

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the 38th Conference of International Byron Society

Notre Dame University-Louaize, Lebanon

6 July 2012

International Joint-President, John Clubbe, chair, called the meeting to order at 5:34. Present were thirty conference participants from eleven IBS societies and three countries where it is hoped societies will be formed –the United Arab Emirates, China, and Poland. In the absence of Brigitte Lohmar, the official recording secretary, Joan Blythe was asked to take the minutes.

Welcome and Gifts of Gratitude

The chair began by welcoming all who were in attendance. He then on behalf of everyone at the conference expressed his heartiest thanks to Naji Oueijan and his outstanding committee for arranging the magnificent conference in Lebanon, a dream of Naji and of the IBS for over a decade. It has long been an IBS tradition to give gifts to those who have contributed most to bringing our conferences to fruition. Foremost to be recognized this year was Naji. He was given an “old pawn” (that is vintage Indian jewelry generally valued more than recently made jewelry) bola with Zuni inlay work depicting an eagle. Like the eagle in Byron’s “English Bards” “soaring to the skies” Naji in conceiving and carrying out this conference has soared aloft with a mighty achievement. Harvey Oueijan, who helped in numerous ways as his father’s right-hand man, was given an “old pawn” inlay Zuni ring. All the students, whose cheerful and energetic assistance were invaluable in maintaining smooth conference proceedings, were given cds of classical music, mostly of Beethoven, since the chair chose them. May Malouf and Nawal Oueijan who were not present would be given gifts of jewelry at the banquet. At the banquet cds of classical music were also given to Organizing Committee members Carol Kfoury, Dean of the NDU Faculty of Humanities, Sami Samra, Chair of the Department of English Translation, and Education at NDU, and Joshua Gonsalves of the American University of Beirut.

Apologies for absence

The chair conveyed regrets from Rosa Florou, Thérèse Tessier and Byron Raizis, all of whom have been having serious health problems. The chair expressed deep gratitude to these three for all they have done to support the IBS and to promote the study and appreciation of Byron’s works. He also on behalf of everyone in the IBS fervently wished them a speedy return to full health.

Eric Wishart gave greetings and apologies for Ken Purslow, Innes Merabishvil, Alan Gregory, and Rosemarie Rowley.

Bernard Beatty gave apologies for Alan Rawes and Michael O'Neill

Approval of 2011 Minutes

Bernard Beatty moved they be approved. Peter Myrian seconded the motion.

Election of Officers

Since the IBS constitution is in flux the chair proposed the following:

--That Brigitte Lohmar continue in her position as recording secretary

--That Eric Wishart and David McKay remain as joint treasurers

--That since after 26 years of service he was retiring from his position as joint president and that since Byron Raizis is also retiring from his position as joint president and since John Lytton resigned in 2011, the following joint-presidents be appointed:

Alan Rawes, Jonathan Gross, and Naji Oueijan.

Peter Myrian moved that this slate be appointed. Martin Procházka seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

The chair reported that Joan Blythe would no longer be serving as corresponding secretary and that the joint presidents should select a person or persons for that post as needed.

Treasurer's Report

Eric Wishart distributed a handout detailing the current state of IBS finances which are very healthy. He did encourage societies, however, to pay their fair share of dues. But he added that in cases of financial hardship that intellectual capital should be taken into consideration. An organization is not healthy without the wealth of personal commitment and action.

Dangerfield Award

The Dangerfield Award is given to the author or editor of the best book (or books) published on Byron in the last several years. For the past three years the award has been funded by the London Byron Society, the principal beneficiary of Elma Dangerfield's estate.

The winners this year, like this conference in Lebanon, bear witness that IBS as an organization with a truly world-wide scope. Each winner will receive 500£.

1. Diego Saglia, editor of Byron e il segno plurale. Tracce del sé, percorsi di scrittura. (Bononia UP, 2011), a collection of essays by distinguished international scholars.
2. Itsuyo Higashinaka, Byron the Protean Poet (Tokyo: Kindai Bungeisha, 2010). This is a collection of 19 of Itsuyo Higashinaka's essays, some of which have appeared in proceedings of Byron conferences over the past two decades. Although a few essays are in Japanese, most are in English.

