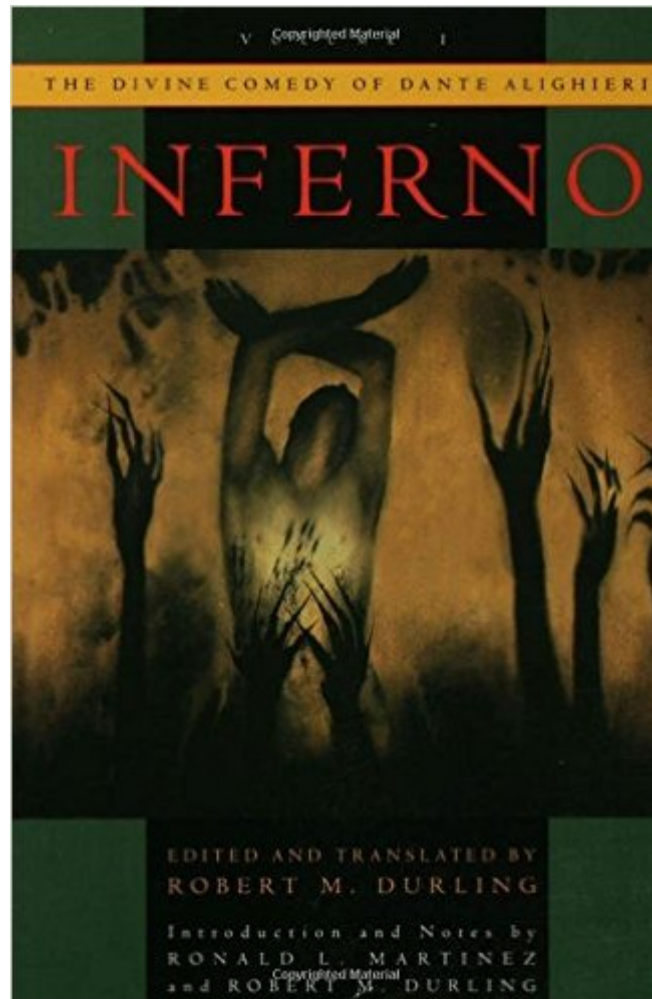


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The Divine Comedy Of Dante Alighieri: Volume 1: Inferno



Synopsis

This is the first volume of a new prose translation of Dante's epic - the first in twenty-five years. Robert Durling's translation brings a new power and accuracy to the rendering of Dante's extraordinary vision of Hell, with its terror, pathos, and sardonic humour, and its penetrating analyses of the psychology of sin and the ills that plague society. A newly edited version of the Italian text can be on facing pages, and this edition includes fully comprehensive notes as well as sixteen essays on special subjects.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I found this edition of Dante's most famous book of the Divine Comedy to be excellent in all respects. The translation seemed exceedingly accurate -- as an Italian prof. I was working almost exclusively from the original -- in a modern, clean style. Here the attempt is not to replicate the hendecasyllabic verse or the "third rhyming" ("terza rima"). More successful still are the notes that follow each canto, replete with explications of historical and theological references or simply of difficult lines. Not to be discounted too is the introduction which admits to not being exhaustive but is powerfully pithy and a nice springboard from which to attack the text. Dr. Joseph A. DiLuzio

This book was my constant companion through humanities studies. The notes are clear and concise without being abstract, and having the Italian to English page by page gave the flavor of the original

verses while rendering the translation nearly as graceful. For anyone wanting to take a trip to hell and back with Dante, this version provides plenty of contemporary signposts along the way.

This edition of the *Inferno* is by far the best English translation available for the serious student of Dante. No absurd attempt to emulate the poetic style is made here, it's strictly prose. Moreover, it's clear, easy to read prose. Remember, it was written in the vernacular, and therefore should be read in the simplest vernacular available to the English speaking reader.

