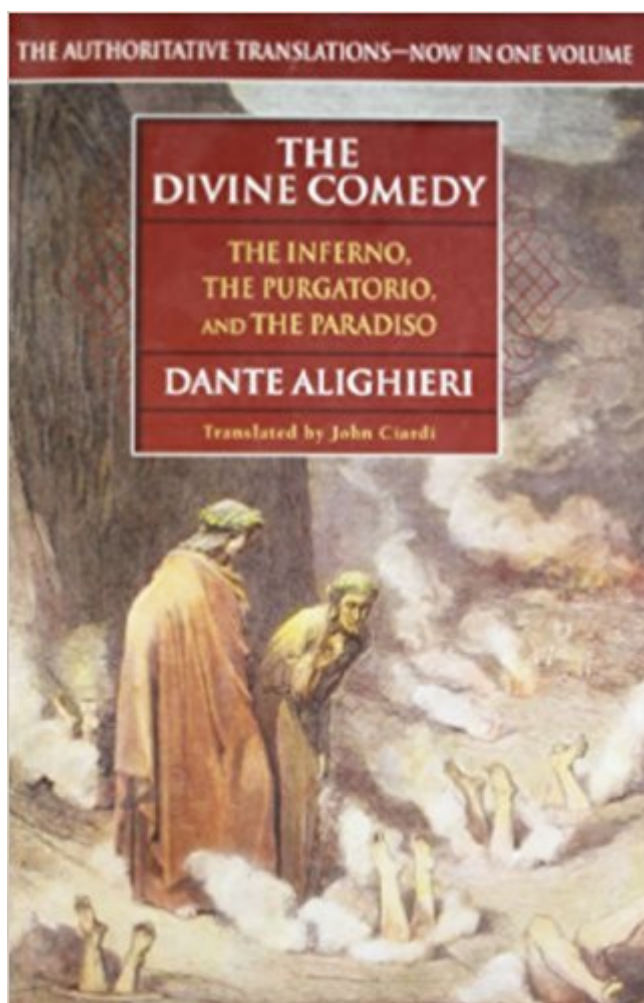


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The Divine Comedy (The Inferno, The Purgatorio, And The Paradiso)



Synopsis

The authoritative translations of *The Inferno*, *The Purgatorio*, and *The Paradiso*—together in one volume. Belonging in the immortal company of the great works of literature, Dante Alighieri's poetic masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, is a moving human drama, an unforgettable visionary journey through the infinite torment of Hell, up the arduous slopes of Purgatory, and on to the glorious realm of Paradise—the sphere of universal harmony and eternal salvation. Now, for the first time, John Ciardi's brilliant and authoritative translations of Dante's three soaring canticles—*The Inferno*, *The Purgatorio*, and *The Paradiso*—have been gathered together in a single volume. Crystallizing the power and beauty inherent in the great poet's immortal conception of the aspiring soul, *The Divine Comedy* is a dazzling work of sublime truth and mystical intensity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Critic extraordinaire James (Cultural Amnesia, 2007) is also a poet (*Opal Sunset: Selected Poems*, 2008), and he has been working his way to this daring project ever since he was in Florence in the mid-1960s while studying at Cambridge, as he explains in his rousing introduction. His companion, whom he would soon marry, the future Dante scholar Prudence Shaw, revealed to him the “great secret of Dante's masterpiece, the fact that it possesses both “interior intensity and propulsion. How, James wondered, could a translator re-create this dynamic? Deciding that Dante's terza rima is too strained in English, he uses

robust, rollicking quatrains. He also avoids footnotes, which so rudely interrupt the flow and drama of this defining classic, by working necessary explanations into the poem itself. James's revitalizing translation allows this endlessly analyzed, epic, archetypal "journey to salvation" to once again stride, whirl, blaze, and sing. Anyone heretofore reluctant to pick up *The Divine Comedy* will discover that James's bold, earthy, rhythmic and rhyming, all-the-way live English translation fulsomely and brilliantly liberates the profound humanity of Dante's timeless masterpiece. --Donna Seaman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Dante and Shakespeare divide the world between them -- there is no third." T.S. Eliot "Ciardi has given us...a credible, passionate persona of the poet, stripped of the customary gauds of rhetoric and false decoration, strong and noble in utterance." Dudley Fitts "A sensitive and perceptive translation -- a spectacular achievement." Archibald MacLeish "I think [Ciardi's] version of Dante will be in many respects the best we have seen." John Crowe Ransom

