

# Dante Society Newsletter

Volume 6, Number 2

April 2000

## Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues,

The 118th Annual Meeting of the Dante Society of America will be held on Saturday, May 13, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. (reception to follow) in Ticknor Lounge, Boylston Hall, on the Harvard University campus, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After our business meeting a panel comprising the Society's Councillors and Editors will lead a debate on the "Top Ten" essays published over the last century in *Dante Studies*. The recommendations of members and panelists will be forwarded to the Board of Editors, who are compiling a retrospective 2000 volume of the journal. 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 12. The returning members of the Council are Steven Botterill, Theodore Cachey, Jr., H. Wayne Storey, and Nancy Vickers. I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Nominating Committee, Joan Ferrante (chair), Kevin Brownlee, and Sara Sturm-Maddox, for their time and effort in preparing the slate of candidates.

I would like also to remind you that the deadline for submitting essays to the Dante and Grandgent prize competitions has been extended to June 30 of every year. We hope that the additional time will encourage more students to submit their work. The winners will be determined in early September and announced in the fall Newsletter.

With best wishes,

Teodolinda Barolini

## Spring Election Slate

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

**John Ahern** is Dante Andolini Professor of Italian at Vassar College. He is the author of numerous essays on Dante, including "The New Life of the Book: The

*Dante Studies* volume 116 (1998) has been printed and should be in the hands of members by the end of April at the latest. The volume for 1999 is due out before the end of summer.

Implied Reader of the *Vita Nuova*" (*Dante Studies*), "Binding the Book: Hermeneutics and Manuscript Production in *Paradiso* 33" (*PMLA*), and "L'aquila tra gli indiani: Le traduzioni americane di Dante" (*Lecture Classensi*). His survey of English translations of Dante's works appears in *The Dante Encyclopedia*.

**Teodolinda Barolini** is President of the Dante Society of America and Lorenzo Da Ponte Professor of Italian at Columbia University. Currently on a Guggenheim Fellowship, she is preparing a commentary to Dante's *Rime* for the Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli. Barolini is the author of *Dante's Poets: Textuality and Truth in the 'Comedy'* (Princeton) and *The Undivine Comedy: Dethologizing Dante* (1992).

**Giuliana Carugati** is Assistant Professor of Italian at Emory University, where she teaches Dante and the Renaissance for the Comparative Literature program. In 1991 she published *Dalla menzogna al silenzio: La scrittura mistica della Commedia di Dante*, which won the Premio Pisa in the same year.

**Ronald L. Martinez** has taught Italian language, literature, and culture at the University of Minnesota since 1980. With Robert M. Durling he wrote *Time and the Crystal: Studies in Dante and the Rime Petrose* (1990) and is also collaborating with Durling on a translation with commentary of the *Divine Comedy* (1996-). He was an NEH fellow in 1993-94 and a visiting professor at I Tatti in the spring of 1999.

**Edward Peters** is the Henry Charles Lea

Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, where he has regularly taught an upper-division course on the World of Dante. He has also published eight articles on Dante and has written several more for *The Dante Encyclopedia*. His other works include *The Shadow King* (1970); *The Magician, the Witch, and the Law* (1978); *Torture* (1985; 1996); *Inquisition* (1989); and several dozen other scholarly articles, books, and short notices, as well as a survey text of medieval history, *Europe and the Middle Ages* (fourth edition forthcoming).

**Walter Stephens** is Charles S. Singleton Professor of Italian Studies at The Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Giants in Those Days: Folklore, Ancient History, and Nationalism* (1989) and co-editor of *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1989). He is currently completing *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and Belief*, a study of demonology in its theological context between 1430 and 1530. He has published numerous articles on Italian literature, particularly on Tasso. While not a "full-time" *dantista*, he never strays too far from Dante due to his interest in the intersections of literature and theology.

## Dante2000 Conference

by Martin G. Eisner and Kristina M. Olson

From April 7 to April 9, 2000, the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University and the Dante Society of America hosted an historic gathering of American and European Dante scholars, **DANTE 2000**, at the Casa Italiana. During nine panels and two technological demonstrations, leading *dantisti* shared in celebrating the seven-hundredth anniversary of the vision of the *Commedia*. What follows is a brief summary of their presentations.

**Joan M. Ferrante** chaired the first panel, titled *Dante and Gender*. A paper by **Susan Noakes**, "Sexuality, Nobility, and Banking: The Crossing of Discourses in the *Tenzzone* with Forese," began the conference with a consideration of the poems in light of contemporary Florentine social history. **Gary Cestaro** offered a close reading of *Inferno* XV and XVI in his

“Queering Nature, Queering Gender: Dante and Sodomy.” In “Beyond Dualism: Thinking About Gender in Dante’s Lyrics,” **Teodolinda Barolini** demonstrated Dante’s departure from the conventional binary opposition of male and female to an ethics of desire in which women are moral agents.