I can't comment on the "beauty" or "correctness" of the translation, as I do not have the proper knowledge of Italian, but I will comment on other aspects of this translation that I found particularly helpful. My background: I read this edition as a part of Stanford's SLE (Structured Liberal Education) program, which is a comprehensive (or as comprehensive as you can get in one year) survey of western philosophy and literature. This edition has copious notes after every Canto which flesh out the multifaceted complexity of the *Inferno*. After a single reading of a Canto not only do they help make sense of difficult passages (which of course, abound) but also reveal interpretative difficulties which might be easily missed without the proper historical or literary background. These notes (many with references to further reading) cover a range of interpretations and expose the reader to common political, religious, and rhetorical readings. This text also is printed so the English translation is opposite the original Italian on every page - particularly helpful for a close reading (even if the reader has little or no background in Italian). I am continuing to read the rest of the *Comedia* in this translation because I found the *Inferno* so compelling. Much like Dante the pilgrim cannot travel through hell alone and needs the assistance of Virgil, this translation guides the reader through the byzantine world of the literary *Inferno* - hopefully like Dante, to some (if limited) understanding.

I purchased Durling's translation of Dante's *Inferno* for my Humanities class, so we certainly picked apart at the intricacies of the language. My professor is an Italian specialist by trade and learned under the authors at one point, so I suppose that may have been part of his reasoning behind recommending this translation... No qualms here though; it's a well-translated text with a handy page-by-page comparison, original Italian on the left, translated English on the right. The translation is very clear and easy to understand, but manages to retain the depth and personality of each of the characters. The glossary at the end is also extremely helpful for helping the reader understand historical references. This translation comes highly recommended.

The basic problem here is that Durling's original was designed for facing pages of English and Italian. Durling's book, however, was dumped to the Kindle without the slightest regard for the fact that the Kindle's "page" size has nothing to do with the page size of the original -- in fact, of course, the Kindle doesn't even have a fixed "page" size. So, what do you get in the Kindle version? You get 30 lines of English followed by 30 lines of Italian, then 30 more lines of English, and so on. How this will break on your Kindle screens is completely arbitrary. For the Kindle, the text needed to be re-organized and it just wasn't. A quality version of Inferno on Kindle would be most welcome, but this isn't it. Save your money. This is the worst, most incompetent Kindle transfer I've seen.

Durling and Martinez's translation is by far the most literal and most comprehensive of Dante's Divine Comedy. For those encountering the text for the first time, or those who are intimately acquainted with the text will find this translation to be the best as well. The Introduction, Footnotes to each Canto, and the Additional Notes (mini-essays) are also a fantastic addition to the work.

The book was delivered today with minor creases, but in fine condition besides (should have been more careful with the package and at the very least involved the item in bubble wrap). Now, about this particular edition of the Inferno, I must say that, though good and "as another reviewer put it" distinctly user-friendly, it is neither the best English translation nor the best annotated version of the poem. In terms of poetic effect, H. W. Longfellow's translation is indisputably superior to Durling's, let's say, "poetic prose", even if it's slightly obscure oftentimes (as is Dante's Italian verse) and, consequently, not as user-friendly. And in terms of enlightening commentary and reading support, it seems to me that Robert Hollander's is the best edition out there; I would even say that his translation is more beautiful and sounds better aloud than the one I'm reviewing "but this is just my opinion (read their Look Inside! previews and decide for yourselves). This is not to say Durling's edition is bad, and I guess the "best edition" depends on the reader and his or her objective in reading Dante: for a learned, scholarly reader who is accustomed to knotty periods and subtle historical, religious, mythological and literary references, and who wants to enjoy fine poetry (not to write a college essay or meet some school requirement), I believe Longfellow's translation is the most appropriated; but if you are inexperienced and not as well-educated as you wish you were (which makes two of us, by the way), choose between Durling's and Hollander's translations/commentaries, with this reviewer giving the latter a slight edge.

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