

Approved Minutes of the
**132nd Annual Meeting of the
Dante Society of America**

Saturday, May 17, 2014

Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters
National Historic Site

Welcome

President Nancy Vickers welcomed the membership to the 132nd Annual Meeting of the Dante Society of America and called the meeting to order at 10:30am, noting that a quorum had been met with 149 valid proxies and approximately 30 members in attendance. She then introduced Park Ranger Garrett Cloer from Longfellow House-Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site, who offered additional welcoming remarks.

Approval of Minutes

Vice President Albert Ascoli read the Minutes of the 131st Annual Meeting of the Membership, held on May 18, 2013, and Acting Secretary/Clerk Nancy Vickers read the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Membership held on January 9, 2014. Vickers called for additions or corrections to the Minutes. There being none, the approval of the Minutes was moved, seconded, and conferred unanimously by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report

President Vickers, in her role as Acting Secretary-Treasurer, delivered the Treasurer's Report. She began by noting that her report would be only preliminary given the extraordinary demands of the by-laws revision project and the membership and web communications management initiative to which she had been giving full attention over the past several months. She continued by reporting that she had requested and received from the Audit Committee an automatic extension to August 15, 2014, for preparing the Society's federal and Commonwealth tax filings. The appropriate extension forms have been mailed, and the Committee has agreed to meet in early summer to review the reconciled 2013 financial records in detail as well as our completed Form 990EZ and Massachusetts Form PC. A complete Treasurer's Report for the past year and an Audit will be completed at that time.

Vickers reported that her monthly review of statements from Merrill Lynch indicate that the Society's accounts are in good order and that it is doing well financially. As of April 30, 2014, the value of the Merrill Lynch combined Endowment Management Account (EMA) was \$271,267. This compares to \$241,395 on April 30, 2013. The increase in the value of our accounts was approximately 12%, and Vickers remarked that the Society had clearly achieved good growth in its net worth over the past year.

Of the total \$271,267 on the balance sheet, \$21,375 are in the Society's cash/operating account and \$249,892 are in its investment account. The Society's current asset allocation is: Fixed Income 49%, Equities 42%, and Cash 9%. Vickers noted that the Society appears to be overweight in Fixed Income. She has asked an independent investment advisor to assess the current asset allocation and make suggestions for rebalancing to Council.

Vickers called for questions. There being none, she concluded her report.

Audit Committee

Per the above report of Acting Secretary-Treasurer Vickers, there was no separate report of the Audit Committee at this time. The current members of the Audit Committee include Christopher Kleinhenz (chair), Joseph Luzzi, and Arielle Saiber.

Nominating Committee

Nominating Committee chair Simone Marchesi presented the report on behalf of the Committee, whose members included Susanna Barsella and Brenda Schildgen. Marchesi thanked the membership for its high level of participation in this year's election. He added that the slate of nominees was very strong and the vote very close. He announced that Deborah Parker and Justin Steinberg were elected to the Council for the three-year term of 2014-2017.

President Vickers thanked the Committee for its service and past chair Peter Hawkins for providing the new chair with useful instructions.

Prize Committee

President Vickers introduced Vittorio Montemaggi as member representative of the Prize Committee. In doing so she noted that Montemaggi and fellow Council member Joseph Luzzi had concluded their three-year terms on the Council and thanked them for their service. In particular, she thanked Montemaggi for his work on the revision of the award guidelines.

Montemaggi presented the report on behalf of the Prize Committee, which included Dennis Looney as chair and Ronald Herzman. The Dante Prize of \$500 for the best undergraduate student essay was awarded to Kelly Loew of the University of California, Los Angeles for her essay "Come l'uom s'eterna': Poetry, Pride, and Textile in the Divine Comedy." The Charles Hall Grandgent Award of \$750 for the best graduate student essay was awarded to Joshua Reid of the University of Kentucky for his essay "Softening the Brows of Dread Renown: Rossetti's Revision of Dantean Portraiture."

In concluding his report and congratulating the winners in absentia, Montemaggi commented on the impressive range and quality of the submissions as a sign of the health of the prize program. He asked those present to encourage their students to submit essays for next year's competition.

President's Report

President Vickers began her report by reminding the membership that Christian Dupont had recently been elected to Council as Secretary/Clerk and Librarian. She noted that Dupont had been contributing admirable service to the ad hoc committee on membership and web communications over the past year. She noted further that as a professional librarian and archivist, Dupont will explore options for the organization and storage of the Society's permanent records.