Future IBS Conferences

2013: Bernard Beatty gave an enthusiastic preview of the first IBS conference ever to be held in London. "Byron: the Poetry of Politics & the Politics of Poetry" is scheduled to take place at King's College, London, July 1-6, 2013. Special events include a visit to the Elgin Marbles and reception hosted by the British Museum, excerpts from Verdi's I Due Foscari performed by students of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Orthodox vespers in King's College sung by the Chapel Choir, and an optional excursion to Harrow School. Lodgings nearby could be quite reasonable starting at 50 £ a night. Other options include the Strand Hotel at a "knock off price." The call for papers will go out in September 2012 and will be available on the IBS web site and elsewhere. The deadline for submissions is January, 2013. Eleven academic sessions are scheduled.

2014: The chair said he had received a proposal from Innes Merabishvil, for a conference in Tbilisi, Georgia. Although he did not suggest a vote about it at this time, he strongly urged future serious consideration of her offer since she has been pressing for an IBS conference in Georgia since 1997.

Regarding a conference in Georgia, Olivier Feignier then reported that he had heard from his brother, Denis, about a recent visit with Innes in Tbilisi. Denis had been very impressed by Innes's courtesy. In just a few hours she had told much to him about Byron Studies in Tbilisi and shown him places in Tbilisi which contribute to its merit as a venue for an IBS conference.

Peter Myrian responded to Innes's proposal by saying that while he thought Tbilisi produced "terrific wine" and could be a "fantastic" venue, he was concerned about security since recently there have been kidnappings and some other atrocities, apparently politically motivated.

2016: Samvel Abrahamyan said he hoped the 2016 conference could take place at Yerevan State University in Armenia to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Byron's studying Armenian at the Armenian Mekhitarist Convent on the Island of San Lazzaro near Venice.

Peter Myrian noted that the Armenian government would be very supportive of a Byron conference in 2016 because of the anniversary concept.

Olivier strongly opposed this proposal since he and the Byron Society of France have been eagerly planning to host a conference in 2016 in order to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Byron's travels on the European continent. An academic conference in Paris would be followed by visits via train and bus to Chamonix, Coppet, Chillon, and Geneva.

Some thought that while Olivier's proposal was very exciting, the logistics of getting from place to place could involve difficulties and much expense.

Qingbao Song said he wanted to found a Byron Society and host a conference in China very soon.

The chair said that instead of voting on future conference venues all those who wished to host a conference for the years 2014, 2015, and 2016 should submit to the joint presidents a one-page single-spaced proposal. He expressed appreciation to Innes, Samvel, and Olivier for their offers.

The Advisory board

The Advisory Board of the IBS met July 2. Board members have been working hard on a new constitution. They realize that in addition to the constitution the major issues which must be addressed are the web site and the establishment of our own email address list.

Open Forum

Starting last year the chair instituted the open forum time so that anyone attending might express an opinion.

Vishvanathan Manikan expressed the wish to found a Byron Society in Dubai where he currently works.

Jonathan Gross gave an eloquent tribute of thanks to John Clubbe for his years of dedicated leadership of the IBS and for his personal encouragement vis à vis scholarly projects and involvement in the society. Jonathan also praised Naji's most recent book about what Byron might have done during a visit to Lebanon.

Gratitude was again expressed to Rosa Florou for all she has done to promote Byron among youth through student conferences in Messolonghi. . Naji thought it was imperative to continue what Rosa has started in the event she could no longer sponsor the student conferences.

A round of applause was given in honor of Rosa and Byron Raizis..

Conclusion

The chair spoke about a “new era” in the society beginning with the three new joint presidents, the newly established Advisory Board, and the revised constitution to come. He said that after 26 years he is glad to pass on the baton to younger scholars. Bernard initiated a standing ovation in expressing appreciation for John’s sustained work on behalf of the IBS.

Itsuyo then proposed that John stay on in some official advisory capacity. Taking up this idea, Martin proposed that John be given the title of Honorary Vice President. The chair thanked Itsuyo and Martin for their generous thoughts but declined to have any official position. He said he would always be available for consultation if needed and would always remain vitally interested in the on-going work of the International Byron Society.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Blythe, Corresponding Secretary

15 September 2012.

