

Dante Society Newsletter

Volume 9, Number 2

March 2003

Letter from the President

Dear Colleagues,

As I write my last President's letter for the Dante Society Newsletter, I think of how much has happened in the six years since I took up the baton passed me by our dear friend, the late Charles Davis. I will take this opportunity for a brief valedictory "State of the Society" message. As you will see, the passing of batons is my theme.

Dante Studies

After the sundering of our long relationship with SUNY Press in 1997, we were fortunate indeed that (with the help of **Wayne Storey**) our journal found a safe haven at Fordham U. Press, where, edited by **Chris Kleinhenz**, it has continued to publish the best of Dante scholarship. The recent centennial issue is a tribute to our heritage, and also a culminating testament to Chris's inspired editorial stewardship; it contains essays spanning one hundred years by ten of our illustrious forebears and concludes with a splendid overview, "Reflections on Dante Studies in America," by **Giuseppe Mazzotta**. After fifteen years of guiding the journal, a term of office second only to that of his predecessor Anthony Pellegrini, Chris announced his retirement at the Council meeting of October 2002, which will take place with the publication of the volume for 2002. Our journal is the true heart and soul of a Society that in many ways anticipated the virtual age: we have no real bricks and mortar home, but we surely have an identity, and it is all wrapped up in *Dante Studies*. In his exercise of prudence and good will on behalf of our journal, Chris has kept *Dante Studies*—the veritable jewel in the crown of the Dante Society—on the *dritta via* for fifteen years, and we are grateful.

I am very pleased to announce that **Steven Botterill** has taken up the challenge of guiding *Dante Studies* in the years ahead. Those who had the pleasure of reading his essays on the year's work in Dante studies in Tibor Wlassics's sprightly journal *Lectura Dantis* will remember Steven's striking combination of open-mindedness with exacting rigor, as well as the deftly amusing style with which he considered our critical efforts. He is a refined writer, gifted with extraordinary good sense, and open to different critical voices, and I am confident that he will make an enormous contribution in the years to come.

Secretary-Treasurer

What can I say of all that **Richard Lansing** has done for the Dante Society? He became our Secretary-Treasurer in 1986, when Joan Ferrante was President. Tapped by Robert Hollander to succeed Anthony J. De Vito, he has provided continuity and institutional memory through three

Presidencies—Ferrante, Davis, and Barolini—and in doing so he has presided over the transition of the Dante Society from an organization that did its business on ledgers and index cards to one that is fully computerized. We should remember that as recently as the 1950s the Dante Society was a Boston-based operation that gathered in the drawing rooms of its members to eat lobster Newburg (served, undoubtedly, by a member's wife) while listening to Singleton. Bob Hollander was the first President of the Society who was not affiliated with Harvard. The successes that we have achieved in recent years in becoming a fully national—and indeed international—Society are the results of hard work: the hard work not of a paid staff but of the Society's elected officials. Foremost among these officials in terms of effort expended—and therefore also in terms of successes achieved and laurels deserved—is Richard Lansing.

In just a brief span of years we have seen how email, which first seemed to promise to lighten our workloads, in fact has had the opposite effect. The revolution in communications technology has not decreased but enormously added to our tasks, by expanding our networks and our possibilities. Just so with the Dante Society. With extraordinary generosity and civic-mindedness (and frequently with the wryest of wits as well), Richard has personally absorbed the exponential growth of the last decades in the job of Secretary-Treasurer. He too has notified the Council that he will be stepping down, and has taken the opportunity to codify the responsibilities of the Secretary-Treasurer for his successor. I think it is instructive for the membership to see the nature of the *pro-bono* work that Richard has been doing for the Society for so well for so long. The ongoing duties of the Secretary-Treasurer now include the following:

A. Maintenance

1. Database: update regularly, on the web; download file periodically for backup; download "views" for Mailing Events and for DS Report.
2. Paper stock: full sheet, Com 10 env., 6 x 3.5 ballot env., Ivory full sheet, Merrill

- Lynch deposit slips, checks, checkbook.
3. Computer programs, files, plus backup system.
4. Website administration: maintain account with Interland, Inc.
5. Archive Prize essays, label.
6. Purchase stamps; toner; computer program updates.
7. Financial records: record expenses and income, enter into spreadsheet; write checks and use credit card; archive monthly/annual statements electronically.
8. Fordham UP records for DS volumes, correspondence.
9. Maintain security-proofed website for Council and Board.

