

# Dante Society Newsletter

Volume 12, Number 2

April 2006

## Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The 124<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Dante Society of America will be held on Saturday, May 20, 2006, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Carriage House of the Longfellow Historic Site in Cambridge, MA.

At the meeting, after the customary discussion of the Society's business (finances, status of *Dante Studies*, etc.), short papers by three well-known scholars will be presented and discussed. The speakers, Professor María Rosa Menocal (Yale University); Professor Karla Mallette (Miami University of Ohio); and Professor Gregory B. Stone (LSU) will address a subject of great current interest: Dante's relation to the culture of Islam. As in the past, a reception will cap the event.

I wish to thank Jim Shea, site manager of the Longfellow House, for hosting the meeting at a time when special plans are being developed to celebrate in 2007 the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Henry Longfellow. In recognition of the creative role played by Longfellow in founding the Dante Club and the Dante Society, and of his brilliant efforts to bring Dante to the American public, the DSA intends to take active part in the celebrations. I think it proper that we devote the May Program of 2007 to evaluating the contributions to Dante studies by Longfellow and his circle of friends. I will therefore form a committee to identify and select speakers for the 2007 event. In the meantime, I urge all members of the DSA interested in participating in next year's program with papers to submit short proposals.

I now wish to update you quickly on two key elements in the life of the DSA. I am, first of all, delighted to share with you the good news about our Capital Campaign. We are about halfway to our \$120,000 goal. The endowment has practically doubled since the fund-raiser was launched. This success is doubtless due in part to Merrill Lynch's smart management of our assets. The endowment, however, has also grown thanks both to the contributions so many of you have been generously making and to the matching gifts by Nancy Vickers, Teodolinda Barolini, and Joan Ferrante. A number of future initiatives for the

promotion of Dante studies will be possible if the endowment keeps growing.

The other element I wish to bring to your attention concerns the status of *Dante Studies* and the timetable for the last three issues. We all agree that the journal is the heart of the Dante Society, its central activity. It defines who we are in the larger context of the humanities and worldwide Dante scholarship. To bring the publication of *Dante Studies* to date as quickly as possible and to ensure the continued loyal interest of our readers, the Council has agreed to appoint Richard Lansing as Managing Editor. It is with enormous gratitude that I inform all of you that Professor Lansing (who has helped the Society in so many ways over the years) will flank the Editor, Steven Botterill, in his responsibilities. As things stand now, Volume 121 (year 2003) and Volume 122 (year 2004) will be coming out this year. Plans are in place to bring the 2005 volume out by the start of 2007.

Leaving the Council this May are Professor Guy Raffa and Professor Brenda Schildgen whom I thank for their steady, vigorous, and generous support of the DSA. Thanks are also due to the members of this year's Nominating Committee, Professor Ronald Martinez (who chaired the Committee), Professor Teodolinda Barolini, and Professor Peter Hawkins. The Nominating Committee has chosen four remarkable candidates from among members in good standing of the Society for election to the Council. Brief biographies of the candidates are printed below. You will choose two new councilors to replace Professor Raffa and Professor Schildgen. Please mark the enclosed ballot and return it together with the proxy statement by May 13, 2006.

With best wishes,  
Giuseppe Mazzotta

### ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, May 20, 10:00 a.m.,  
Carriage House, Longfellow Historic Site,  
105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA.

The Longfellow House is a short walk from Harvard Square. Parking at the site is limited, but garages are available in Harvard Square.



## Three Generous Guides Lead Capital Campaign

As the *Purgatorio*'s three theological virtues direct Dante in the final approach to his beloved Beatrice, so three virtuous guides by means of their own generous example are leading the Dante Society of America to its eagerly sought haven of financial security.

Three distinguished Dante scholars known for their devoted service to the Society – Nancy Vickers, President of Bryn Mawr College and past Vice-President of the DSA, Joan Ferrante, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University and past President of the DSA, and Teodolinda Barolini, Professor of Italian at Columbia University and past President of the DSA – have all dug deep into their own resources to provide the one-third match that augments every *fully tax-deductible* contribution to the Dante Society's current Capital Campaign. What motivates them to lead by so conspicuous an example? "By giving, I wanted to help to preserve the humanistic values of our beloved little Society and to put it on a firmer financial footing as we take the Society into the 21<sup>st</sup> century," explains Professor Barolini. Professor Vickers points to what the DSA has done for her: "The Dante Society played an important role in my formation as a young scholar, and I find that one of the most personally gratifying things I can do with discretionary dollars is assure its vitality for subsequent generations. Those of us who love and believe in the humanities must support them."

Nothing can acknowledge better the generosity of these three guides than your own first-time gift or continued support. Won't you follow their lead and help the Dante Society reach its goal?

To discuss a gift, please get in touch with Nancy Vickers at 610-526-5156 or [nvickers@brynmawr.edu](mailto:nvickers@brynmawr.edu), Joan Ferrante at 212-854-6415 or [jmf2@columbia.edu](mailto:jmf2@columbia.edu), or Teodolinda Barolini at 212-854-2308 or [tb27@columbia.edu](mailto:tb27@columbia.edu).

#### BALLOTS AND PROXIES

must reach P.O. Box 711, Framingham, MA 01701-0711, no later than Saturday, May 13.

