

Approved minutes of the
**134th Annual Meeting of the
Dante Society of America**

Saturday, April 23, 2016
Carmichael Auditorium
Brown University

President's Welcome

President Albert Ascoli welcomed the membership and visitors to 134th Annual Meeting of the Dante Society of America and called the meeting to order at approximately 9:15am, noting that a quorum had been met with 110 valid proxies and approximately 20 members in attendance.

Approval of Minutes from the 133rd Annual Meeting

Secretary-Librarian Christian Dupont distributed copies of the draft minutes of the 133rd annual meeting of the Society held on May 2, 2015, and invited members present to review them. Dupont called for additions or corrections to the Minutes. There being none, approval of the minutes was moved, seconded, and conferred unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Nancy Vickers presented her report on the assets and financial state of the Society.

The combined Merrill Lynch Endowment Management Account (EMA) began 2015 at \$251,483 and ended at \$241,151. Of that closing amount, the cash/operating sub-account totaled \$12,233 and the investment/endowment sub-account, \$228,918. Our combined asset allocation was: equities 49%; fixed income 44%; and cash 7%.

The cash/operating sub-account opened 2015 at \$16,102 and closed at \$12,233. The 2015 dues passed into the FY16 budget in the course of the Society's move to the association management services provided by its new journal publisher, Johns Hopkins University Press. Now that the Society has completed its complex transitional phase, all dues sent in a given fiscal year will consistently appear in the accounting for that year.

The investment/endowment sub-account began 2015 at \$235,380; its close at \$228,918 represents a decline of 2.75%. This downward turn is attributable to a substantial slowdown in the markets. These results are not dramatically unlike those of other not-for-profit endowments. The Council has discussed investment performance and agreed to

evaluate alternative investment scenarios. A subcommittee has been appointed to advise the Council; it is currently working with a pro bono, independent consultant.

Audit Committee Report

Secretary-Librarian Dupont read the report of the Audit Committee submitted by Christopher Kleinhenz, chair:

The Audit Committee consisting of Guy Raffa, Janet Levarie Smarr, Christian Dupont, and Christopher Kleinhenz (Chair) met via conference call on Friday, August 28, 2015 and examined the 2014 year-end reports for the accounts of the Dante Society of America as submitted by EMA (Merrill Lynch Wealth Management). The Committee is pleased to report that all the books are in order.

We express our thanks to our Treasurer, Nancy Vickers, and to our President, Albert Ascoli, for their invaluable contributions to the Society and for their expert husbanding of its finances.

Following the reading of the report, President Ascoli call for a motion to approve the Audit Committee Report and the Treasurer's Report. A motion was made, seconded, and approved.

Secretary-Librarian's Report

Secretary-Librarian Dupont gave a brief report on the Society's membership.

As of March 31, 2016, the Society had the following numbers of members, by category (actual and percentage differences with respect to final 2015 figures are included in parentheses):

- Regular = 257 (+3 / +1%)
- Secondary Joint = 5 (+3 / +150%)
- Life (including former Sustaining Life) = 81 (+1 / +1%)
- Student = 43 (-4 / -8%)
- Honorary = 11 (-1 / -9%)
- Fellows = 3 (0 / 0%)
- Institutional = 6

Dupont encouraged members and prospective members to take advantage of the online membership registration and renewal options available on the Society's website.

Nominating Committee Report

President Ascoli asked Secretary-Librarian Dupont to present the report of the 2015-2016 Nominating Committee on behalf of its chair, Ronald L. Martinez. Dupont began by

noting that in addition to Martinez, Olivia Holmes and Antonio Rossini served as members of the committee.

The committee was charged for nominating four individuals to fill two vacancies on Council. The vacancies were created by the conclusion of the terms of Beatrice Arduini and Simone Marchesi.

The four nominees who appeared on the ballot distributed to the Society's membership included Martin Eisner (Duke University), Jason Houston (Gonzaga University), Francesca Southerden (Wellesley College), Jelena Todorović (University of Wisconsin, Madison).

Dupont reported that 138 members cast their ballots through the online voting system provided by Johns Hopkins University Press – the first time that the Society's elections had been conducted electronically. He announced that Eisner and Southerden had been elected and offered congratulations. He also thanked Houston and Todorović in their absence for having accepted the committee's nomination. Finally, he thanked the members of the committee for their service.

Prize Committee Report

President Ascoli asked Secretary-Librarian Dupont to present the report of the 2015-2016 Prize Committee on behalf of its former chair, Vittorio Montemaggio. Dupont began by noting that in addition to Montemaggio, Ronald Herzman, and Kristina Olson.

The committee received twelve submissions for the Dante Prize for the best undergraduate student essay, which carries an award of \$500. The committee decided to split the prize for 2015 and make awards to Melinda Wilson (UCLA) for her essay: "From Shipwreck to Salvation: Family, Division and Self-Sacrifice in the *Commedia*," and to Alex Cuadrado (Princeton University) for his essay: "Fraud Defrauded: Allusion and Analogy in *Inferno*."

