

The Dante Society Newsletter

Volume 21, Number 1

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Letter from the President

With considerable trepidation, but also with excitement and good hope, I find myself composing this, my first official “President’s Letter” since it became my honor, privilege, and great good fortune to succeed Nancy Vickers at the end of the Spring 2014 annual meeting. As you know, this has been a period of truly momentous change for us, coming at a time when the popularity of our author and his masterwork are at an all-time high, but when many scholarly societies, including our own, are facing crises of identity and of mission. And yet the vital legacy of President Vickers, along with dynamic and talented Officers and Council members with whom I serve, gives us every reason to believe that our Society’s future will be a very bright one.

What is that legacy? Prior to her presidency, Nancy oversaw the first directed fund-raising campaign in the Society’s history, rescuing us from a slow march toward bankruptcy and putting us in a position to begin making changes that would renew and amplify our traditional mission as we reaffirmed and reinterpreted our identity. As President she introduced important reforms in our financial practices, allowing us for the first time to establish an endowment to supplement and stabilize our budget. She oversaw the drafting and successful membership approval of new By-Laws that allow us to become a truly national organization for the first time ever. With the advice of our new Secretary-Librarian Christian Dupont and others, she orchestrated the agreement with Johns Hopkins University Press that

will both transform the publication practices of *Dante Studies* and provide us with support for a new, improved website that will allow us to offer convenient and expanded services to our membership while creating a platform for efficient management of the Society. And she has, most generously, consented to continue on as Treasurer until our new financial system is fully implemented. In fact, during the last two years of her presidency, Nancy, with superhuman strength and incredible generosity, fulfilled temporarily the roles of both Secretary and Treasurer in addition to her Presidential duties.

As we now turn toward the future, we are most fortunate that last April the role of Secretary, with the added title of Librarian, was assumed by long-time DSA member Christian Dupont. Christian’s extensive experience as a special collections librarian (beginning with the Devers Dante collection at Notre Dame) and his expert knowledge of the history of our Society allow him not only to fulfill the many and indispensable duties of Secretary, but also to reinvigorate the Society’s archival memory and to oversee (with all the necessary technical know-how) the development, launch, and maintenance of our new website in early 2015. In this last endeavor he has also benefited from the excellent advice of Council Member Deborah Parker and newly-elected Vice-President Arielle Saiber, both of whom have built and run influential Dante-related web sites. Going forward he will be working with Council Member Simone Marchesi and others who will be appointed to a newly established website committee to develop innovative content for our new site.

At the same time, the Society’s publications are experiencing a change in leadership. We are grateful that Council Member Beatrice Arduini has agreed to serve as our Newsletter Editor. We are also witnessing a significant changing of the editorial guard at *Dante Studies*. After a full ten years of outstanding service to the journal, Richard Lansing is stepping down, to be succeeded by Justin Steinberg. The editorial board with whom he will be working has meanwhile been restructured with rotating, term-limited appointments. Justin has also generously agreed to host the next annual meeting at

his home institution, the University of Chicago. This will be the very first meeting to be held outside of Cambridge, Massachusetts, the Society’s historical home. And that meeting will be paired with the first in what we hope will become a series of annual mini-conferences co-sponsored by the Society, this one on the topic of Dante’s political theology. The Annual Meeting and conference will take place in Chicago on May 2, 2015.

Last, but certainly not least, in June 2014 the Council approved a proposal to create a new standing committee for Education and Outreach, whose mandate is to broaden the Society’s capacity to fulfill its reinvigorated mission of promoting “the study and appreciation” of Dante—his works, his times, and his extraordinary cultural afterlife—particularly among younger students and the general public. The first chair of this committee is Ronald Herzman, whose long experience with summer seminars on Dante for secondary school teachers, coupled with his work at the NEH, makes him the ideal “Virgil” for the DSA’s journey into this essential area of activity, which has been too long neglected.

All of these exciting changes are directed at you, the members of the Society, and they cannot and will not succeed without your active participation in making them a reality. In a series of presidential messages, I have been informing you in detail of the Council’s activities and of important developments in all of the above-mentioned areas. I, together with the Officers and Councilors of the Society, look forward to receiving your input and suggestions for how best to go forward with them.

Albert Russell Ascoli
ascoli@berkeley.edu

Annual Meeting, May 2014

The Dante Society of America’s 132nd Annual Meeting took place on May 17, 2014, at the Longfellow House—Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Park Ranger Garrett Cloer offered welcoming remarks.