The second panel, *Eros and Mysticism*, was led by **Giuseppe Di Scipio**. **Steven Botterill**, speaking on “Language, Silence and Poetry,” argued for the mystical status of the poem. In “*Quando amor fa sentir de la sua pace*,” **Giuliana Carugati** discussed neo-Platonic conceptions of *eros* and *logos* with respect to Beatrice. **Lino Perfile** answered the question “Does the Sweet New Style Go to Heaven?” by arguing that there is an absence of examples of blessed earthly love in Paradise.

**Nancy Vickers** presided over the morning’s third panel, *The Body*. **Zygmunt Baranski** dealt with “Scatology and Obscenity in Dante” focusing on linguistic and ethical choices in the light of medieval culture. **Regina Psaki**, “Beatrice, the Body, and Beatitude in the *Commedia*,” called attention to the eroticized language deployed in *Paradiso*. In “The Body and the Flesh in *Purgatorio*,” **Robert M. Durling** discussed this dichotomy focusing on the terrace of pride.

*Dante and Ovid*, Friday’s final panel, was mediated by **Allen Mandelbaum**. **Warren Ginsberg** talked about Dante’s redemption of Ovid *maggiore* through the suppression of Ovid *minore* and his irony in “Dante’s Ovids.” **Jessica Levenstein** illustrated “The Re-formation of Marsyas in *Paradiso* I,” highlighting close textual connections between Dante and Ovid. In “Ovid and the *exul inmeritus*” **Michelangelo Picone** considered Biblical and classical conceptions of exile and adduced the landscape of Ovid’s *Tristia* as a source for Lake Cocytus.

Saturday began with *Reception and Cultural Studies I*, chaired by **Theodore J. Cachey, Jr.** **Kevin Brownlee** spoke about Dante’s reaction against French cultural hegemony in his presentation of “Dante’s France.” In “Dante in England,” **David Wallace** reviewed the mostly benign history of Dante’s reception over centuries of religious reform. **Albert Russell Ascoli** offered an examination of how Dante maintained *auctoritas* in “Dante after

Dante.”

The day’s second panel, *Material Culture/Filologia Materiale*, was led by **Franco Ferrucci**. **John Ahern** addressed the question “What Did the First Copies of the *Comedy* Look Like?” **H. Wayne Storey** discussed the copyist’s role in shaping a poem’s presentation in “The Early Editorial Forms of Dante’s Lyric: 1287-1358.” **Guglielmo Gorni**, “Filologia materiale, filologia congetturale, filologia senza aggettivi,” mapped out the possibility of a “filologia assoluta.” **Mary Reffling** chaired the day’s final panel, *Reception and Cultural Studies II*. In “Moby Dante?”, Piero Boitani traced the complex presence of Dante in Melville. Through a series of slides, **Christopher Kleinhenz** outlined possible visual sources for Dante’s imagery and *Weltanschauung* in his talk “On Dante and the Visual Arts.” In “Still Here: Dante After Modernism,” **Peter Hawkins** and **Rachel Jacoff** illustrated Dante’s continued influence on current verse through readings of contemporary English poets.

At the end of the day’s panels, **Richard Lansing** offered a demonstration of the Dante Society’s bibliographic resources accessible on the Internet in “Dante in a Technological Era.”

Sunday opened with a discussion of *Science and Philosophy* led by **Christian Moevs**. **Alison Cornish** examined Dante’s popularization of contemporary meteorology, with particular regard to *Purgatorio* V, in “Vulgarizing Science: Vernacular Translation of Natural Philosophy.” In “From Plurality to (Almost) Unicity of Forms: Statius’s Embryology in *Purgatorio* 25,” **Manuele Gragnolati** sketched a comparison with the writings of Bonaventure and Aquinas on the origin of the soul and the formation of the body and soul in the afterlife. **Giuseppe Mazzotta** focused on the economy of gifts as expounded by the two philosophers in “Dante between St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas.”

**Robert Hollander** provided a demonstration of “The Princeton Dante Project,” another valuable research website.

**DANTE 2000** closed with a panel on *Eschatology* led by **Dino S. Cervigni**. **Ronald Herzman** meditated on the convergence of Trinitarian doctrines at the

root of *Paradiso* XI in “Eschatology in the Sun.” **Amilcare Iannucci** highlighted the perspective of the existential present as means to individual salvation in “Already and Not Yet: Dante’s Eschatology.” Finally, **Ronald L. Martinez** examined the sources and contexts of Dante’s jeremiads in “‘Alas, alas, that great city’: Florence and Jerusalem in Dante.”

Another highlight of **DANTE 2000** was the Participants’ Banquet, at which the first Charles T. Davis Award for Distinction in Dante Studies (named after our late and much loved former President) was awarded to John Freccero, with the dedication *per esser presto / a tal querente e a tal professione*.

The conference was made possible with the generous support of: Department of Italian, Yale University; Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Fordham University; the William and Katherine Devers Program in Dante Studies, University of Notre Dame; Department of Italian and Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, New York University; and the Department of Italian, Columbia University.

The conference is audio archived at the following website:

[www.italianacademy.columbia.edu](http://www.italianacademy.columbia.edu)

### Dante Society Newsletter

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