

Dante Society Newsletter

Volume 19, Number 2

April 2013

A Letter from the President

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I write in anticipation of an exciting and timely panel on "Dante and Boccaccio" at our upcoming Annual Meeting, and with fresh memories of our MLA Winter Meeting, where Jeffrey Schnapp both wonderfully contextualized the *Commedia*'s deployment of distance in relation to time (i.e., speed) within the epic tradition and then gave us an update on the position (past, present and future) of Dante studies in the digital humanities. A lively discussion followed.

I also write with a progress report on the organizational agenda that I described in the Spring Newsletter of last year (see the DSA website under "Publications"). The Council's 2012 meetings focused on the challenge of revising the DSA By-Laws. Following our fall labors we sent our work for final review to our pro bono drafting lawyer and then to our Massachusetts compliance lawyer. They returned a completed text to us by mid-March. Though thrilled to have concluded, we find ourselves behind schedule in terms of mounting a substantial review, comment and query period (followed by a response and/or modification period) prior to the all-important vote by the membership. We will thus send the proposed By-Laws to you at the beginning of the upcoming semester with an eye to completing your comment and voting process in the fall of 2013. Those with email will receive the document through the DSA listserv; those without email, through the US postal service. Again, your participation in this effort will be critical.

We will address two major initiatives at the upcoming Council meeting that we urgently need to advance. The first is the redistribution of the labor needed to operate the Society, and the second is the related decision of how to pursue the redesign of our website. It is our hope to begin assigning specific tasks (web management, newsletter production, etc.) immediately as well as to initiate the work of recruiting a new Treasurer and a new Secretary to be elected next May (the latter depending, in part, on your endorsement of our revised By-Laws). My re-nomination as Acting Secretary-Treasurer on the enclosed ballot responds

both to the requirement within our current By-Laws that the office of Secretary be filled by a Massachusetts resident and to the reality that I will be coordinating the progressive handing off of responsibilities during the course of 2013-14. I encourage you to send nominations and/or expressions of interest to the Council by early May at the DSA addresses in the box below.

And finally...the website. In this instance your Council must work itself through the seemingly intractable impasse produced by our lack of institutional affiliation. Simply put, how would a freestanding, all-volunteer scholarly society maintain a website (on which it would depend not only for effective communication but also for core operational infrastructure) without an IT department? Building such a website is clearly within our means; keeping it running through provider malfunctions, upgrades and disappearances is another matter. Needless to say, this conversation has been protracted. We now need to decide which of several paths (with several price tags) to follow and to establish an implementation schedule. We will keep you informed, and, as always, we welcome your comments.

Sincerely,
Nancy Vickers

The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Society will take place on Saturday, May 18 in the Carriage House of the Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site (105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA 02138), only a short walk from Harvard Square. Parking at the site is extremely limited and must be arranged in advance. Should you require handicapped parking, please contact us by mail or email. For general parking, garages are available in and around the Square.

The event will begin with a business meeting at 10:30 a.m. (**please take note of the change in our starting time**), followed by a panel, "Dante and Boccaccio: Three Approaches," that has been organized in honor of the 700th anniversary of Boccaccio's birth.

The panelists and their topics are:

- Simone Marchesi,
Associate Professor of French and Italian, Princeton University.
"Fiction with Fiction: Confessing to Dante in Decameron 1.1."
- Kristina Olson,
Assistant Professor of Italian, George Mason University.
"The Politics of *Cortesia*: Dante, Boccaccio and the Case of Corso Donati"
- Martin G. Eisner,
Assistant Professor of Romance Studies, Duke University.
"Mediating Dante: Boccaccio and the Transformation of a Modern Author"

As is our tradition, refreshments and conversation in the garden (see Heather Webb and Albert Ascoli below) will follow.



Dante Prize, Grandgent Award

Members of the Society are urged to encourage promising dantisti to compete for the Dante Prize (for undergraduates) and for the Charles Hall Grandgent Award (for graduate students). Submissions must be sent by June 30 as email attachments to dsa@dantesociety.org. They will then be forwarded to the Prize Committee as blind submissions. For complete guidelines, see "Prizes" on the DSA website.

Spring Elections

Enclosed you will find a ballot of candidates prepared by the Nominating Committee. 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, so that it arrives no later than Monday, May 13 to The Dante Society of America, P.O. Box 1558, Arlington, MA 02474-0023.

The Committee nominates Nancy Vickers to serve for one additional year as Acting Secretary-Treasurer (see the "Letter from the President") and brings forward the following four colleagues as nominees for two open positions as members of the Council.

Beatrice Arduini (Ph.D., Italian Studies, Indiana University, 2008, Dottorato di ricerca, Italian Language and Literature, Università degli Studi, Milan, 2007) is an Assistant Professor in the French and Italian Studies Division of the University of Washington. Her writing centers on Medieval Italian literature and Dante Studies, particularly on manuscript culture. She is currently working on a book, *The Invention of Dante's Convivio*, which examines the tradition of Dante's unfinished treatise in manuscripts and early printed editions. Current projects also include the analysis of Giovanni Boccaccio's activity as copyist and editor of Dante's works, in particular the *Rime*, and the study of the conditions of writing and transcribing in prison in the Florentine Middle Ages. She has published in *Romance Philology*, *Textual Cultures*, *Medioevo Letterario d'Italia*, *Dante Studies* and *Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Recently, she contributed a chapter to *Dante in the Long Nineteenth Century: Nationality, Identity and Appropriation*.

Martin Eisner (Ph.D., Columbia University, 2005) is an Assistant Professor of Romance Studies at Duke University. He specializes in medieval Italian literature, particularly the works of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, as well as the history of the book and media. His first book, *Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature: Dante, Petrarch, Cavalcanti, and the Authority of the Vernacular* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), joins material philology to intellectual history in its exploration of Boccaccio's transcriptions of Dante, Petrarch, and Cavalcanti in Chigi L V 176. His new book project, *Dante and the*

Afterlife of the Book: The Philology of World Literature, continues to integrate philological materials into literary criticism, but takes a diachronic rather than synchronic approach in its analysis of the material tradition of Dante's first book, *Vita nuova*, from its earliest manuscripts to the most recent editions and adaptations.

Simone Marchesi (Ph.D. Princeton University, 2002) is an Associate Professor of French and Italian at Princeton University. His main research area is the dialogue with classical and late-antique texts engaged by Italian medieval writers, especially Dante and Boccaccio. He has published two monographs on medieval authors: *Stratigrafie decameroniane* (2004), and *Dante and Augustine: Linguistics, Poetics, Hermeneutics* (2011), along with several journal articles and chapters in collections. Most recently, he has edited and translated into Italian Robert Hollander's commentary to Dante's *Commedia* (2011). His current research focuses on the interplay between scholastic ethical thinking and medieval fiction.

Kristina M. Olson (Ph.D. Columbia University, 2006) is an Assistant Professor of Italian at George Mason University. Her manuscript, *Courtesy Lost: Dante, Boccaccio and the Literature of History* (under contract with the University of Toronto Press), examines Boccaccio's historical vision of thirteenth and fourteenth century Florence and Italy vis-à-vis his activity as *dantista*. She has published articles and book chapters on Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch in such venues as *Annali d'italianistica*, *Heliotropia*, *Modern Language Notes*, and *Symposium*, and has a forthcoming essay in the upcoming issue of *Dante Studies* entitled "New Voices in Dante Studies." She is also the co-editor, with William Weaver, of *Open City: Seven Writers in Postwar Rome* (Steerforth Press, 1997). She received a Jacob K. Javits Fellowship in 2000-2004.

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