

HUI216

Italian Civilization

Andrea Fedi

22.0 Announcements

- <http://www.campo7.com/hui216/>
- All midterms have been corrected and graded, all are available for pickup now (ID needed)
 - Bring any documents that were requested
- Extra-credit assignments: class policy and information have been posted
- The deadline for the paper is May 3
- Rules for the submission of drafts
- Best topics for the paper

22.0 The midterm: final results

- 207 midterms have been corrected and graded
- The average is 83.6 (B-/B)
 - A or A- = 69
 - B+, B, or B- = 59
 - C+, C, or C- = 51
 - D+ or D = 20
 - F = 8
- Average number of correct multiple-choice answers = 17/27
- Average score for the short-answer section = 16/21

22.0 The Italian Middle Ages and Dante

- The Italian communes (city-states)
- Dante Alighieri
- Dante's *The Divine Comedy*
- Excerpts from Amilcare Iannucci, "The presence of Italian literature (old and new) abroad in the 20th-century"
- Dante's episode of Paolo and Francesca (*Inferno*, canto 5)
- Matthew Pearl's novel, *The Dante Club*
- Roberto Benigni and Dante

22.1 The City-state (commune, it. *comune*)

- City-states are based on a constitution called *statuto*
- Merchants and entrepreneurs are organized in guilds, called *corporazioni*, similar, in their relationship with the government, to modern lobbies
- Democracy is limited and based on income
- There is a constant conflict of interests. It is fueled by
 - arbitrary taxation
 - lottery system for public office
 - short mandates

22.1 Classes in the City-states (communes, it. *comuni*)

- Nobles from the feudal times move out of the castles and into the cities
 - They pay someone to fight for them instead of fighting in person as knights
- Merchants grow in power (especially through banking, loans)
- Popes/Emperors are the highest authorities, the sources of legitimacy for the authority of each government, but local politics is run autonomously

22.2 Dante (Durante) Alighieri (1265-1321)

- born in Florence in 1265, from a minor aristocratic family (not sufficiently wealthy)
- was a disciple of Brunetto Latini
 - Latini wrote the *Tresor* in French
- in his youth Dante was a poet of the Dolce Stil Novo (The Sweet New Style)
- to support his political career, Dante joined the Medical guild in 1295
- in 1300 he opposed the political stands of pope Boniface VIII's

22.2 Dante's exile

- Dante was then accused of corruption by political adversaries
- he was sentenced to pay a fine and to serve a two-year exile
- he never went back to Florence and so he was sentenced to death
- Dante visited many Italian courts, never returning to Florence
- died in Ravenna in 1321

22.3 Florence - Orsanmichele



22.3 Florence
- Orsanmichele, St.
George and the
dragon (Donatello,
1386-1466)





22.3 Florence

- Orsanmichele, Nanni di Banco
(1375-1421): Patron Saints of the
Guild of the Stone and
Woodcutters