President Vickers announced that in response to the recommendations of the ad

hoc committee on membership and web communications, the Society was finalizing an agreement with Johns Hopkins University Press (JHUP) to become one of its Affiliated Societies. The agreement will result in a comprehensive partnership with JHUP that will produce new and increased sources of revenue for the Society while reducing clerical overhead. JHUP will publish and distribute *Dante Studies* as well as host the Society's website, which will undergo a redesign. Vickers concluded her report by thanking Richard Lansing for his nearly 20 years of dedicated service to the Society as Secretary-Treasurer (from 1986-2002) and Editor-in-Chief of *Dante Studies* (since 2005).

Vickers then introduced the annual program presentation on "Dante in the Classroom and the Community." Panelists Ronald Herzman (State University of New York College at Geneseo) and William Stephany (University of Vermont, retired) gave an overview of the NEH summer seminar on Dante for high school teachers that they have been conducting since 1999. Two of their former seminar participants, Barbara Ellison Rosenblit (Weber School, Atlanta) and Terry Quinn (St. Louis University High School), then spoke about their teaching experiences.

After the panel presentation, Vickers introduced Vice-President Albert Ascoli as the newly elected President. In thanking Vickers for her extraordinary service, Ascoli commented, "Because of what Nancy has accomplished, I and my fellow Council members now have an unparalleled opportunity to renew old programs and to develop new ones that will foster the great tradition of academic study of Dante in North America, and also help to make the treasures of our poet available to younger students and to a more general public." Following a long, warm round of applause, the assembly adjourned to enjoy refreshments in the garden.



Newly elected President Albert Ascoli presents President Emerita Nancy Vickers a humorous gift—an action figure of Dante based on the "Dante's Inferno" video game.

Spring Election Results

Last spring, the membership of the Dante Society elected Deborah Parker and Justin Steinberg to the Council for three-year terms (2014-2017). The Council unanimously elected Christian Dupont as Secretary-Librarian and Albert Russell Ascoli as the Society's next President. Nancy Vickers agreed to continue to serve as Treasurer until a successor is named. In June, Arielle Saiber was elected Vice-President by the Council for a term of one year.

Winter Meeting

The Dante Society will meet at the 2015 MLA Annual Convention in Vancouver on Friday, January 9, 2015, from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m., at the Vancouver Convention Center, East 8, VCC East. President Ascoli will preside. Daniela Boccassini (University of British Columbia) will lecture on "Re-envisioning Dante's Mind. Memory, Imagination, Individuation." We regret that vigorously enforced MLA rules require that everyone who wishes to attend the lecture be registered for the MLA Convention.

Next Annual Meeting Set for May 2, 2015, in Chicago

The Dante Society of America will hold its Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, on Saturday, May 2, 2015. The business meeting will be paired with a conference on "Dante's Political Theology," organized by Justin Steinberg (University of Chicago). A detailed program will appear in the "Events" section of the DSA website and the Spring 2015 Newsletter.

For further information concerning the conference, contact Justin Steinberg's conference assistant, Madison Hendren at madison1@uchicago.edu.

2014 Essay Prize Results

The 2014 Dante Prize for the best undergraduate essay was awarded to Christian Coppa (University of Notre Dame) for his essay: "From the 'selva oscura' to the 'divina foresta': Sylvan Symbols in Inferno and Purgatorio." No Grandgent Prize was awarded this year.

We are grateful to Prize Committee members Ronald Herzman, Dennis Looney (Chair), and Vittorio Montemaggi for their thoughtful reading and judging of the entries.

The deadline for submissions for the 2015 competitions is June 30. The prize amounts are \$500 for the Dante Prize and \$750 for the Grandgent Award. Society members are invited to help promote the competitions and encourage submissions.

Dante Sessions at Kalamazoo

The Fiftieth International Congress on Medieval Studies will be held at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, May 14-17, 2015. The Dante Society is sponsoring the following series of sessions, arranged by Alison Cornish (University of Michigan).

For additional information, please visit: <http://wmich.edu/medieval/congress/sessions.html>.

DANTE I: HYBRIDITY

Chair: Roberta Morosini (Wake Forest University)

Albert Russell Ascoli (The University of California at Berkeley): "Ponete mente almen come sono bella": Poetry and Prose, Goodness and Beauty, in *Convivio*."

