

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI (d. 1285?), Italian noblewoman and romantic heroine, daughter of Guido da Polenta (ruled Ravenna, 1275-90), probably born in Ravenna. Most likely because the alliance was important to her father for political reasons, Francesca married (1275) Giovanni Malatesta da Rimini (d. 1304), who was allegedly very unattractive. She was drawn to Giovanni's younger brother Paolo Malatesta da Rimini (d. 1285?), who became her lover. When her husband discovered the relationship, he murdered the couple. This tragic love affair provides the theme of one of the most famous episodes of *The Divine Comedy*, by Dante, in which Paolo and Francesca are depicted with great compassion. The story has inspired other works of literature, including the poem *Story of Rimini* (1816), by the English author Leigh Hunt, and the drama *Francesca da Rimini* (1902), by the Italian writer Gabriele D'Annunzio. The story of Francesca has also been the subject of works by the 19th-century French painters J. A. D. Ingres and Alexandre Cabanel (1823-89), and of the orchestral fantasy "*Francesca da Rimini*" (1876), by the Russian composer Peter Ilich

