



Dante's Invention

James Burge

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**A readable, richly researched account of the events of the turbulent life of Dante Alighieri and how they transformed him into the author of the world's greatest poem —
The Divine Comedy**

Dante Alighieri was a self-absorbed young poet who composed rarefied verse about the nature of love. While medieval Florence descended into violent turmoil he seemed entirely uninterested in anything other than Beatrice, the girl he had loved since they were both children. Fate had to work very hard to make him write his great work, the *Divine Comedy*. This is the story of how it did so.

Dante became caught up in a world of feuds, corruption and betrayal, exiled and forbidden to return on pain of death, he turned his attention to the world around him. He abandoned early attempts to change mankind through philosophy in favour of an impassioned plea, made through a new kind of fiction. The result was the *Comedy*, a fantasy about a journey from Hell to Heaven which is at the same time a poem about Beatrice and Dante's own statement about the nature of the universe. The *Comedy* speaks from the strange and distant world of the medieval mind but it has resonances for anyone today who is concerned about how things are and how they ought to be.

"A bold, readable and well-documented exploration of the imagination of one of the great founder figures of European culture." David Starkey

**"The book wears its considerable scholarship lightly. Written in a no-nonsense, attractive style it combines seriousness with wry humour. Dante, famously, managed to hold the entire universe in his head: James Burge convinces us that he has somehow managed to do the same."
Sir Christopher Frayling**

James Burge is a writer and television programme-maker, specialising in historical documentaries, mainly on BBC 2 and Channel 4. He is the author of *Heloise & Abelard: a Twelfth-Century Love Story*.

TV: Documentary in development