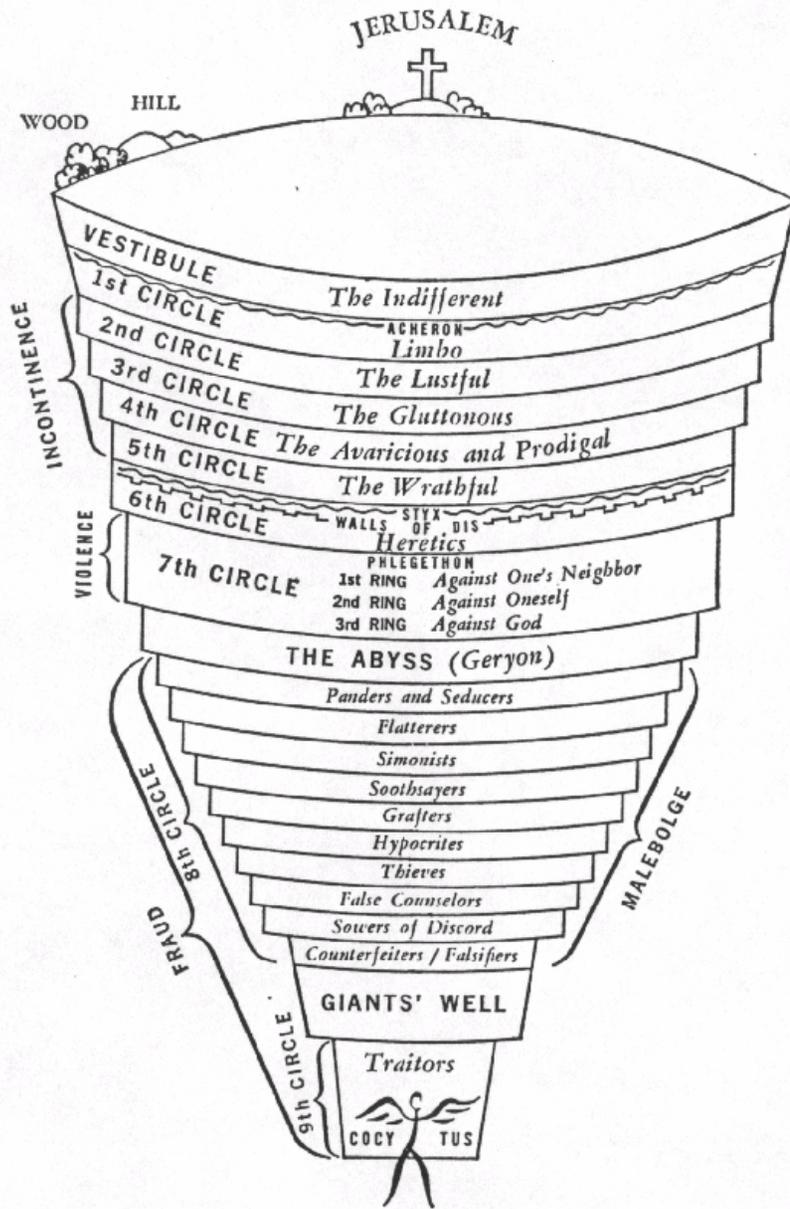


Claudius, Castor, Symphorian and Nicostratus, four Christian sculptors who refused to execute a statue of Aesculapius for the Emperor Diocletian

22.4 Dante Alighieri (1265-1321): his works

- *De vulgari eloquentia* (=About vernacular language)
 - Where can one find the illustrious Italian language? Nowhere, says Dante
 - The ideal Italian language should be a combination of various dialects
- *Monarchia* (about monarchy)
 - Talks about the Roman empire and its historical mission (following St. Augustine's ideas)
- *Quaestio de aqua et terra*
- *The new life* (Vita nova)
 - Love and true nobility result from experience, not blood
- *The Divine Comedy*
 - a medieval *summa* (=encyclopedia)

22.5 The structure of Dante's Inferno (Hell)



Hell

22.6 *Inferno*, canto 4

- According to the teachings of the Church, there was a Limbus patrum (=Limbus of the Fathers)
 - There lived the Patriarchs of the Old Testament, who were eventually freed by Jesus
- There was also a Limbus puerorum (=Limbus of the children), made for the children who died before they could be baptized
- Dante's castle, the Limbus of the great Romans and Greeks, is the product of a new cultural canon, combining Christian ideology with a profound admiration of classical culture
 - There, in a most beautiful setting, live the souls of Virgil, Homer, Horace, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Democritus, Hippocrates, Cicero etc.
 - This theory became so famous that later it was officially condemned by the Church

22.7 Excerpts from *Italian studies in North America*. Ed. by Massimo Ciavolella and Amilcare A. Iannucci. Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1994

- AMILCARE A. IANNUCCI -- "The presence of Italian literature (old and new) abroad in the 20th-century"
- After Greek and Latin literature, Italian literature is the third in chronological order that aspired to and achieved classical status
- In this century, Italy's literary past has been as determining as its literary present
 - Indeed, I would argue that it has been more influential than contemporary (I use this term loosely to refer to the twentieth century) Italian literature in shaping the literary culture of this century

22.7 Excerpts from *Italian studies in North America*. Ed. by Massimo Ciavolella and Amilcare A. Iannucci. Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1994

- For instance, after almost seven hundred years, Dante continues to produce meaning and pleasure in a way that no contemporary Italian author (with the possible exception of Pirandello) can claim to do.
- ... with a few notable exceptions, contemporary Italian authors have not had an enduring, transforming effect on the literary culture of our time. On the other hand, Dante and the great authors of the Renaissance continue to be powerful cultural forces to this day, often the focus of intellectual and academic debates and the source of creative inspiration. In the battle between the ancients and the moderns, the former seem to have prevailed.