Jonathan Combs-Schilling (The Ohio State University): "Lifting Up the Low Reeds: The Status of Genre in Dante's Eclogues."

Akash Kumar (Columbia University): "He Said/She Said: Hybridity and Cultural Contamination in Dante's Lyric Poetry."

Meredith Ringel-Ensley (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill): "Haptic Poetics and Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia*."

DANTE II: OTHER DISCOURSES

Chair: Jason Aleksander (St. Xavier University)

Stanley Benfell (Brigham Young University): "The Resurrection in Dante's *Paradiso*."

Corey Flack (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign): "The Counterfeiter and the Geometer: The Idea of *Misura* in *Inf. xxx*."

Vincent Pollina (Tufts University): "The Fate of Courtly Convention in Dante's *Rime Petrose*."

Francis R. Hittinger (Columbia University): "Dante Sinistra: Aristotle and Discourses of Greed in the Medieval Italian Lyric."

DANTE III: OTHER CONTEXTS

Chair: Albert Russell Ascoli (The University of California at Berkeley)

Roberta Morosini (Wake Forest University): “*Un uom nasce a la riva de l’Indo (Pd XIX, 70). Mediterranean Dante or Tales that Travel in “Quel mar che la terra inghirlanda.”*

Beatrice Arduini (University of Washington): “Reading Dante in the Eighteenth Century: Anton Maria Biscioni’s 1723 *Convivio*.”

Jelena Todorović (University of Wisconsin-Madison): “Biscioni’s Edition of the *Vita Nova* and What It Meant for the Libello’s Fortuna.”

Zane D.R. Mackin (Columbia University): “*Dante Shinkyoku: Fiction and Fact in Postwar Japan*”

The EBDSA

As the *Electronic Bulletin of the Dante Society of America (EBDSA)* nears the conclusion of its twentieth year of publication, the on-line journal continues to encourage the submission of short articles on any aspect of Dante criticism. These are limited to 1500 words, and may be written in English, Italian, or French. The Board also accepts comments to essays posted on the site. *EBDSA* is linked under Publications on the DSA website.

Nominations Sought for New Council Members

Members are invited to send “nominations from the floor” for possible candidates to run for election to Council in Spring, 2015, to any member of the Nominating Committee: Olivia Holmes, chair (oholmes@binghamton.edu), Susanna Barsella (barsella@fordham.edu), or Simone Marchesi (simonem@princeton.edu). If possible, nominations should be submitted by the end of December. The Committee will then deliberate on the potential nominees, and propose a slate of four candidates for the two vacancies on the Council when Albert Ascoli and Arielle Saiber complete their current three-year terms of service as elected councilors.

Members are also permitted to nominate candidates for election to the Council at any annual meeting of the Society by delivering to the Society’s Secretary at least forty-five (45) calendar days prior to

such annual meeting a written notice of nomination signed by at least ten (10) members, providing the name and curriculum vitae of each candidate. The next annual meeting will take place on May 2, 2015, which means that nominations by the membership must be received by March 18, 2015.

Council Members, 2014-15

Beatrice Arduini
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Albert Russell Ascoli, President
University of California, Berkeley
Christian Dupont, Secretary-Librarian
Boston College
Ronald Herzman, ex officio, Chair, Education and Outreach Committee
State University of New York at Geneseo
Richard Lansing, ex officio
Editor-in-Chief, *Dante Studies*
Brandeis University
Simone Marchesi
Princeton University
Deborah Parker
University of Virginia
Arielle Saiber, Vice-President
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Justin Steinberg
University of Chicago
Nancy Vickers,
President Emerita and Treasurer
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Ad Hoc Committee on Web Site

Redesign, 2013-14

Christian Dupont, Chair
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Albert Russell Ascoli
Univ. of California, Berkeley
Deborah Parker
University of Virginia
Arielle Saiber
Bowdoin College

Website Committee, 2014-15

Simone Marchesi, Chair
Princeton University
(additional appointments pending)

THE DANTE SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Note new postal mailing address:

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www.dantesociety.org



Where's my dues renewal envelope?

Not to worry ... we didn't forget!

In early 2015, we'll be launching a new DSA website, which will include, among other new features, the ability to *renew your membership, pay your annual dues, and make additional donations completely online!* Keep an eye out for further announcements in the New Year, both by email and regular mail (for those of you who prefer the latter, it will still be possible to mail us a check).