

Dante Society Newsletter

Volume 11, Number 2

April 2005

Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

This year's meeting of the Dante Society of America, the 123rd since its establishment, will be held on Saturday, May 21, at the Longfellow National Historic Site. I wish to thank site manager Jim Shea for allowing us to meet at the "birthplace" of the DSA and especially for inviting our members to visit the mansion and view a selection of Longfellow's own editions of Dante and other related artifacts.

After a brief discussion of Society business (finances, membership, prizes, etc.), I shall be delighted to shift to an unusual occurrence in the life of the Society. In our last fall meeting (October 30, 2004), the members of the Council voted unanimously to confer the second Charles T. Davis Award for Distinction in Dante Studies on a past President of the Dante Society: Professor **Robert Hollander** (Princeton University). Robert Hollander enjoys a national and international reputation as a world-class Dante scholar. He is widely respected and admired for both his influential historical work and his devotion to all aspects (commentaries, editions, translation, etc.) of Dante's texts. This celebration of Bob's achievements and exceptional breadth of learning, which will climax in the gift of a gold florin mounted in a plaque, will be followed by two presentations aimed at highlighting the nature and scope of his scholarship. **Kevin Brownlee** (University of Pennsylvania) and **Teodolinda Barolini** (Columbia University) will sketch the trajectory of Robert Hollander's career as a Dante scholar. This special occurrence will be crowned by a paper by **Regina Psaki** (University of Oregon at Eugene) on "Aestheticism and Its Discontents: Dante and the Contemptus Mundi Tradition."

It gives me great pleasure to announce another public event, which is scheduled to take place in Washington, DC, on Saturday, June 18, 2005. In collaboration with the Dante Society of America, the Smithsonian Associates will present for

the benefit of its members an all-day seminar on "Dante and His World." Three distinguished Dante scholars and prominent members of the Society – **Christian Moevs** (University of Notre Dame), **Rachel Jacoff** (Wellesley College), and **Peter Hawkins** (Boston University) – will speak, respectively, on "Dante's Life and Times," "Dante and Love," and "Dante and God." The event will end with a panel discussion and audience questions. Let me add for the record what a rewarding experience it was for me to be working on this project with the Program Coordinator for the Smithsonian Associates, Melody Curtis.

The effort to bring the poetry and thought of Dante within a larger community of readers has its counterpart in the distinctively scholarly work carried out in more traditional venues. I recall and would like to share with all of you my excitement at the learned focus and breadth of imagination displayed by the paper given by Wai Chee Dimock (Yale University), "Planetary Dante," at the Winter Meeting of the Dante Society (2004 MLA Convention in Philadelphia). And most eagerly I anticipate equal pleasure from the paper which **Ronald Martinez** (Brown University) will present at the next Winter Meeting of the Dante Society (see details below).

Enclosed you will find a ballot containing the slate of candidates prepared by our Nominating Committee. I ask you to please mark it and return it, together with the proxy statement, in time for the vote count on May 14.

Annual Meeting on Saturday May 21, 2005

BALLOTS

must be received by our office no later than Sunday, May 14, to be counted in time for the meeting. Results will be announced at the meeting.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Nancy Vickers and David Wallace as they leave the Council after three years of devoted service to the Society. I would also like to commend the members of the Nominating Committee, Alison Cornish (chair), Ronald Martinez, and Peter Hawkins, for their time and effort in preparing this year's slate of candidates.

In closing, I would also like to thank our indefatigable Secretary-Treasurer Todd Boli, our continuing Council Members, *Dante Studies* editor Steven Botterill and the other members of the Editorial Board, the Prize Committee, the Auditing Committee, and Nancy Vickers, who continues as Capital Campaign Chair, for the tremendous dedication with which they all serve the Society.

With best wishes,

Giuseppe Mazzotta

Annual Meeting, May 21, at Longfellow Carriage House

On Saturday, May 21, the Annual Meeting of the Dante Society of America will take place at the Carriage House of the Longfellow National Historic Site in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. There will be a brief business meeting followed by several presentations (see President's letter above) and a concluding reception.

Members who would like to drop by the site early may avail themselves of a half-hour walk-through of the Longfellow mansion's first floor. Although the mansion will not be open to the public until June 5, site manager Jim Shea has graciously offered to guide small groups of our members on these walk-throughs every half hour from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The Longfellow Historic Site is at 105 Brattle Street, a short and pleasant walk from Harvard Square.

