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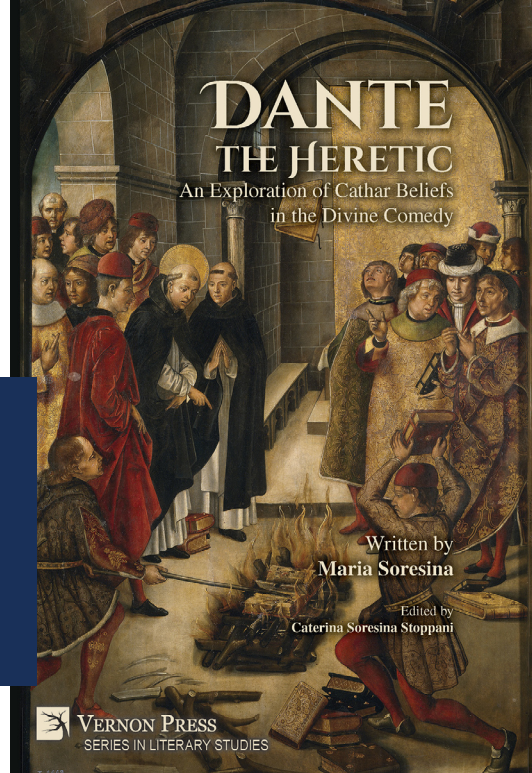
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Written by Maria Soresina
Edited by Caterina Soresina Stoppani

Dante the Heretic

An Exploration of Cathar Beliefs in the Divine Comedy

SERIES IN LITERARY STUDIES



About the author

Maria Soresina (1940–2024) was an Italian scholar and essayist. Since 2002, after a decade of studying Dante's works, she has published the following books:

- 'Le segrete cose. Dante tra induismo ed eresie medievali', Moretti Honegger, 2002; and Moretti & Vitali, 2010.
- 'Libertà va cercando. Il catarismo nella Commedia di Dante', Moretti & Vitali, 2009.
- 'Mozart come Dante. Il Flauto magico: un cammino spirituale', Moretti & Vitali, 2011.
- 'Come per i pesci il mare. Lettera sul Novecento: orrori, speranze, utopie, disincanti', Moretti & Vitali, 2019.
- 'Dirò de l'altre cose ch'i v'ho scorte nella Commedia di Dante Alighieri', Colibri, 2020, translated into English with the title 'Dante's Hidden Philosophy. The Secret Worldview in The Divine Comedy', Colibri, 2023.

The books have received important and gratifying reviews, and a thesis entitled 'The Divine Comedy and the Cathars in the Reflections of Maria Soresina' was discussed at the University of Milan in 2017.

Maria Soresina has written numerous articles, which appeared in prestigious literary magazines such as 'La Biblioteca di via Senato', 'Quaderni di Studi Indo-Mediterranei', 'La Mosca di Milano', 'Poesia e spiritualità', and 'Dialoghi Mediterranei'. Over the years, Maria Soresina has given hundreds of lectures in private and public settings both in Italy and abroad, including a lecture at the Loránd Eötvös University in Budapest. From January 2021 to May 2024, she read and gave a commentary on the complete poem in 150 weekly videos posted on her YouTube channel.

Summary

The purpose of this book is to demonstrate that Cathar doctrine is the main source of Dante's poem and to encourage readers to approach this work with fresh eyes, beyond the interpretative frameworks that are often worn.

With detailed references to Dante's text, persuasive arguments, lucid and concrete exposition, and a direct and easy-to-follow style, Maria Soresina progressively presents the links between the 'Divine Comedy' and Catharism, which she has been investigating since the end of the last century.

The text analyzes Cathar characters with respect to the doctrine. The Cathars were Christians, but their beliefs were very different from those of the Catholic Church. The author analyzes their philosophy, followed by verses of Dante that demonstrate agreement with it and distance from the Catholic Church.

In addition to the great doctrinal questions, there are many Cathar beliefs and customs, all of which, such as their being vegetarians, find precise confirmation in the verses of the 'Divine Comedy'.

The Cathars had only one sacrament, the 'consolamentum'. A long chapter is dedicated to demonstrating that Dante's journey through Purgatory corresponds to the various phases of this sacrament, within which the figure of Beatrice has a particular meaning, a woman whom Dante probably never met and never loved.

This text offers non-Italian-speaking readers the chance to engage with these interpretive theories, destabilizing the canonical criticism and forcing a re-examination of sources and historical context.

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