poem, then he explains the poem's structure, part by part. Dante himself later became uncomfortable with this work of youth, but he did not disown it. This selected edition of *Dante and His Circle* concentrates on the eternal theme of Love, leaving aside poems relating to the wars and politics of the time. Love as a subject of serious public discussion signaled the emerging Renaissance, not just a rediscovery of the glories of ancient Greece and Rome, but a new sensibility finding—no—building a platform for personal expression and interchange. Besides the *Vita Nuova*, Rossetti arranged some poetic exchanges between Dante and Guido Cavalcanti. The *Vita Nuova* is also available as a stand-alone volume (www.createpace.com/3683218). The woman's perspective on love may have best been told by Sappho (www.createpace.com/4185675), who invented lyric poetry — and what we now know as the guitar pick!

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