The committee received five submissions for the Charles Hall Grandgent Award for the best graduate student essay, which carries an award \$750. The 2015 Prize was awarded to Nicole Madeleine Adair Jones (University of California, Berkeley) for her essay: "Knowledge, Commentary, *Pane Orzato*: Dante's Defensive Praise of the *Volgare* in *Convivio*."

The Prize Committee is pleased to welcome submissions for the first annual Durling Prize. Established in memory of our late colleague Robert M. Durling, this award will recognize excellence in the teaching of Dante's life, time, and works by educators working in North American secondary schools (i.e., high schools and middle schools). The prizewinner will receive a monetary award in the amount of \$1,000.

In concluding the report, Dupont encouraged those present to encourage submissions for for each of the Society's prizes. Complete submissions guidelines and deadlines are available on the Society's website.

President's Report

Ascoli began his report by commenting further on the establishment of the Durling Prize. He noted the significance of the Prize in recognizing the important contributions that secondary school teachers make to continuing widespread awareness and appreciation for the time, life, works, and cultural legacy of Dante Alighieri—a contribution that resonates deeply with Society's reinvigorated mission and recent appointment of an Education and Outreach committee and director. He also remarked on the significant generosity of the family and friends of Robert M. Durling, as well as many members of the Dante Society, in creating the prize fund, which is managed as a part of the Society's quasi-endowment, generating income each year to fund the annual award. The recipient of the first Durling Prize award will be announced later this year.

Complementing the Durling Prize initiative, a new section of the new *Dante Notes* space on the Society's website will soon begin presenting examples of secondary student writing on Dante. Four student essays are currently being prepared for online publication and will be posted in June. Edited by Simone Marchesi, *Dante Notes* represents a continuation of the *Electronic Bulletin of the Dante Society of America*, founded by Robert Hollander in 1995. In addition to publishing short scholarly essays and responses, *Dante Notes* will include also a pedagogy section as well as the new student essays section.

Under the editorship of Justin Steinberg, the first issue of *Dante Studies* to be issued in the same year as its volume numbering was published in December 2015. The opportunity to synchronize the publication and distribution years was afforded by the move to a new publisher, Johns Hopkins University Press (JHUP), and the Council decision to publish the annual report of the Society separately on the Society's website. The 2015 issue is also the first to which members and institutional subscribers have immediate online access, through JHUP's Project Muse platform. Electronic access to issues older than five years will continue to be accessible through JSTOR. The 2015 issue of *Dante Studies* includes the traditional American Dante Bibliography feature for the previous year, 2014, but Steinberg and a Council subcommittee have been exploring ways to publish the American Dante Bibliography separately, online. The 2015 issue includes eight scholarly essays selected from a healthy pool of submissions. The selection and preparation of essays for the 2016 issue is well underway, with anticipated publication date of December 2016. Submissions for future issues are always encouraged and welcome.

Ascoli thanked Ronald L. Martinez, professor of Italian and Brown University, for organizing and hosting the conference that opened yesterday evening with Marvin Trachtenberg's keynote address and will continue through the remainder of the day. Titled "Dante and the Protocols of Performance: Theatricality, Ritual, Feasts," the conference includes a total of seven speakers from the United States and Italy. The free conference is sponsored by Brown University with additional support from the Dante Society of America.

Next year's annual meeting will be held at the University of Oregon on Saturday, May 6, 2017. In conjunction with our Annual Meeting, University of Oregon professors Regina Psaki and Warren Ginsberg will host a symposium on "Translation in Dante: Dante in Translation." Further details will be posted to the Society's website and shared through its electronic mailing list and newsletter as they become available.

At its business meeting on Friday, Council discussed possible sites for future annual meetings and conferences. Suggestions from members are always welcome.

For the Modern Languages Association (MLA) Annual Convention, which was held in Austin, Texas, from January 7-10, 2016, the Dante Society organized a session titled "Digital Dante" that featured five panelists. Panelists emphasized the pioneering role of Dante Studies in digitization and discussed multimedia Dante-related academic resources that combine traditional elements of scholarly research with new communication and presentation possibilities enabled by networked digital technology.

The Society sponsored two sessions at the 62nd annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, held in Boston on March 31-April 2, 2016. The first session focused on "Dante and Science" and the second on "Communities of Reading and Dante's *Divine Comedy*."

The 51st International Congress on Medieval Studies was held at Western Michigan University on May 12-15, 2016. The Dante Society sponsored three sessions involving a total of twelve presenters. The themes included "Gender and Medium," "Female Figures," and "Philosophical Questions."

Calls for papers for next year's conferences and sponsored sessions will be posted to the Society's electronic mailing list.

Ascoli closed his remarks by welcoming Martin Eisner and Francesca Southerden to their elected roles on Council. He also thanked Beatrice Arduini for her service on Council, noting that she will continue as Newsletter editor. He likewise thanked Simone Marchesi as an elected member of Council, noting that he will continue as an ex-officio member in his ongoing capacity as editor of *Dante Notes*.

New Business

Ascoli opened the floor for questions and new business. None was put forward.

Adjournment

There being no new business, Ascoli called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made, seconded, and approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:00am. Following a short break, the Annual Conference on “Dante and the Protocols of Performance: Theatricality, Ritual, Feasts” convened in the same room.

Respectfully submitted,

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