

Dante Society Newsletter

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Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues,

The 119th Annual Meeting of the Dante Society of America will be held on Saturday, May 12, from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M. (reception follows) in Eliot House, on the Harvard University campus, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After our business meeting Matthew Pearl will speak to us on "The Dante Club: The Poet's Journeys as Historical Fiction."

A 1997 graduate of Harvard College, Matthew Pearl's novel *The Dante Club* will be published next year by Random House. Set in 1865 Cambridge, the novel follows the small group of poets, professors and scholars led by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who came together as the "Dante Club," ultimately giving rise to the Dante Society of America. The story explores the border realm between literature and life that opens up when a series of murders based on the punishments of Dante's *Inferno* erupts through Boston—forcing the Dante Club to shed its sheltered literary existence and penetrate the mystery.

In his lecture Mr. Pearl will cover the provocative origins of the Dante Society, a vision of the *Divine Comedy* as historical fiction, and the general content and character of the upcoming novel, including its historical and literary sources. Most of all, Mr. Pearl hopes to stimulate a dialogue on the challenges of bringing substantive manifestations of Dante, as persona and poet, into mainstream American culture. We think this will be a presentation of particular interest to members of our Society.

Accompanying this mailing you will find an enclosed ballot containing the slate of candidates prepared by the

Nominating Committee, as provided by our by-laws. Please mark your ballot and return it, together with the proxy statement, in time to have it included in the vote count on May 10.

Leaving the Council after having served three years are Theodore Cachey, Jr., and H. Wayne Storey. I would like to express my gratitude to each of them for their dedication and service to the Society. I would also like to commend the members of the Nominating Committee, Sara Sturm-Maddox (chair), Kevin Brownlee, and Albert Ascoli, for their time and effort in preparing this year's slate of candidates.

With best wishes,

Teodolinda Barolini

Spring Election Slate

The Nominating Committee has placed the following four nominees on this spring's ballot:

Giuseppe Mazzotta is the Charles C. and Dorathea S. Dilley Professor of Italian at Yale University. He is the author of *Dante, Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy* (Princeton, 1979); and *Dante's Vision and the Circle of Knowledge* (Princeton, 1993). He has also edited *Critical Essays on Dante* (Boston: Hall, 1991). Over the years he has lectured extensively on Dante, and he has written a number of essays on various aspects of Dante's poetry and thought as well as reviews on Dante scholarship. He is at present writing a biography of Dante.

Christian Moevs is Assistant Professor of Italian at the University of Notre Dame, where he is co-editor of the Devers Series in Dante Studies and a Fellow of the Medieval Institute. He is author of the forthcoming *The*

Metaphysics of Creation: Love, Mind, and Matter in Dante's Comedy, as well as of a number of essays on Dante; his current project is on the commentary of Cristoforo Landino. He has won NEH and I Tatti fellowships, and has served on the bibliographic and prize committees of the Dante Society.

F. Regina Psaki is the Giustina Family Professor of Italian Language and Literature at the University of Oregon. She has published six articles on Dante, most recently "The Sexual Body in Dante's Celestial Paradise" in *Imagining Heaven in the Middle Ages*, eds. J.S. Emerson and H. Feiss, O.S.B. (Garland, 2000). She has also written on Boccaccio, on medieval misogynist texts, and on medieval romance and lyric poetry. She has published book-length translations of three medieval romances. She has served as President of the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship (1997-1999).

Barbara Watts is Associate Professor of Art History and at Florida International University, where she teaches late medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque art and Humanities courses in art and literature. She has published six articles on Botticelli's interpretation of Dante, including essays appearing in *Artibus et Historiae*, *Lectura Dantis*, *Dante Studies*, and *Word and Image*, among others. Recently, she contributed to the BBC documentary on Botticelli's drawings for the *Commedia*, "Botticelli: Visions of Violence and Beauty," and, as well, to the Dante/Botticelli audio-guide produced for the exhibition of Botticelli's Dante manuscript drawings at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. She is currently completing an essay on the role of Dante in Giorgio Vasari's "Life of Botticelli" and writing a paper on the veiled presence of Dante in Michelangelo's "Last Judgment."

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The Dante Society of America
Brandeis University, MS 024
P.O. Box 549110
Waltham MA 02454-9110
lansing@brandeis.edu