

Dante Society Newsletter

Volume 20, Number 2

April 2014

A Letter from the President

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Let me begin by thanking you once again for your participation in the process of crafting and approving our twenty-first-century By-Laws. Your engagement was truly critical. The simple fact that almost three-quarters of you voted amply demonstrates the vitality of our Society.

The Council and I have since moved on to the next major tasks facing the DSA: updating our website; finding web-based solutions for many of our administrative challenges; and redistributing the remaining work of running the Society among several volunteers. At our May meeting we are scheduled to ratify an arrangement that will set these initiatives in motion. Watch your email (or your mailbox) for more information. Generally speaking, over the course of the next year almost all of the ways we interact with you will be transformed. Yes, this may well be your last mailing of envelopes within envelopes. We know that this is the path to making the Society truly "sustainable," and we also know that transitions of this magnitude can tax the resolve of each and every one of us. Change is always difficult (albeit necessary), and we ask for your loyalty, good will and patience as we move forward. And, for those of you who are not "web-oriented," we will keep you informed via the postal service.

Among the changes on the horizon, I should add that this is my last President's Letter to you. It has been a privilege to lead the Society over the past five years, but it is now time to see what retirement has to offer. In addition, serving as both President and Acting Secretary-Treasurer has been demanding; we are now at a point where other volunteers are ready and able to take office. Only recently, in addition to voting Justin Steinberg as Associate Editor of *Dante Studies*, the Council elected Christian Dupont to be our Secretary-Librarian. He will oversee our technological revolution as well as all of our communication with you. An accomplished special collections librarian, he will also apply himself to bringing the Society's archives up to date. As I write, the Council is in the process of electing a new President to take office at the conclusion of this year's Annual Meeting.

I will remain Acting Treasurer until we successfully recruit a successor.

With many thanks for your good will and support and with all best wishes, Nancy

Revised Guidelines for Prizes

The Prize Committee presents the following revised description of the Society's student essay prizes.

"Since 1887 the Dante Society of America has presented annual prizes for the best student essays on a subject related to the life or works of Dante Alighieri. The Dante Prize of \$500. is offered for the best essay submitted by an undergraduate enrolled in any college or university in the USA or Canada, or by anyone not enrolled as a graduate student who has received an undergraduate degree from a college or university in the USA or Canada within the past year. The Charles Hall Grandgent Award of \$750. is offered for the best essay submitted by a student enrolled in any graduate program in the USA or Canada.

Undergraduate essays should be no longer than 7,500 words and graduate essays should be no longer than 10,000 words. The essay submitted can be a self-standing work or a portion of a larger work. In the latter case, writers are asked to include in the submission a description of how the essay fits within the larger whole. That description will not count towards the essay's overall word limit, but should not exceed 750 words for undergraduate essays and 1000 words for graduate essays.

The deadline for submissions is June 30 of each year. All submissions must be sent as e-mail attachments to the Dante Society at dsa@dantesociety.org. Files should be saved as documents with either a '.doc', '.docx', or '.rtf' extension. No hardcopy submissions will be accepted.

Each author should provide a cover page (as the first page of the file) giving her or his name; institutional affiliation; local, permanent and e-mail addresses; and the title and category (undergraduate or graduate) of the essay. The author's name should not appear on the essay title page (to follow the cover page) or on any other page of the text since the essays are submitted anonymously to the readers.

Quotations from Dante's works should be cited in the original language, and the format of the essay should conform to either the Chicago or MLA Style Sheet guidelines.

A special committee of the Society will judge the submissions. In either competition, the committee may, at its discretion, split the award between two contestants (each to receive one half of the prize), or it may make no award. The announcement of the winners and their essay titles will be made in early autumn and published in the fall issue of the Society's Newsletter; they will also appear in the Annual Report of the Society. The essays remain the intellectual property of their authors."

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Society will take place on Saturday, May 17 in the Carriage House of the Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site (105 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA). Parking at the site is extremely limited and must be arranged in advance. Should you require handicapped parking, please contact us. For nearby general parking, garages are available in and around Harvard Square.