22.7 A. A. Iannucci, "The presence of Italian literature (old and new) abroad in the 20th-century"

- Dante's Limbo is the site of one of the most extraordinary cultural operations in literary history
- It is in this liminal setting that Dante meets the great poets of antiquity - significantly, it is his first encounter in the afterlife - and they, so the narrative goes, welcome him into their illustrious company "sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno" (Inf. 4.102)
- With this simple gesture, Dante elevates himself to the rank of an *auctor*, or as we would say today, to the rank of a classic
- The gesture is not entirely self-serving. In claiming citizenship in the "bella scola" [=fair school] of "timeless authority" (Curtius 18), Dante also claims legitimacy for the Italian vernacular as a literary language, proclaiming it the equal of Latin, "the grammatical language"
- the encounter is an act of cultural self-definition and a bold statement of authorial intention... Dante will write (such is his boast) the great Christian epic of conversion (as yet unwritten), and he will do so in Italian, that is, in a language which he is quite literally forging on the spot.

22.7 A. A. Iannucci, "The presence of Italian literature (old and new) abroad in the 20th-century" (2)

- Between aspiration and achievement yawns an abyss. Fortunately Dante's talent matched his ambition. His *poema sacro* was an instant best seller. The literate read it, copied it, and passed it on to friends - the manuscript tradition assures us of this. Those who couldn't read gathered eagerly in public squares to hear the latest news from the other world. The poem was immediately and widely known, and soon became both an object of study and a source of creative inspiration.
- The transition from best seller to classic was almost immediate. By the end of the fourteenth century, Dante's poem had generated more commentary than Virgil's *Aeneid* had throughout the whole of the Middle Ages.
- It had also engaged the most prominent creative writers of the century from Boccaccio to Chaucer, who came into contact with Dante's work (as well as that of Boccaccio and Petrarch) during his trips to Italy in the 1370's

22.7 A. A. Iannucci, "The presence of Italian literature (old and new) abroad in the 20th-century" (3)

- The Comedy's impact on the literary scene in fourteenth century Italy was enormous. Suddenly it was possible to write a great work in the vernacular without having to reach deep into antiquity for models. There was now a contemporary or near contemporary Italian epic in the class of Virgil, Lucan, and Statius (and Homer too) to look up to.
- An ambitious Italian writer of the time had to come to terms with Dante and his poem. The strategies for doing so differed, however. One could accept its influence or resist it. Boccaccio, Dante's biographer, commentator, and great admirer, chooses the former course, both in his so-called minor works..., and in his major vernacular work. Indeed, in the *Decameron*, Boccaccio uses Dante to structure and define his very different literary enterprise - the work's subtitle, you will recall, is "Prince Galahalt."
- On the other hand, Petrarch chooses the strategy of resistance or non-reception. He disposes of the "anxiety of influence" (Bloom) vis-à-vis Dante simply by refusing to read his great predecessor, or so he claims in a celebrated letter to Boccaccio (*Familiars* 22.15), who had chastised his friend and mentor for his lukewarm attitude towards Dante.

22.7 A. A. Iannucci, "The presence of Italian literature (old and new) abroad in the 20th-century" (4)

- Petrarch's cultural agenda was, of course, much grander than Boccaccio's, consisting of no less than the recovery of classical antiquity, which he felt had been lost, and in the process bringing about a profound renewal of culture, to be based no longer on abstract philosophical schemes but on the *studia humanitatis*. His own fame as a poet and humanist was to be made in Latin, philologically repristined.
- Thus in his (unfinished) epic, the *Africa*, he, like Dante, invokes Virgil, Statius, and Lucan (there is also the mandatory nod to Homer), but, in contrast to his famous precursor, he engages them on their own linguistic turf. In this ambitious enterprise to revive contemporary culture, in which he manages to involve Boccaccio, Petrarch was enormously successful. Indeed, his reputation and influence during his lifetime and the first three-quarters of a century or so after his death were based almost entirely on his Latin, humanistic compositions.
- During this period, Boccaccio too was known less for his vernacular writing than for his classical scholarship, to which, under the sway of Petrarch, he dedicated the latter part of his life. His encyclopaedic *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, for instance, became a standard reference text throughout Renaissance Europe.

