

Poignant poetry marks campus visit by Mary Jo Bang

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Alumni, faculty, and students alike gathered to listen as award-winning poet Mary Jo Bang recited pages of her most poignant poetry on Monday (Oct. 21) on the Tulane uptown campus. Bang was recently named the 2013 Newcomb College Institute Florie Gale Arons poet.



The 15th Florie Gale Arons Poet, Mary Jo Bang greets members of the Tulane community after reading from her works. (Photo by Sabree Hill)

[Bang](#) is the author of numerous volumes of poetry, including *Elegy* (2007), which won both the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Alice Fay di Castagnola Award. Her works include *Apology for Want*, *Louise in Love*, *The Downstream Extremity of the Isle of Swans*, *The Bride of E*, and a contemporary translation of *Dante's Inferno*.

"My own interpretation is that Dante saw how bad behavior destroys social fabric," she explained. "It's a warning and also a plea." Her controversial translation spans Dante's circles of hell from cowardice to depravity by morphing the classic tale into an action-adventure story littered with pop culture references. Shakespeare and South Park both appear in her twist on the age-old allegory. "It's not your parent's

Dante's Inferno.”

Bang shared that she draws inspiration from a plethora of sources. “I go forward intuitively,” she said. “I always find it fascinating when chance presents words to you.” Her ideas arise from paintings, word games and sometimes even celebrity-filled magazines spotted on trips to the dentist's office.

Because Bang draws from the pains and joys of life, her stanzas have a vivid, lyrical lilt and are often infused with an element of sadness. Her works are politically astute, occasionally self-mocking and undeniably moving. Using these traits, she has merited a Pushcart Prize, the Katherine Bakeless Nason Prize, and a “Discovery”/*The Nation* award, among others. She currently serves as a professor at Washington University in St. Louis.

The [Florie Gale Arons program](#) was established in 1999 by the daughters of Arons, a 1950 Newcomb alumna.

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