B. Membership Mailings

There are two mailings each year, in November and in April: November includes fall Newsletter, dues notice, addressed return envelop; April includes spring Newsletter, ballot, proxy form, addressed return envelop.

Other recurring mailings

- a. Send valid member address labels to Fordham UP, on Avery 5160.
- b. Send DS Report to DS Editor for each annual volume.
- c. Send Prize Co. members copies of blind essays (after June 30).
- d. Inform authors of receipt in June and of winners in September.

Email tasks

- a. Answer inquires from members and non-members and file.
- b. Communication with President and Council: announce meetings.
- c. Solicit nominations and votes for VP each year in May and announce winner.
- d. Set up lunches and dinners for Council and Board meeting dates.

C. Fiscal responsibilities

1. Pay bills; receive income from dues, sales, gifts; update database.
2. Maintain WCMA portfolio with Merrill Lynch: buy/sell as needed. Home office is Wellesley; Account Exec. is John Ridill: 781-431-4014 / 800-201-9536.
3. File state tax statement with MA, Form 1 and 990, pay fee; no federal unless income average for 3 years is more than \$25,000 per year.
4. Report to Council in fall on state of portfolio (briefly).
5. Compile and submit annual report to Auditors; present annual report at spring Council meeting, and present summary at Annual Meeting.

D. Secretarial responsibilities

1. Prepare dues notices ("prepare" includes formatting and printing);

Annual Meeting on April 27, 2003

BALLOTS

must be received by our office no later than Monday, April 21, to be counted prior to the meeting. The results will be announced at the meeting, as will the results of the new Council's election of a new President.

prepare ballots and proxy forms.

2. Hire assistant to perform the mailings, update database, mail in income to ML.
3. Convene Council and Board meetings.
4. Submit MLA Convention forms to MLA; proof copy in July.
5. Arrange for meeting locations: spring meeting always at Harvard; arrange with Harvard liaison.
6. Communicate with Nominating and Prize Cos., Prize submitters.

E. Dates

1. September, late: inform essay authors of prizes
2. October: fall Council meeting
3. November: fall mailing
4. December: ensure that committees are in place
5. April: spring mailing
6. May: spring Annual Meeting
7. May, late: conduct election of VP annually, and President once every 3 years; new Council alone votes
8. July 1: Collect and prepare essay submissions

F. Mailing contents and policies

1. Fall: fall Newsletter, annual dues notice, return envelope.
2. Spring: spring Newsletter, ballot, proxy, ballot env., return env.; "past due" dues notice for the delinquent.
3. Life (and SL) members do not receive a dues notice, but may be sent an address form.
4. Joint members receive two ballots and proxies in the spring, one return envelope.

Our spring meeting will give us the opportunity to show our gratitude to both Richard and Chris; we look forward to thanking them in person for all that they have done for our Society at the Annual Meeting on April 27 in Cambridge.

Capital Campaign

The Dante Society's development into a truly international organization, from a self-contained and easily governed local club, has generated responsibilities that are fast outstripping the abilities of its elected officials. We are reaching the stage in our history where—if we are to continue making progress—we will need to hire at least one staff-person to handle the Society's infrastructure. To make this critically important next step we will need to add to our endowment. Under the leadership of Nancy Vickers, chair of the Capital Campaign, the Council has been working on the development of a Campaign. More announcements on this topic will be forthcoming at the spring meeting in Cambridge.

Dante2000 Conference Volume

Many of you will remember the splendid conference held in April 2000 at Columbia University. I am pleased to announce that the volume of proceedings, edited by me and Wayne Storey and published by Fordham U. Press, will be out in 2003.