22.7 A. A. Iannucci, "The presence of Italian literature (old and new) abroad in the 20th-century" (5)

- Petrarch, however, was much too sensitive to literary history to ignore the vernacular completely, despite his apparent scorn for it. We know the care that went into the making of the *Canzoniere* (Wilkins), which he refers to simply as *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. And although he stakes his ultimate fame on the *Africa*, he is not about to hedge his bets. He informs us in another celebrated letter to Boccaccio (*Seniles* 5.2) that from an early age he had planned to write a "great work" (*magnum opus*) in the vernacular, a probable reference to the *Triumphs*.
- Written in *terza rima* in obvious competition with Dante, this little work became the source (about the middle of the fifteenth century) of a second wave of Petrarchan influence in Europe. The first, as I have already noted, was driven by his Latin works; the third and last in chronological order would be fuelled by the *Canzoniere* (Wilkins, *Studies* 280-81).
- In the latter half of the Quattrocento, the *Triumphs* surpassed even Dante's *Comedy* in popularity, and remained a powerful literary force well into the seventeenth century. Over 300 surviving manuscripts scattered throughout Europe attest to its remarkable diffusion, and after the first Venetian edition of 1470, it was reprinted regularly. Moreover, during this time it was repeatedly illustrated, glossed, translated, and generally revered.

22.8 Dante and the Italian language

- The main problem faced by Dante or by any writer/ intellectual who, between the 13th and the early 14th century, decided to choose the vernacular for works of literature that dealt with topics of the highest level (philosophy, theology, politics), was that the Neo-Latin languages had developed as popular, spoken variations of Latin, and therefore their vocabulary was more suitable for the daily needs of social life
- Latin instead had remained, well into the Middle Ages, the exclusive language of intellectuals, teachers, politicians, wealthy merchants and of the clergy, the language of treatises, laws and constitutions, diplomatic communiqués, business transactions and religious rituals/commentaries

22.8 Dante and the Italian language

- Therefore, because of its limited use, vernacular Italian languages generally lacked the terminology, first and foremost, to express certain ideas, then also the flexibility (subtlety) that is necessary to describe intricate issues, and finally the elegant nuances that are expected in literature
- Vernacular literature, before *The Divine Comedy*, with the exception of the poem written by St. Francis and a few other examples, closer to the age of Dante, usually directed its efforts to the comic genre, in which the vernacular could be used effectively to imitate the language used in taverns and in the streets
- Also, before *The Divine Comedy*, most examples of vernacular literature were sonnets, ballads, sestinas, and the longest poems rarely extended beyond the measure of 1,000 verses

22.8 Dante and the Italian language

- The first thing Dante had to do was to create hundreds of new words to describe the mystical experiences of the protagonist in his journey/pilgrimage through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise, to explain the intricacies of the theological principles that govern the world of the dead, and to transfer the subtleties of religious interpretation to the analysis of God's intervention in human history
- So even though Dante's language relied heavily on the syntax of the Florentine dialect which he spoke as a native of that city, the lexicon of his poem was very much experimental and creative, so much so that in spite of the profound admiration that his poetic attempt produced, many of those new words were rarely or never used afterwards

22.8 Dante and the Italian language

- Dante's language, also, is a powerful mix of words taken from Latin, Greeks, and from many different Italian dialects, which Dante knew first-hand or had learned through his numerous readings
- Thus, Dante's greatest achievement goes well beyond the creation of a language that few dared imitate: the effect of the success of his poem, of his powerful and comprehensive representation of the universal knowledge of his time, was to show that Italian, particularly the Tuscan language, had not just the flexibility but also the dignity to express a wide range of concepts and ideas, from the most trivial realism (a character is farting in the Inferno), to the description of the mystical encounter of the Pilgrim with God himself

