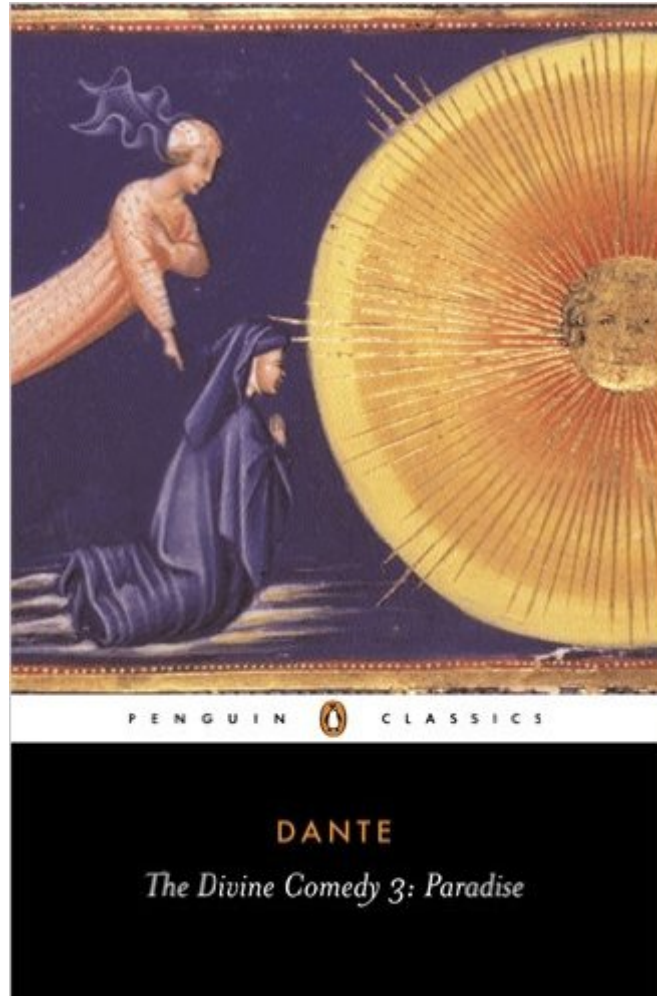


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The Divine Comedy, Part 3: Paradise (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

The third volume of Dante's *Divine Comedy* To the consternation of his more academic admirers, who believed Latin to be the only proper language for dignified verse, Dante wrote his *Comedy* in colloquial Italian, wanting it to be a poem for the common reader. Taking two threads of a story that everybody knew and loved – the story of a vision of Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, and the story of the lover who has to brave the Underworld to find his lost lady – he combined them into a great allegory of the soul's search for God. He made it swift, exciting and topical, lavishing upon it all his learning and wit, all his tenderness, humour and enthusiasm, and all his poetry. In *Paradise*, Dante journeys through the encircling spheres of heaven towards God. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Book Information

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics; Reprint edition (July 30, 1962)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140441050

ISBN-13: 978-0140441055

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.7 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars – See all reviews (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #298,139 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > European > Italian #292 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Ancient, Classical & Medieval > Ancient & Classical #7214 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Classics

Customer Reviews

please read the life and works of Dorothy L. Sayers to appreciate fully the effort she made here, her final writing, posthumously completed (no, not with any seance, which she adequately lambasted in her detective stories). Her total translation of the *Commedia* is worth the price of admission (Do not abandon all hope, as she will bring you home to the beatific vision). There are several translations of

varying usefulness and grace, but Dorothy is the rock upon which to stand when comparing the rest.

Dorothy Sayers's translation of Dante is an important addition to the numerous translations of Dante currently available, and worth reading. Sayers manages to do what few English translators can, or even attempt: she renders the text in *tirza rima*. *Tirza rima* is notoriously difficult to write in English anyway, but the prospect of writing a translation in the form would make even the best poet tremble. However, Sayers pulls it off, giving readers a taste of Dante's original poetic form. Sayers's accomplishment comes at a price, however. Often she must contort the syntax in order to get the rhymes to fit, making an already-demanding poem even harder to comprehend in places. She also has to fall back on English archaisms and other tricks to make the form work, and some passages read much rougher than others. I would recommend that a first-time reader of Dante not begin with Sayers's translations. I do not read Italian, so I cannot comment on the extent to which the translation is accurate. But there are several other well-regarded translations in print, such as Ciardi's and Esolen's, both of which are much easier to read, without sacrificing poetic quality. The experienced reader of Dante will want to read Sayers's translation at least once. For myself, the real value of Sayers's editions is her notes, which are thorough and lucid. Paying special attention to philosophy and theology, Sayers unpacks and explains Dante in a way that few translators (or critics!) have been able to do. Even when her verse is stilted or cramped, her notes are enlightening. That is why Sayers's translation belongs on the bookshelf of the serious Dante reader, alongside some more readable translations.

Dante deserves 5 stars and the translators 4, but the current Kindle edition deserves 1. It seems to have been sloppily OCR'd with little editorial attention. Problems include, 1. Ugly formatting (compared to the paper book). The verse numbers intrude into the text, the useful page headings are gone (except where they've been accidentally and intrusively included), and the indentation is inconsistent. On most devices it is hard to get lines to not wrap, but in the paper book this is handled well. 2. Typos/errors. Especially in the italicized comments at the beginning of each chapter. Clumsy, no attention to detail. 3. No table of contents and no good way to navigate between text, notes, and glossary. There should be *more* hyperlinking opportunities in the electronic text. But instead it's clumsier to use than the actual book, which responds well to thumb and finger. Also on the Kindle Touch anyway it's impossible to look up a phrase, for example to google "mosaic of Justinian at San Vitale" which was mentioned in the notes. I can't believe I paid \$9.59 for such a barbarically edited book. Where are your standards, Penguin? It's distracting and disappointing.

This is one of the greatest books I have ever read! Dorothy Sayers translation is incredible and she offers tremendous insight into past history and provides much needed background to enjoy this timeless classic of the Western Canon. It is also easy to understand why Dante ranks high up in Western Canonical literature along with Virgil and Homer. What made the book enjoyable also was that, prior to purchase, I viewed online documentaries about Dante's Inferno which is what I would recommend but even then, you will not anticipate all of the actions of the book.

This is not the most up - to - date translation: however, it is one of the more worthy bits of the history that has grown up around the Comedy, and its perspective is still of practical use. (She actually tries to avoid Freud, for example). Her misunderstandings are ones we can overlook, and she could even help to correct any new ones (not that I do not have full faith in our, er, "currentness", of course!) that might arise. As for the work of the Master himself, what can one say? Its the best book in world history (have not read any better: and I am, in all humillity, considered something of a reader). Simply put, its Heaven.

In this final translation of the Comedia begun by Dorothy Sayers and completed by Barbara Reynolds we find that Dante has lead us to his ultimate destination. This section is perhaps the most intellectual and theological section of all, which is why T.S.Eliot favored this most of all. Even if is too much to absorb, except in small doses, the honey added the notes and the introduction, makes it exquisitely enjoyable. So we find out that Dante's real destination was not Beatrice but God. Heavy going for the modern reader but a reason to begin to read this work again in a more modern translation. Notice that I said more modern and not better. If this were not the case why should be concerned with Keats' reaction to Chapman's Homer. The reader is welled advised to pursue other translations and compare them to this. Happy to know that Barbara Reynolds is among those to whom we may turn.

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