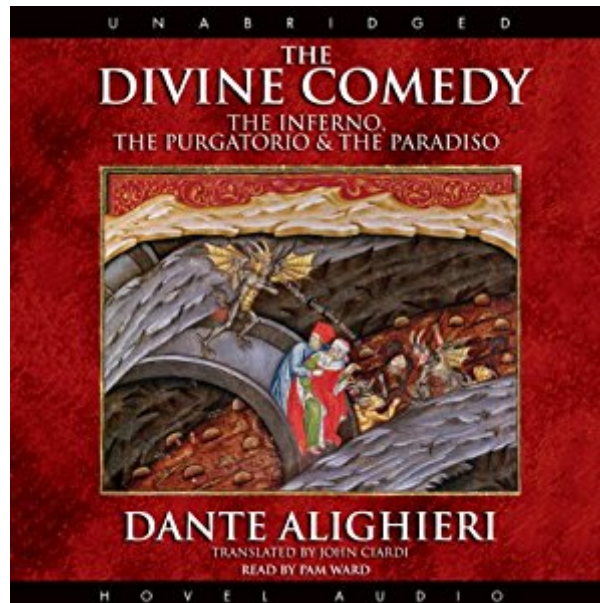


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The Divine Comedy: The Inferno, The Purgatorio, & The Paradiso



Synopsis

Purgatory is the second part of Dante's epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, presented here in an attractive and unabridged edition. Prior to this journey, Dante and his guide Virgil had visited Hell, learning the nature of each of the nine circles which constitute it. Upon departing Hell, the pair journey onward, eventually reaching the shores of the Mount of Purgatory. Here, the two ascend and behold the series of terraces which constitute this realm. Much of Dante's personal philosophy of sin revolves around the emotion of love - as such, many of the inhabitants of purgatory have directed love in a wrong or sinful manner, ultimately with the design of causing harm to others. Various misdeeds - the Seven Deadly Sins - constitute the sequential terraces of purgatory - namely pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust. At the highest peak of Purgatory is the Garden of Eden; after reuniting with his paramour Beatrice, Dante takes a drink from the River Eunoïa, and prepares for his ascent to the heavenly paradise. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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" artifactualing, 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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