"Illuminating Dante"

The Dante Society's newest initiative has been the building of a visual database of Dante illustrations, called "Illuminating Dante: An Image Archive for Readers of the *Divine*

Comedy." John Ahern, who has spearheaded the project, has put together an enthusiastic and dynamic editorial team; its members are Dario Del Puppo (Italian, Trinity College), Karl Fugelso (Art History, Towson University), Thomas Hill (Art Librarian, Vassar College), Elliott King (Art History, University of Essex), Sandy McVetty (Media Cloisters, Vassar College), and Arielle Saiber (Italian, Bowdoin College). Funded by a Planning Grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, this group has developed foretastes of the enriching meal that "Illuminating Dante" will certainly become; they will be demonstrating these modules—and welcoming members' feedback—at the Annual Meeting in Cambridge.

April 27 ANNUAL MEETING: SAVE THIS WEEKEND!!

You will shortly be receiving invitations to a truly unique meeting planned for the weekend of April 26 and April 27. On April 26 the last of several Dante events will be held at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, featuring a lecture by **John Freccero**. And on April 27 the Dante Society will host a special brunch at the Harvest Restaurant, after which **John Ahern** will present "Illuminating Dante" (with video display), at the Longfellow House. Tours will be conducted after the talk. We look forward to seeing you in Cambridge!

Sincerely,

Teodolinda Barolini
President

Spring Election Slate

The Nominating Committee has placed the following four nominees on this spring=s ballot:

Todd Boli, Ph.D., is an independent scholar living in Framingham, Mass. He has been a member of the Society since 1984 and has served on its audit committee since 1987. He has been most recently employed by the Newton (Mass.) Public Schools to teach Italian. He has taught Italian at Columbia University, University of Florida, Tufts University, and Regis College. From 1996 to 2002, Prof. Boli worked in the international department at Comdex (later Key3 Media), where his duties included contract management, financial reporting, and client services. He has also served as issues director on several major political campaigns. A 1968 graduate of Harvard College, Prof. Boli received his doctorate in Italian from Columbia University in 1981. He has been a Fulbright Scholar and Austin Oldrini Traveling Fellow. His publications include works on Boccaccio and Dante, and he contributed articles to the recent *Dante Encyclopedia*.

Margaret Brose is Professor of Italian and Comparative Literature at the University of California at Santa Cruz. She is co-editor of *Representing Kenneth Burke* (1982) and in 2000

she was awarded the MLA's Marraro-Scaglione Prize for her book, *Leopardi Sublime* (1998). The recipient of numerous grants and teaching awards, including the Fulbright Fellowship, the ACLS grant, two NEH fellowships, and two Visiting Scholar Awards to the American Academy of Rome. She is presently serving a four-year term on the Advisory Editorial Board of the *PMLA*. She is currently working on a book entitled *The Body of Italy: Political Allegories of the Female Figure*.

Gary P. Cestaro is Associate Professor of Italian at DePaul University, Chicago. He also teaches in the Honors Program and is Director of the Program in Comparative Literature. He is the author of *Dante and the Grammar of the Nursing Body* (forthcoming, University of Notre Dame Press) and the editor of a forthcoming volume of essays, *Queer Italia: Same-Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film* (Palgrave-St. Martins).

Brenda Deen Schildgen is Professor of Comparative Literature, University of California, Davis. She has written two books on the Bible, one, *Power and Prejudice: The Reception of the Gospel of Mark*, receiving a Choice Award for 1999. In addition to numerous articles on Dante, Augustine, Chaucer, and the Bible, she is co-editor of *Boccaccio's Decameron and Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, author of *Pagans, Tartars, Jews, and Moslems in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (University of Florida Press, 2001), and *Dante and the Orient* (University of Illinois Press, 2002). She is presently working on a study of iconoclasm.

Guy P. Raffa is Associate Professor of Italian and director of European Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. He is the author of *Divine Dialectic: Dante's Incarnational Poetry* (Toronto, 2000) as well as articles and reviews in the field of Dante studies. He is the project director of the web site danteworlds.lamc.utexas.edu, for which he wrote an original commentary on the *Inferno*, and he received a President's Associates Teaching Excellence Award in 2002 for his teaching of Dante to undergraduates. He serves an associate bibliographer for *Dante Studies* and represents the ATTI's South West region.

The Dante Society of America

Brandeis University, MS 024
P.O. Box 549110
Waltham MA 02454-9110

dsa@dantesociety.org

www.dantesociety.org