22.8 Dante and the Italian language

- His greatest achievement was to raise the vernacular to the level of Latin, to give to the vernacular the intellectual status that it lacked before him
- So if he really deserves the title of father of the Italian language which is so often given to him, it is not just because his language is somewhat close to the language Italians speak today (Boccaccio and Petrarch did more to become the models of the new literary Italian language), but because he showed that the best way to render honor to the great masters of Roman and Greek literature whom he so much admired (Virgil, Horace, Homer, etc.) was not to simply imitate them, but to emulate, to rival their mastership and creativity.

22.8 Dante, *Inferno*, cantos 1-5

- Total words in cantos 1-5 = 4,972
- Number of different words = 1,686
- Words in Dante that are not to be found in the Basic Vocabulary of the Italian language (the 7,000 Italian words most frequently used today) = 894 (18 %)
- Words from Dante that can also be found among the first 2,000 words of the Basic Vocabulary of the Italian language = 3,858 (78%)

22.9 *Inferno*, Canto 5: references to classical civilization

- Minos, mythical king of Crete, is the judge of the underworld
 - This character is present in Virgil's *Aeneid* too
- Famous lovers of Canto 5 include
 - Dido, Queen of Carthage and lover of Aeneas (*Aeneid*)
 - Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt
 - Helen, mistress of Paris: her abduction started the Trojan war (see Homer's *Iliad*)
 - Greek superhero Achilles (*Iliad*)

22.10 Canto 5: the characters, the sources

- The characters
 - Francesca, daughter of Guido da Polenta
 - Giovanni, first (?) son of Malatesta, Lord of Rimini
 - Paolo, his younger (?) brother
- There are 3 kinds of sources about this episode
 - Contemporary documents say nothing about the love affair and the double murder that ended it
 - Dante and especially his commentator Boccaccio seem to know and say too much
 - XIV century chronicles of Rimini may have been influenced by those very literary sources

22.10 Canto 5: the historical evidence

- 1263: pope Urbanus IV writes to the bishop of Rimini, referring to contributions that local convents and churches owe the two brothers, Paolo and Giovanni
- 1264: receipt of a payment
 - Giovanni and Paolo are called *scolares* (=students, pupils), therefore they must have been kids or teenagers, with little difference in age between them
 - Paolo is called *Paulotius* (=little Paolo), and he is quoted after Giovanni: so he must have been younger
- 1287: a notary's document establishing the terms of a peace agreement between the Malatestas and the Manfredis
 - Giovanni signs it, but not Paolo (already dead?)
- 1307: by this time Giovanni is dead for sure (probably died in 1304)

22.10 Canto 5: the historical evidence (2)

- Giovanni and Paolo were probably born in 1240-46
- Giovanni's nickname was Gianciotto (*Johannes Zoctus*, John the cripple)
 - he was a political leader (*podestà* of many towns), a military officer
 - had 2 wives, Francesca and Zambrasina (whom he married before 1286)
- Paolo's nickname was *il bello* (the handsome)
 - he got married in 1269 with Orabile Beatrice
 - 1282-83: Paolo was a in Florence, as the leader of the Florentine army (minimum age for that position: 36); then he resigned
- Francesca was born possibly around 1260

22.11 Canto 5: the literary sources, Dante

- Dante was approx. 20 at the time of the events
 - he might have known about it in 1304, while staying at the court of Count Guidi (in a castle between Florence and Arezzo); there lived Margherita, daughter of Paolo
 - Dante's account: a woman, Francesca, who lived in Ravenna (city not named directly in the poem, but identified by a metaphor), has a sexual relationship with her brother-in-law; they are both killed by a relative (her husband, never named directly)

22.11 Canto 5: the literary sources, Boccaccio

- Giovanni Boccaccio includes more information in his commentary of the *Divine Comedy* (1373-75); according to his version
 - Francesca is tricked into marrying Gianciotto (she married him by proxy, and he was represented at the ceremony by Paolo)
 - A servant alerts Gianciotto of the affair (1283-85)
 - Gianciotto catches the lovers in Francesca's bedroom, Paolo tries to escape but his cloak gets stuck, held by a nail
 - Gianciotto kills Francesca by accident, and then, enraged, kills Paolo too

22.12 *Inferno*, canto 5.70 ff.: pity and attraction in Dante

- After I had listened to my instructor
Name the knights and ladies of the past,
Pity gripped me, and I lost my bearing.
- I began, "Poet, I would most willingly
Address those two who pass together there
And appear to be so light upon the wind" ...
- As soon as the gust curved them near to us,
I raised my voice to them, "O wind-worn
souls,
Come speak to us if it is not forbidden."