Results will be announced at the meeting.

#### Spring Election

Enclosed you will find a ballot of candidates prepared by the Nominating Committee according to our bylaws. Please mark your ballot and seal it in the provided "Ballot Envelope." Also enclosed is a proxy for the Annual Meeting. Please return it together with the ballot envelope by May 13.

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

**Fabian Alfie** is an Associate Professor of Italian at the University of Arizona. He is the author of several articles on Dante, including two studies on Dante's tenzone with Forese Donati, and an article which treats the poet's impact on fifteenth-century Italian culture. He has also published two articles on the *Fiore*, the thirteenth-century Tuscan translation of the *Roman de la Rose* attributable to Dante Alighieri. In addition, he has produced numerous articles on Italian poetry of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, including analyses of Cino da Pistoia, Rustico Filippi, and Boccaccio, but focusing on the comic authors of the age. He is the author of *Cecco Angiolieri, Comedy and Culture: Cecco Angiolieri's Poetry and Late Medieval Society* (Leeds 2001).

**Maria Luisa Ardizzone** is Associate Professor of Italian at New York University. Her current areas of interest and research are medieval poetry, philosophy, and science, with additional interests in modern poetry, especially Ezra Pound. She has edited a volume of Pound's writings, *Machine Art and Other Writings: The Lost Thought of the Italian Years* (Duke 1996) and has recently published a study of Guido Cavalcanti, *Guido Cavalcanti, the Other Middle Ages* (Toronto 2003), and edited *Guido Cavalcanti tra i suoi lettori* (Cadmo 2003), a volume of papers on Cavalcanti

arising out of a conference at NYU, in addition to having authored numerous papers on Pound, Cavalcanti, and Dante.

**Daniela Boccassini** is Professor of Italian and French at the University of British Columbia. She completed her graduate studies at the universities of Milan (Statale) and Paris (Paris IV). At UBC she teaches Dante, the Italian Middle Ages and Renaissance, and various courses in Romance Studies. Her research interests focus on Dante, the Medieval and Renaissance periods, and the exploration of the ways in which the act of writing preserves the memory of complex cultural processes, involving various disciplines, different cultural traditions, and multiple epistemological transitions. She is the author of *La parola riscritta: Guillaume Gueroult, poeta e traduttore nella Francia della Riforma* (La Nuova Italia 1985) and more recently of *Il volo della mente: Falconeria e sofia nel mondo mediterraneo: Islam, Federico II, Dante* (Longo 2003), as well as of numerous articles.

**Arielle Saiber**, newly tenured at Bowdoin College, received her Ph.D. in Italian literature from Yale University in 2000, and a B.A. in Philosophy from Hampshire College in 1993. Her Ph.D. thesis was published as *Giordano Bruno and the Geometry of Language* (Ashgate 2005). She co-edited the anthology *Images of Quattrocento Florence: Selected Writings in Literature, History, and Art* (Yale 2000), and has published essays on early mathematical treatises, on Giambattista Della Porta, and on Salvador Dalí's illustrations of Dante's *Paradiso*. She has forthcoming essays on *Purgatorio* 15 for *Lectura Dantis: Purgatorio* (University of California Press) and on Niccolò Tartaglia's poetic solution of the cubic equation. She has been a fellow at the Harvard-Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, the Folger Institute, and the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici in Naples. She worked with John Ahern to develop the online "Illuminating Dante." She serves on the boards of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts and the Division of Literature and Science of the Modern Language Association. She co-curated in 2000 an exhibit at the Bowdoin Museum of Art called "Dante's *Divine Comedy*: Cut, Oiled, and Shot." She is the recipient of Bowdoin's Karofsky Prize for excellence in teaching and Yale's Field Prize for outstanding scholarship. Her current projects include work on contemporary artist Paul

Laffoley and an online VR model of Dante's cosmos.

#### Dante at MLA 2006

Professor Richard Lansing of Brandeis University will address the Winter Meeting of the Dante Society at December's Modern Language Association Convention in Philadelphia. The title of his talk is "The Pageantry of Dante's Verse." Please see next fall's Newsletter for further information.

#### Text and Image in the UK

The Cambridge in America organization alerts us to "Visible Language: Dante in Text & Image," an exhibition which runs through July 1 at the Cambridge University Library. The show draws on the Library's own collections and the renowned private library of Livio Ambrogio to bring together over seven centuries of manuscripts, printed books, and illustrations created to make Dante's words visible or inspired by Dante's writings. If your spring travels include the UK, please consider taking in this extraordinary exhibition of seldom seen Dante materials. To learn more, visit [www.lib.cam.ac.uk/exhibitions/Dante/](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/exhibitions/Dante/).

#### Reminder: Dues for 2006

If you have not yet paid your dues for 2006, please include them and the enclosed dues form when you return your ballot and proxy. We value your participation in the Dante Society and look forward to your continued support.

#### Dante Prize, Grandgent Award

The Dante Society of America annually offers the undergraduate Dante Prize of two hundred 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 by email to [dsa@dantesociety.org](mailto:dsa@dantesociety.org) no later than June 30. For complete guidelines, please see the Society's "Prizes" page at [www.dantesociety.org](http://www.dantesociety.org).

#### DANTE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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