Vickers announced that in response to the recommendations of the ad hoc committee on membership and web communications, the Society is finalizing an agreement with Johns Hopkins University Press (JHUP) to become one of its Affiliated Societies. JHUP will publish and distribute *Dante Studies*; host the Society's website, which will undergo a redesign; provide a series of web-based administrative services, including support for online membership registration and dues payment, an online members-only directory with opt-in/out options, members-only web content, online voting, and more. The agreement will result in a comprehensive partnership with JHUP that will produce new and increased sources of revenue for the Society while reducing the clerical overhead involved in maintaining the Society's operations to a minimum.

Richard Lansing will continue as Editor-in-Chief of *Dante Studies* for the 2013 and 2014 issues. The 2013 issue will be published in the coming weeks and the 2014 will appear in the winter-spring of 2015. Both issues will be published with the Society's current publisher, Fordham University Press. Justin Steinberg has been appointed by the Council to succeed Lansing as Editor-in-Chief and will be responsible for the publication of the 2015 issue, which will be issued by JHUP in 2015. The Annual Report of the Society for the previous year, which has been traditionally published as part of *Dante Studies* and which led to the issuing and numbering of the volumes according to past years, will be issued separately by JHUP as an online publication that will be available from the Society's new website.

Vickers noted that all but 28 members of the Society now have email addresses and so will be able to take advantage of the online membership services that will become available in 2015 through the affiliation with JHUP. Those members who do not have email addresses will continue to receive communications, membership and voting services by regular mail.

Vickers concluded her report by recognizing and 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). She remarked in particular how Lansing had rescued the journal and returned it to regular annual publication during his tenure, a service without which JHUP might not have considered the Society's petition to become one of its Affiliated Societies. Vickers noted that the Society will have ample opportunities in the future to honor and accord proper thanks to Lansing, but concluded her remarks by asking those gathered to join her in offering Lansing a warm round of applause.

Annual Meeting Program

President Vickers introduced the annual program panel presentation on “Dante in the Classroom and the Community” and panelists Ronald Herzman (State University of New York College at Geneseo), William Stephany (University of Vermont, retired), Barbara Ellison Rosenblit (Weber School, Atlanta), and Terry Quinn (St. Louis University High School).

Since 1999, Herzman and Stephany have jointly offered ten seminars for school teachers on Dante’s *Commedia* in Siena, Italy, through the sponsorship of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Rosenblitt and Quinn are high school teachers who participated in two of the seminars. The panel focused on how high school teachers have engaged their students and surrounding communities in the study of Dante’s works.

The presentations lasted for about forty minutes after which the panelists entertained questions.

Remarks of Vice-President/President-Elect

President Vickers introduced Vice-President Albert Ascoli as the newly elected President of the Dante Society of America. Ascoli delivered the following prepared remarks:

“Thank you, Nancy. It is an extraordinary feeling to stand here in Longfellow’s house, assuming an office that Longfellow himself devised and held first. Solemn as that feeling is, it is, for me, a more personal and an equal honor to follow in the footsteps of Nancy Vickers, who has done nothing less than refound this venerable Society, so that it may most effectively pursue its redefined mission of encouraging ‘the study and appreciation of the time, life, works and cultural legacy of Dante Alighieri.’

“Despite the Dante Society’s historical claims for our attention, Nancy had no reason to seek the honor of the presidency. She is a brilliant medieval and early modern interdisciplinary scholar, among whose interests Dante was not the only one, though she has written wonderfully about him. She has been a department chair, a dean and, of course, president of Bryn Mawr College, and she brought all her experience and her knowledge and her charisma to bear on the problem of readying this little organization to carry on into the future, when she might well have chosen to rest on well-deserved laurels.

In her two terms as president, she dramatically increased our endowment (though, for those of you who have checkbooks, work still remains to be done on that front!), introduced normal and responsible financial practices, and successfully carved out the revision of the Society’s by-laws and its organization, making it easier for us to reach out beyond the borders of Cambridge and Massachusetts. Furthermore, the changes to our website and our lead publication, *Dante Studies*, that she has set in motion will make an astonishing difference in our ability to honor Dante and to serve our membership.

“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. You will be hearing more about our initiatives in the weeks and months to come.

“For now I ask that we thank Nancy for service far above and beyond. My hero!”

Ascoli led the assembled audience in a long and warm round of applause and presented her with a humorous gift—an action figure of Dante based on the Dante’s Inferno video game.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:45pm. A reception for speakers and Society members was held in the carriage house and garden of Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian Dupont
Secretary/Clerk and Librarian
The Dante Society of America