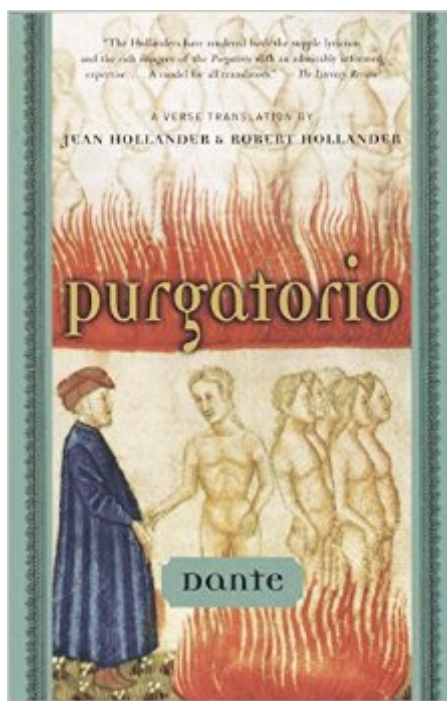


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# Purgatorio



## Synopsis

Now I shall sing the second kingdom, there where the soul of man is cleansed, made worthy to ascend to heaven. In the second book of Dante's epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, Dante has left hell and begins the ascent of the mount of purgatory. Just as hell had its circles, purgatory, situated at the threshold of heaven, has its terraces, each representing one of the seven mortal sins. With Virgil again as his guide, Dante climbs the mountain; the poet shows us, on its slopes, those whose lives were variously governed by pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust. As he witnesses the penance required on each successive terrace, Dante often feels the smart of his own sins. His reward will be a walk through the garden of Eden, perhaps the most remarkable invention in the history of literature. Now Jean Hollander, an accomplished poet, and Robert Hollander, a renowned scholar and master teacher, whose joint translation of the *Inferno* was acclaimed as a new standard in English, bring their respective gifts to *Purgatorio* in an arresting and clear verse translation. Featuring the original Italian text opposite the translation, their edition offers an extensive and accessible introduction as well as generous historical and interpretive commentaries that draw on centuries of scholarship and Robert Hollander's own decades of teaching and research.

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## Customer Reviews

My dad's friend, who teaches a class on Medieval literature at a local college, saw I was reading a different translation of the *Divine Comedy*, and recommended I get the Hollanders' version, claiming

it was both the most accurate and the best to read. I'll have to take his word as far as being the most accurate, but I can say, of the three translations I've read, this one is by far the most enjoyable to read. They perfectly capture the mood, feel, and beauty of Dante, and I don't see any reason to ever read a different translation. Part of what makes the Hollanders' version superior are the wonderful explanatory notes and pre-chapter outlines, which guide you through the journey page by page, and make the journey that much more enjoyable. The notes, rather than being boring and confusing, are well written and enjoyable to read. Last but not least, the maps in the introductions to all of the books (maps of hell, purgatory, and paradise) really add to the feel of the journey Dante and Virgil take. I couldn't recommend this book more highly.

For those who ordered the Kindle and got Kirkpatrick instead of Hollander: go to the Princeton Dante Project online. The Hollanders are unbelievably generous in putting all of their Dante scholarship on a navigable website. Italian text, English translation, easily accessed line-by-line notes, Dante's pre-Commedia works... FREE!! I was several cantos into the Hollander Inferno years ago, when I realized that I was going to spend the rest of my life reading this work, and so it is proving to be. The English translation is beautiful. The explanatory notes are illuminating, providing an immersion into the world of Dante and classical literature. I've read that on Homecoming Weekend, Princeton alumni march in a parade, class by class, beginning with the oldest graduating class... except for Prof. Hollander's Dante students, who insist on marching as a group, so illuminating did they find the experience. One can see why. I'm on my third journey with Virgil and the Hollanders, and I am everlastingly grateful to them.

Robert Hollander, a Princeton professor, has devoted his career to the study, translation and teaching of Dante's *Divina Commedia*. He has been assisted by his wife, Jean, throughout. All three parts of the Hollander translation of the *Divina Commedia* have now been published and are in print, in three separate volumes - one for the *Inferno*, a second for the *Purgatorio*, and a third volume for the *Paradiso*. Each contains the Italian text and Hollander's translation into English on facing pages. There are extensive and very helpful notes, charts and illustrations throughout, for each part of the *Commedia*. I think that Hollander's translation captures the meaning very well. My personal preference among available translations is, however, the translation made by Geoffrey Bickersteth. I believe he was a Cambridge University professor. Dr. Bickersteth has not only done a grand job of capturing in English the meaning of each part of the poem; he has performed the feat of putting his English wording into the form of *terza rima*, which is the same poetic form as Dante used for the

Italian original. This is a great aid to the reader. Bickersteth's notes are good, but Hollander's notes seem to be more thorough and more complete. Bickersteth's translation was originally published some years ago in England. I am familiar with an edition of the Bickersteth translation published by Blackwell's, of Oxford. Later, in 1965, the Bickersteth translation of the entire Commedia was published in one very nice volume, on thin Bible paper with a hard binding, making it easily portable, again with the Italian text and the English text on facing pages, by Harvard University Press (as an imprint of its Belknap Press.)

I have all three translation/commentaries that Robert and Jean Hollander have produced - Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso and as an Italian speaker I think they are the best I have seen to date. If I understand the division of labour (apologies if incorrect), Jean as the poet has worked to structure the best English outcome from Dante's original and what shows is a desire to stay true to his actual words and meaning and not try to emulate rhymes, rhythms etc as that's almost impossible. Robert as a lifetime Dante scholar contributes excellent notes on a near line by line basis. Each line in the Commedia has a unique identifier which has enabled over the years, commentators and scholars to discuss and argue meaning and intent with some such debates persisting to the present. As Roberto Benigni - of Tutto Dante fame and a friend of the Hollanders, says - 'Dante e duro, duro, duro' - Dante is hard, hard, hard. It's not an easy work to come to terms with and requires effort and persistence. Here the Hollander's works are an immense assistance.

Wow, this was fantastic! It's a shame so many readers abandon Dante's epic journey after the Inferno. Dante's poetry is (again) beautiful "as is the Hollander translation" but his use of simile, metaphor, symbolism, and allegory is far more impressive to me in this canticle than in the Inferno. Unless you're enrolled in a university course "or are drinking buddies with a Dantean scholar" seek out an edition with plentiful notes (and read them) to get the most out of this one. Note: Hollander translation with all the notes is super helpful if you're (like me) not terribly familiar with mythology, European/church history, or biblical references

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