22.12 Paolo and Francesca: the exquisite metaphors, unusual for hell

- Just as the doves when homing instinct calls them
To their sweet nest, on steadily lifted wings
Glide through the air, guided by their
longing,
So those souls left the covey where Dido
lies,
Moving toward us through the malignant air,
So strong was the loving-kindness in my cry.

22.12 Francesca speaks to Dante using the language of courtesy

- O mortal man, gracious and tenderhearted,
Who through the somber air come to visit
The two of us who stained the earth with
blood,
If the King of the universe were our friend,
We would then pray to him to bring you
peace,
Since you show pity for our wretched plight.

22.12 Francesca praises love with the same words and ideas used by the poets of the Sweet New Style

- Love which takes quick hold in a gentle heart
Seized this man for the beauty of the body
Snatched from me -- how it happened galls
me!

Love which pardons no one loved from loving
Seized me so strongly with my pleasure in
him

That, as you see, it still does not leave me.
Love led the two of us to a single death:
Caina awaits him who snuffed out our lives.

22.12 Dante's reaction (1)

- When I had heard those grief-stricken souls,
I bowed my head and held it bowed down low
Until the poet asked, "What are you thinking?"
When I replied, I ventured, "O misery,
How many the sweet thoughts, how much
yearning
Has led these two to this heartbroken pass!"
- Then I turned round again to speak to them,
And I began, "Francesca, your sufferings
Move my heart to tears of grief and pity."

22.12 Their sin was prompted by literature. This is the key issue in the canto: the power of literature, the opposition between sinful literature and the new enlightening literature of the *Comedy*

- One day for our own pleasure we were reading
Of Lancelot and how love pinioned him.
We were alone and innocent of suspicion.
- Several times that reading forced our eyes
To meet and took the color from our faces.
But one solitary moment conquered us.

22.12 Sinful literature can change your behavior: authors and poets have a big responsibility

- When we read there of how the longed-for smile
Was being kissed by that heroic lover,
This man, who never shall be severed from
me,
Trembling all over, kissed me on the mouth.
- That book -- and its author -- was a pander!
In it that day we did no further reading.

22.12 Dante's reaction: Dante the character VS. Dante the narrator

- "The book they were reading was one of the French Arthurian romances... It tells of Lancelot, the most famous of the knights of the Round Table of King Arthur. He fell in love with Arthur's Queen Guinevere. Since Gallehault is a character who encouraged the Queen and her lover, the book is 'a Gallehault indeed,' for it serves Paolo and Francesca as a go-between." (Mandelbaum)
 - The same story provided the basis for the movie *First Knight*

22.12 Dante's reaction: he feels responsible as a former poet of the Sweet New Style group

- While the one spirit spoke these words, the other Wept so sadly that pity swept over me And I fainted as if face to face with death, And I fell just as a dead body falls.
- The language of love in Dante's early poetry is very similar to the language used by the character of Francesca
 - <http://www.italianstudies.org/poetry/vn7.htm>
 - <http://www.italianstudies.org/poetry/vn12.htm>
 - <http://www.italianstudies.org/poetry/vn19.htm>
 - <http://www.italianstudies.org/poetry/lp10.htm>
- The theme of love and spiritual (social?) nobility appears in the works of other poets from that period
 - Guinizelli

22.13 *The Dante Club*: "All Literary Allusions Abandon, Ye Who Enter Here," By JANET MASLIN, *NYT* Feb. 7, 2003

