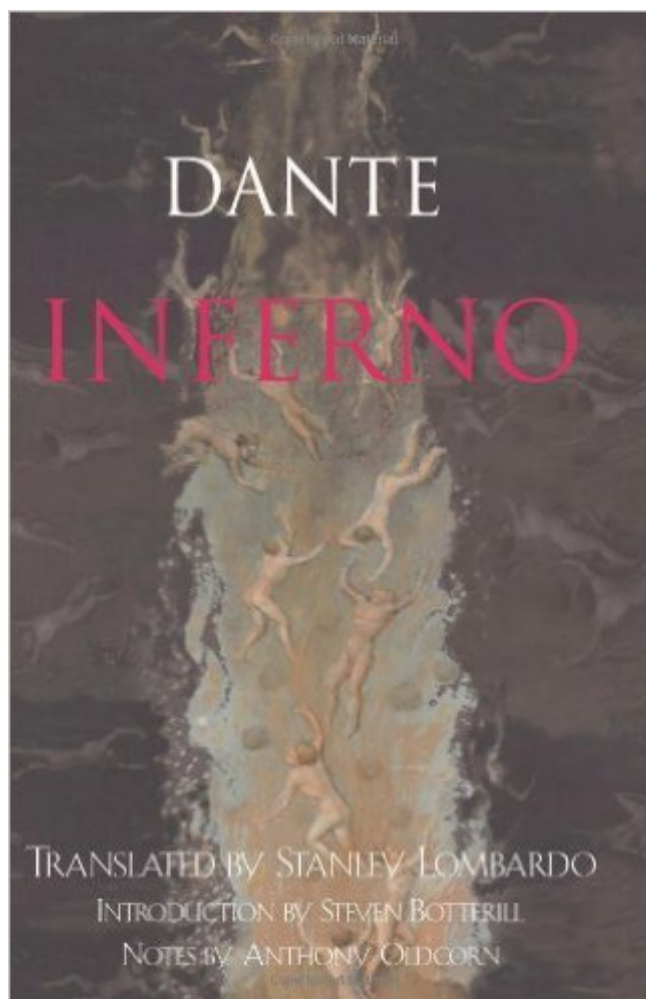


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Inferno (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

An attractive new alternative as both a translation and a pedagogical tool. The volume includes an excellent introduction by Dante scholar Steven Botterill (Univ. of California, Berkeley), clear and informative notes by lifelong Dantist Anthony Oldcorn, a concise bibliographical note that indicates some important sources on Dante in print and online, and a diagram of Hell; Index of the Damned lists characters who appear in the canticle. The translator's preface explains Lombardo's choices as he faced the always-challenging task of rendering Dante's poetry into English. Among the most interesting choices are the occasional use of rhyme--especially in key passages and at the end of each canto, where interlocking rhymes that mimic Dante's terza rima are consistently employed--and an emphasis on creating a version that works well as an oral presentation, following the long tradition of private, public, and theatrical readings of the poem. The volume includes the original Italian text, thus facilitating classroom references and comparisons.

--Rebecca West (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago) in Choice

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Customer Reviews

+++++(Note: this review is for the book "The Inferno" translated by John Ciardi and published by Signet Classics in 2001.) This is book one containing part one (or "cantic" one) of poet Dante Alighieri's (1265 to 1321) three part "The Divine Comedy." This book describes Hell and the eternal suffering of the damned. This poem is comprised of 34 episodes (or "cantos"). Dante at the beginning of the poem explains why he has begun this journey: "Midway in our life's journey, I went astray from the straight road and woke to find myself alone in a dark wood." Thus because Dante's life journey has led him "astray from the straight road" (that is, from the straight and narrow), he now finds himself "in a dark wood" (that is, in Hell). Thus the journey through the nooks and crannies of Hell begins. Dante takes this incredible journey with his master and guide, Virgil. Along the way the reader along with the travelers encounters such things as mythical creatures and people, legends, people of Dante's time, biblical people and references, and human victims. Hell, according to Dante, has 4 complex parts: (1) The Gate of Hell (2) The first 7 stone ledges or "circles" (3) The eighth circle which consists of ditches (4) The ninth circle with Satan at its center. At the end of this long trek through Hell, Dante says, "My Guide and I crossed over and began / to mount that little known and lightless road / to ascend into the shining world again." From here, they ascend "The Mount of Purgatory" (which is the subject of Book 2 containing Part 2 called "The Purgatorio"). There is a historical introduction by Archibald MacAllister of Princeton.

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