The event will begin with a business meeting at 10:30 a.m., followed by a panel on "Dante in the Classroom and the Community" offered by Ronald Herzman, Terry Quinn, Barbara Rosenblitt, and William Stephany.

Herzman and Stephany have jointly organized ten seminars for school teachers on Dante's *Commedia* in Siena, Italy, since 1999, all sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Rosenblitt and Quinn are teachers who were in two of the seminars. The panel will focus on the way participants have used Dante's work in their teaching and in presentations to non-academic audiences.

A reception in the garden will follow.

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 before May 17 to The Dante Society of America, P.O. Box 1558, Arlington, MA 02474.

The Committee brings forward the following four colleagues as nominees for the two open positions on the Council:

V. Stanley Benfell, Professor of Comparative Literature at Brigham Young University, received his PhD from New York University. His research interests concern the literature of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, and he has published studies on European Renaissance literature in addition to essays on Dante. His work on Dante includes articles on Dante's relationship to the Spiritual Franciscans and Peter John Olivi, and on Dante's understanding of avarice and its remedies. His book, *The Biblical Dante*, was published by the University of Toronto Press in 2011. As a result of his fellowship in an NEH seminar on the seven deadly sins, his attention most recently has turned to Dante's moral philosophy and theology, particularly to Dante's ideas regarding virtue.

Francesco Ciabattoni is Associate Professor at Georgetown University. He received his Laurea in Lettere from the Università degli Studi di Torino and his PhD in Italian Studies from The Johns Hopkins University. Ciabattoni's research focuses on Dante and the Middle Ages, the twentieth century short story, and the interplay of music and literature. He has published articles on Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio; and a book on the role of music in Dante's *Commedia* (*Dante's Journey to Polyphony*, University of Toronto Press, 2010). He has also co-edited volumes on Primo Levi (*NEMLA Italian Studies* 32, 2010, with Simona Wright) and Italian medieval literature (*The Decameron Third Day in Perspective*. Volume Three of the *Lectura Boccaccii* Series, with P.M. Forni, University of Toronto Press, 2014). In addition, he has published poems in *Gradiva* and a collection of lyrics titled *Paradosso terrestre* (Rome: Il filo 2008). He is currently working on a book about intertextuality in Italian *cantautori*.

Deborah Parker is Professor of Italian at the University of Virginia and former chair of the Dept. of Spanish, Italian and Portuguese (2011-13). She is the author of *Commentary and Ideology: Dante in the Renaissance* (Duke UP, 2009),

Bronzino: Renaissance Painter as Poet (Cambridge UP, 2000), *Michelangelo and the Art of Letter Writing* (Cambridge UP, 2012) and co-author, with Mark Parker, of *Inferno Revealed: From Dante to Dan Brown* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Her articles on Dante have appeared in *MLN*, *Dante Studies*, *Renaissance Quarterly*, and *Annali d'italianistica*. She is the General Editor of *The World of Dante* site, which receives roughly 3 ½ million hits each month.

Justin Steinberg is currently Associate Professor of Italian at the University of Chicago. He is a scholar of medieval Italian literature, with research interests in the early lyric, manuscript culture/material philology, reception studies, medieval political theory, and the intersection of literature and law. His first book, *Accounting for Dante: Urban Readers and Writers in Late Medieval Italy* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame UP, 2007) won the MLA Scaglione Prize for a Manuscript in Italian Studies. He has just published his second book, *Dante and the Limits of the Law* (Chicago, 2013). He has published articles on the *Compiuta donzella*, Dante's dreams, and Petrarch's uncollected poems. His current book project is entitled, "*Mimesis on Trial: Evidence, Inquest, and Realism in Boccaccio's Decameron*." His work has been supported by grants from the Fulbright, ACLS, and Franke Foundations. He recently accepted appointment to the position of Associate Editor of *Dante Studies*.

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