- In the ingenious new literary mystery "The Dante Club," someone with intimate knowledge of "The Divine Comedy" appears to be staging murders that mirror the punishments of Dante's "Inferno." Considering that the prodigiously clever first-time author, Matthew Pearl, is a Harvard- and Yale-educated Dante scholar who won a 1998 prize from the Dante Society of America, it is fortunate that he was content with simply writing a book.
- Mr. Pearl has the ambitious idea of summoning the "Yankee Athens" -- Boston -- in 1865, just after the Civil War and on the eve of a rarefied literary breakthrough. A small, distinguished group, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James Russell Lowell and the rather self-congratulatory Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes ("I have a chair in Anatomy and Physiology at the Medical College -- really more a settee than a chair, for the breadth of its subjects"), has undertaken a controversial project: bringing Dante's work to America and its "ungloved masses."

22.13 *The Dante Club* (2003)

- As Mr. Pearl explains, drawing upon a wealth of pertinent poems, letters, essays, novels and journals, this is no simple undertaking. The idea of a translation for American readers has raised hackles, most notably at Harvard, with which the Dante Club members are variously affiliated. Dr. Augustus Manning, treasurer of the Harvard Corporation, is prepared to make threats to stop publication. "Dr. Manning had no intention of allowing foreign poisons to be spread under the disguise of literature," Mr. Pearl explains.
- But the scholars, with an ardor for Dante to match the author's own, are determined to proceed, at least until their Dante fever turns deadly. In a book that otherwise sticks to historical truth, Mr. Pearl has concocted such a wily, convoluted murder plot that the autograph-signing Dr. Holmes begins sounding like his namesake, Sherlock. And Mr. Lowell declares: "Our Lucifer has been racing us to see what will come first -- Dante translated into ink or into blood!"

22.13 Matthew Pearl, *The Dante Club*

- The cathartic importance of Dante's nightmare visions, and the depth of his sense of justice, are thoughtfully integrated into this plot, even if Mr. Pearl occasionally seems to overreach. Though he makes frequent use of a proud mulatto detective named Nicholas Rey, explaining the postwar bigotry that still plagues him (and drawing upon research from W. Marvin Dulaney's "Black Police in America,") Rey comes across as a composite of facts rather than an animated character.
- Besides, it is the big literary guns who dominate "The Dante Club." And they offer Mr. Pearl so much to work with. Here is the future Supreme Court justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., nicknamed Wendy and wondering why his famous father, known for naming things like anesthesia, couldn't come up with something more creative for his son. Here is the famous publisher William Ticknor, having already caved in under pressure to eschew Walt Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" and now being bullied about Dante's infernal visions.

22.13 Matthew Pearl, *The Dante Club*

- ... Here are cameo appearances by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Ralph Waldo Emerson, the latter being the only American writer with fame to rival Longfellow's.
- The crimes are rendered with a ghastly specificity that suggests Dante by way of "Hannibal" and thus run the risk of being too lurid to suit this book's rarefied atmosphere. For instance, the first murder involves a Massachusetts chief justice who is discovered naked and maggot ridden, as graphically described here. But his fearsome condition jibes not only with Dante, but with the inspired synthesis that shapes the book's finale.

22.13 Matthew Pearl, *The Dante Club*

- Working on a vast canvas, Mr. Pearl keeps this mystery sparkling with erudition. Among its many sidelights are the attack by Dr. Louis Agassiz of Harvard upon Darwin's theory of evolution; a discussion of the Fugitive Slave Act and its consequences; the resistance faced by Italian immigrants, who number only about 300 in the Boston area in 1865...
- Most vivid is the battle between the Harvard Corporation and the principals' artistic freedom. "I do not understand how you can put your good name, everything you've worked for your whole life, on the line for something like this," says Manning, who has threatened to shut down Lowell's Dante class. And Lowell replies: "Don't you wish to heaven you could?"

22.14 Roberto Benigni and Dante

- His Dec. 23 2002 TV show, "L'ultimo del Paradiso" (=The Last [canto] of Paradise), was watched by an average audience of 12,647,000 (46% of the whole audience)
- In interviews released after the show, he announced that he was working on a TV-series on the life of Dante
- He also added that would like to work on St. Francis of Assisi
- <http://www.robortobenigni.altervista.org/paradiso.htm>