I've read *The Divine Comedy* several times, in different translations, but I have always found Paradise a slog. I'm happy to report that Clive James has made even this abstract exploration of light and doctrine (and, I might add, occasionally smug self-righteousness on Dante's part) a fascinating journey. James has chosen an unusual verse form - quatrains, with an abab rhyme scheme - to translate this, but it works well: it moves quickly and smoothly, each line pulling you forward to the next. I'm sure the labor was intensive, but most of the time the word order, the rhythm, the rhymes all fall into place as if they just happened that way. It unfolds naturally. And James has extended the verse in places by filling in some of the oblique references Dante makes. You can read it without having to flip back and forth between notes, which is a good thing, because there aren't any. There are risks in bringing notes into the verse itself: some references in the poem are ambiguous; which do you pick? James tries to stick close to scholarly consensus, where there is any. For example, the "one who made the great refusal" is identified in the verse as Pope Celestine: if you have to pick one among many, that IS the closest to a scholarly consensus; but purists would argue against closing off other possibilities. If that bothers you, this is not the translation for you. But if you've never read Dante before, I would definitely recommend starting here. My one complaint is that the quatrains are not separated by a space. I don't know whether this was James's decision or

the publisher's. I suppose it was an effort to increase the forward momentum and call less attention to the formal structure. Just a personal preference on my part; in no way does it detract from the readability of the poem. (In case this review floats around, the way they sometimes do on , I should clarify that I'm describing the 2013 translation by Clive James.)

There seem to be many jumbled reviews of many different editions and translations of the Divine Comedy. This is in reference to the Knickerbocker cloth bound edition of the Longfellow translation with Doré's illustrations included. I've been looking for a high quality edition of the Divine Comedy for a number of months now. This is the second one I've found not entirely satisfactory (I first picked up a leather-bound edition at a brick & mortar bookstore, and very soon after returned it, for the same reason I am about to describe here). The book's construction is indeed beautiful, but the major shortcoming is with respect to the printing of Gustave Doré's engravings, which happen to be a large part of why I was interested in this volume. The reproduction of the engravings is of low quality, and in many of them the exquisite detail is not even clearly visible. My guess is the pictures were printed from computer-prepared facsimiles, and as such they exhibit the jaggy "copy-of-a-copy" artifacting, along with an unsightly moiré effect in many of the backgrounds. Again, the exterior of the book is truly gorgeous, but it's what's inside that counts. The poor quality of these illustrations cost this overall rating of mine two stars. I would prefer a paperback edition with top quality illustrations. I would even resort to two volumes, the text in one and the engravings in another, if that was the way to ensure I could have Doré's artwork in the vivid, glorious detail it really deserves.

I bought these 3 volumes for a course, which was then postponed indefinitely. But since I'd already started reading, I kept at it. I'd tried reading/studying the Divine Comedy before, without success - too dry. The translator of this version is just excellent, presenting the text in a beautiful flowing, readable English.

I purchased this ebook as a result of an excellent review in the Saturday, April 19th WSJ talking about the qualities of this trilogy to help someone, basically, from despair to health. The review began with the first book which SHOULD be The Inferno and works the reader through the reasons for despair, then moving upward to Purgatory and finally into Paradise. But this book goes in the opposite direction and isn't what I expected nor, I fear, what the author intended. I am going to send it back if possible and order another translation in the expected order.

Truly a classic of the Medieval period, a great insight into Italian culture and politics. Also a fun read if one is interested in Dante's perception of the circles of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, and the punishments/rewards at each, but the work is primarily a political one, and is much easier to understand if one has an understanding of Medieval politics. For example, certain political (and Church!) figures are placed at certain levels in Hell (and Heaven) for their specific deeds, and understanding their actual actions may help one better understand Dante's motivation in creating such punishments in such circles. However, even if one does not wish to do such research, it is an interesting read nonetheless!

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