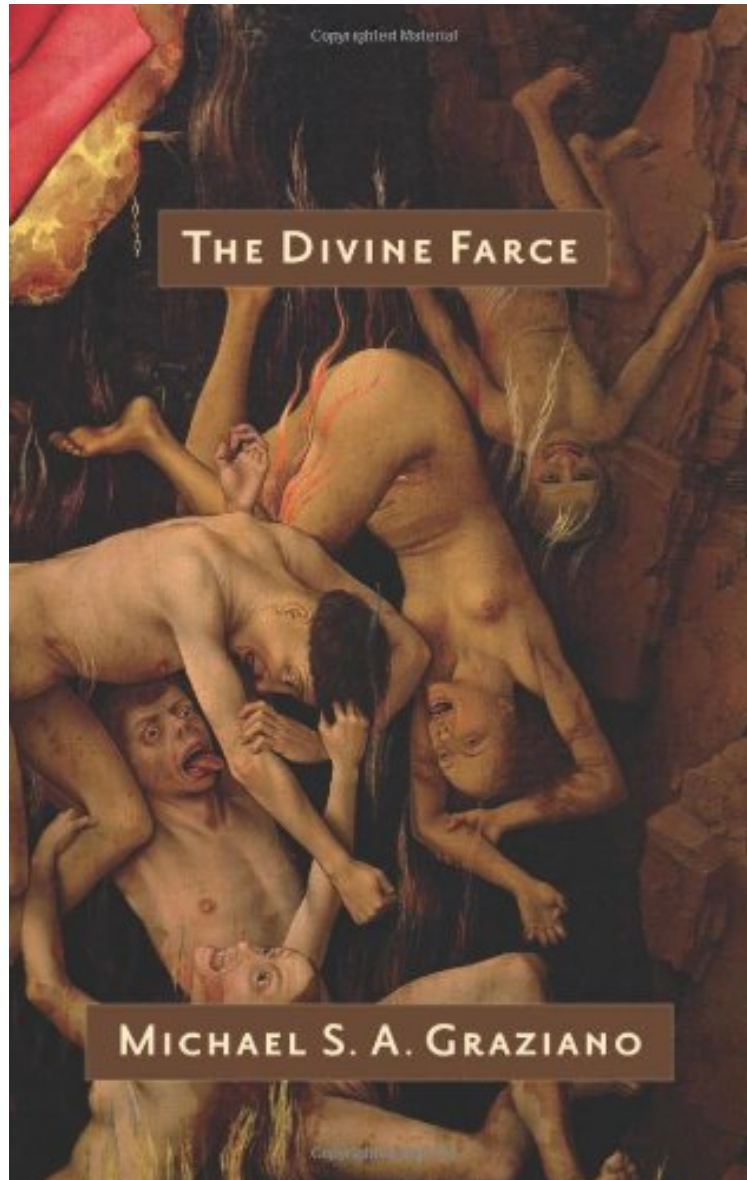


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The Divine Farce (LeapLit)

Michael S. A. Graziano

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Michael S. A. Graziano : The Divine Farce (LeapLit) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Divine Farce (LeapLit):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. "The rules of heaven were minimalist," but hell "had a way of closing in around the soul." By D. Cloyce Smith Set in a self-contained industrial hell, this slim yet accomplished novella stars a curious adventurer among an unimaginative and indistinct population of barely living people who