Parking at the site is limited, but on-street parking is available.

Spring Election

Enclosed you will find a ballot listing the slate of candidates prepared by the Nominating Committee, as required by our bylaws. Please mark your ballot and seal it in the envelope provided (marked "Ballot Envelope"). Also enclosed is a proxy statement for the Annual Meeting. Please complete it and return it together with the ballot envelope in time for the vote count on May 14.

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

Stanley Benfell received his Ph.D. from NYU. He is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature in the Department of Humanities, Classics, and Comparative Literature at Brigham Young University. He has written a number of articles on Dante, including "Biblical Truth in the Examination Cantos of Dante's *Paradiso*" *Dante Studies* 115 (1997) and "Nimrod, the Ascent to Heaven, and Dante's 'ovra inconsumabile'" *Dante Studies* 110 (1992). He is working on a book-length study of Dante's use of the Bible in the *Comedy*.

Gary Cestaro has a Ph.D. from Harvard. He is currently Director of Comparative Literature at DePaul University. His book, *Dante and the Grammar of the Nursing Body* (Notre Dame), came out in 2001. He has also edited a volume entitled, *Queer Italia: Same-Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film* (Palgrave 2004).

Olivia Holmes, Associate Professor at Yale University, holds a Ph.D. in Italian and Comparative Literature and Theory from Northwestern University. She won the Association of Italian Studies Book Award for her book *Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book* (Minnesota 2000). Her current project is entitled *Dante's Two Beloveds: Ethics as Erotic Choice*, of which a portion appeared in a special issue of *Annali d'Italianistica* on "Literature, Scholarship, and Ethics" in 2001.

Dana Stewart has a Ph.D. from Stanford, and is currently Associate Professor of Italian at Binghamton University. She is the author of a recent book on optical theory in medieval literature, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender, and Subjectivity in Medieval Love Poetry* (Bucknell 2003). She also co-edited *Sparks and Seeds: Medieval Literature and its Afterlife: Essays in Honor of John Freccero* (Brepols 2000) and recently organized the 2004 CEMERS conference at Binghamton University on Medieval Literature and Science.

Capital Campaign Receives Generous Support

The Dante Society of America's appeal to its members for contributions to our Capital Campaign has met with many heartwarming and encouraging responses. To date, we have received nearly one hundred donations which, with the one-third match from our campaign leaders, have brought us to over twenty-five percent of our three-year goal of \$120,000.

The Dante Society of America is privileged to rely on a membership whose loyalty, enthusiasm, and dedication make it unique among scholarly organizations. We sincerely ask all our members to do what they can to help the Society move closer to its goal. Only with your generous support can the Dante Society sustain its 123-year tradition and fulfill its twenty-first century mission of advancing and promoting the study of Dante worldwide.

Please keep in mind that our Campaign Co-Chairs will match all gifts by adding a fourth dollar for every three dollars donated until our goal is reached. We also ask you to remember that because the Dante Society of America is a non-profit charitable organization, **your gift is fully tax-deductible.**

If you have any questions, our Campaign Co-Chairs would welcome hearing from you. Please contact Teodolinda Barolini (212-854-2308, tb27@columbia.edu), Joan Ferrante (212-854-6415, jmf2@columbia.edu), or Nancy Vickers (610-526-5156, nvickers@brynmawr.edu).

Dante at MLA 2005

Professor **Ronald Martinez** of Brown University will address the Winter Meeting of the Dante Society at December's Modern Language Association Convention in Washington, DC. The title of his talk is "The Poets and the Paternoster: Lyric and Liturgical Disciplines in Dante's *Commedia*." Please see next fall's Newsletter for further information.

Reminder: Dues for 2005

Members who have not yet sent in their dues for the current year will find a dues form included with this mailing. We value your participation in the Dante Society and look forward to your continued support. Please enclose your dues for 2005 with your ballot envelope and proxy in the return envelope provided.

Dante Prize, Grandgent Award

Do you know a promising *dantista*? The Dante Society of America annually offers the undergraduate Dante Prize of two hundred and fifty dollars and the graduate Charles Hall Grandgent Award of five hundred dollars, each for the best essay on a subject related to the life or works of Dante.

Submissions must be sent as email attachments to the Society at dsa@dantesociety.org no later than June 30. For eligibility, size limits, and complete guidelines, please see the "Prizes" page of the Society's Web site at www.dantesociety.org.

Dante Society Newsletter

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