subsist merely by filling their basic bodily needs. In its opening pages, the hero Sage becomes conscious of his existence alongside two other humans inside a dark womblike enclosure whose walls are covered with a pear-like nectar providing all their basic dietary needs. The trio seems unable to recall any past existence, although they understand instinctively such earthly concepts as sailboats and football fields and nuclear physics (not to mention pears). The scene might resemble the opening of the cult film "The Cube," except the exotic existence here is a "mutual harmony" rather than a source of terror: "The rules of heaven were minimalist. They were elegant." Or so it seems at first. Is this an afterlife? An otherlife? A dream? Whatever it is, it's not enough for Sage, who begins to wonder what's outside their enclosure and, through slow, patient machinations, the three burst out of their womb into a Dantesque hell crowded with zombie-like mobs with only two basic, alternating concerns: slaking their hunger and quenching their thirst. Knee-deep in muck and without any hope of bettering their plight, the masses circulate through an endless series of caverns and passages. There is no procreation and there is no death. The soulless rabble is "so driven by hunger and thirst, and so isolated from each other by the constant mixing of the crowd, and so numbed by the repetition of caverns and food troughs and rusty water pipes and perpetual battle, and so gratified at each orgiastic meal," that they have lost their "capacity for imagination." Only the eternally optimistic, prophet-like Sage seems able to seek the possibility for betterment, to establish new goals. If Graziano's previous, less-than-perfect novel, "The Love Song of Monkey," took an exploratory peek inside the alternative universes created by the likes of Stanislaw Lem and Italo Calvino, then "The Divine Farce" indicates that the author has found a comfortably permanent home in the otherworld. There is not a wasted sentence in this book's 125 pages, which manages to be a fascinating story, a powerful allegory of a romantic optimist, and a horrific prose-poem filled with visceral, repellent imagery--all at the same time. This is simply a grand, unforgettable little book, and I will not be surprised in the least if "The Divine Farce" eventually finds the cult-like army of readers it so clearly deserves. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Couldn't put it down By Kimberly Wade The Divine Farce by Michael S. A. Graziano--how do I describe this book? For starters, it was unlike anything else I've read. It reminded me more of Plato's Republic than Dante's Divine Comedy. You might call it an allegory of the nature of existence. It begins with three people, two men and a woman, trapped in a two-foot cell, naked, body to body. Food pours in through holes in the top. Excrement flows out through a grate in the bottom. Are they in hell? Or is it heaven? The question can be convincingly answered either way. The situations, as well as the writing, are both crude and sublime. It feels timeless and contemporary. I found it riveting. It's a short book. You can read it in one sitting, and you'll want to do that. I'll be looking for Graziano's other books. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Devine Farce By William B. Ross For those of us who have read Dante, sometimes you would like to cut through the personalities that are dated and try not to work too hard through the poetry to make a mental picture of the horrors presented. I really enjoyed the book and in a sense thought of it as a simplistic INFERNO. Dante yet again was straight forward in his attempt to express sin, good and evil. This work is much more vague. A very intense, thoughtful and short work, a very good read to mention and repel your friends with. Your drinking buddies you'll want to buy the book for as a gift, but you wouldn't let your mother know you read it!

"A Dante/Beckett reduction of human struggle to its lowest common denominator."—Michael Mirolla, author of *The Formal Logic of Emotion* and *Berlin* "One of the most original and thought-provoking stories I have ever read...true literary art...Not a word is wasted in this masterpiece. Yes, I call it that. I have read many classics, and I can tell you that *The Divine Farce* should be counted among them; the finest in American literature."—Geekscribe Three strangers are condemned to live together in darkness, crushed together in a concrete stall so small that they can never sit down. Liquid food drips down from above. Waste drains through a grid on the floor. So begins one of the strangest, most surreal comments on the human experience, on love and hatred and the human ability to find good in any situation, no matter how difficult. Michael S. A. Graziano delights in the macabre and surreal, yet it is his optimism that lifts this little novel. Like *The Love Song of Monkey*, this book is deeply thought provoking, horrifying, and funny. Praise for *The Love Song of Monkey*: "Imaginative, intelligent narrative. Twin ideas of forgiveness and mercy twist through this strange, moving, patiently wrought novel."—Publishers Weekly "Fabulously imagined, seriously considered, and very funny. A kind of fairytale antithesis on the meaning of existence. . . . Fantastic."—Spirituality and Health Books "Strange but wonderful . . . like nothing I've read before. A very short book, but the scope is epic in detail. . . . I enjoyed the heck out of this book."—Geekscribe "Should be required reading in the writing grad schools. . . . There's nary a word wasted. What's left is comedy, retrospection, betrayal, tenderness, meditations on loneliness, a love story that survives all attempts to suppress it . . . not bad within 149 pages."—Barnstable Patriot Michael S. A. Graziano, Princeton University neuroscientist, is the author of the novella *Hiding Places* (New England Review, 1997), the novel *The Love Song of Monkey* (Leapfrog Press, 2008), and *The Intelligent Movement Machine* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

From Publishers Weekly In this darkly inventive second work of fiction, Graziano (*The Love Song of Monkey*) deposits his protagonist among the despairing crowds of an institutional hell. At first, the narrator, a thin man known as Sage, shares a tiny, dank cell with a woman and man, Rose and Henry Greene, so-called because of the color of

their voices. Locked together in such close quarters, the three grow intimately close, even loving; when Sage later digs a hole in the concrete and they push their way out, they eventually lose one another in the mad flux of other cave dwellers. Sage follows the herd to the feed trough, learns how to jostle savagely for the hard biscuits (stamped with an H: hell or heaven? Sage wonders) and even feels a kind of comfort within the mob: the warmth of universal inclusion. His curiosity gets the better of him as he wonders what's behind the light holes in the ceiling: eternal freedom or eternal isolation? Graziano's grim allegory interrogates human existence with its visceral, sensuous description. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Michael S. A. Graziano, professor of neuroscience at Princeton University, is the author of the novella *Hiding Places* (New England, 1997), the novel *The Love Song of Monkey* (Leapfrog Press, 2008), *The Seclusion Zone* (finalist in the Faulkner-Wisdom Novella Category, 2007), and *The Intelligent Movement Machine* (Oxford University Press, 2008).