

Approved Minutes of the
**133rd Annual Meeting of the
Dante Society of America**

Saturday, May 2, 2015
408 Wieboldt Hall
University of Chicago

President's Welcome

President Albert Ascoli welcomed the membership to 133rd Annual Meeting of the Dante Society of America and called the meeting to order at 9:15am, noting that a quorum had been met with 124 valid proxies and approximately 20 members in attendance. Ascoli noted that it was the first time the annual meeting had been held outside of Cambridge, Massachusetts in the Society's history.

Approval of Minutes

Secretary-Librarian Christian Dupont distributed copies of the draft minutes of the 132nd annual meeting of the Society held on May 17, 2014, 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

President Ascoli read the report prepared by Treasurer Nancy Vickers:

The current value of the Society's Merrill Lynch Endowment Management Account (an "umbrella" account combining two sub-accounts, operating and investment) is \$266,000. At present, \$21,000 is in held as cash and \$245,000 is invested. Of the invested funds, the Council has designated \$200,000 as a Council-controlled endowment with an eye to contributing a sustainable \$10,000 (or 5%) annually to the Society's operating budget.

At the close of 2013, the value of the Society's combined account was \$261,000 and at the close of 2014, \$251,000. The operating account began 2014 with a balance of \$13,000 and closed with balance of \$16,000; the investment account opened at \$223,000 and closed at \$235,000. Adjusting for a late 2014 transfer of \$20,000 from

the investment account to the operating account, the value of the investment account grew by approximately 14.4% in 2014.

As a year of major initiatives for the Society (including website redesign and implementation, conferences, geographical expansion, and plans for enhanced education and outreach), 2014 was also planned to be a year of more than ordinary expenditure. The audited financial statement which will be prepared this summer will provide details of 2014 revenues and expenses. It will be posted, along with the Society's 2014 Annual Report, on the Society's website in late summer. The audited financial statement for 2013 will also be posted. This is a transitional, double-reporting year that will shift us into compliance with standard financial reporting practices: that is, the publication of the audited financial statement of any given year will appear in that same year's annual report. Our goal is to achieve timely, comprehensive (and comprehensible) financial reporting to our membership.

Audit Committee

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

The Audit Committee consisting of Joseph Luzzi, Arielle Saiber, and Christopher Kleinhenz (Chair) met via conference call on Monday, August 4, 2014 and examined the 2013 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 of the books are in order.

We express our thanks to our former President and current Acting President, Nancy Vickers, and to our new 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 transition of the Society's journal, website, and membership management to Johns Hopkins University Press, which became effective with the launch of the new website on April 2, 2015. On that date, individuals who had been members of the Society during all or any of the past three years were sent

notices by JHUP advising them how to renew their memberships through the new website.

As of May 2, 2015, current-year memberships included:

- Regular members = 119
- Joint members = 1
- Life members = 79 (including 11 who had previously joined at the former “sustaining” level)
- Student members = 25 (including gratis membership awarded to all those who submitted entries for 2014 essay awards)
- Honorary members = 8
- Institutional members = 6

The institutional members included:

- Centro Dantesco dei Frati Minori Conventuali
- Johns Hopkins University Press
- JSTOR
- Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters
- Società Dantesca Italiana
- Università di Roma “La Sapienza”

Dupont also reported that as of the same date, 13 members had made additional contributions to the Society, including 9 who made gifts in the “Angel” category between \$50-\$99, 3 in the “Archangel” category between \$100-\$249, and 1 in the “Cherubim” category of \$1,000 or more. Dupont noted that when members make donations via the website, they are presented with a printable donation receipt for tax purposes and sent a copy via email.

Ascoli added that a Website Committee was in the process of being formed. It is being chaired by Simone Marchesi. Additional members will be added soon. Ascoli encouraged members to submit any problem reports or suggestions for improving the website to Marchesi.

Nominating Committee

President Ascoli asked Secretary-Librarian Dupont to present the report of the 2014-2015 Nominating Committee on behalf of its chair, Olivia Holmes. Dupont began by noting that in addition to Holmes, Susanna Barsella and Simone Marchesi served as members.

The committee was charged for nominating four individuals to fill two vacancies on Council. The vacancies were created by Arielle Saiber, who concluded with this meeting the last year of her second three-year term. For the past year, Saiber served as Vice President. Albert Ascoli also concluded the last year of the three-year term for which he was elected. Ascoli will continue for a second three-year term as an ex-officio member of Council as President.

The four nominees who appeared on the ballot distributed to the Society's membership included Christiana Purdy Moudarres (Yale University), Kristina Olson (George Mason University), F. Regina Psaki (University of Oregon), and Antonio Rossini (University of Windsor).

Dupont announced that Olson and Rossini had been elected and congratulated them in their absence. He also thanked Purdy Mourdarres and Psaki in their absence for having accepted the committee's nomination. Finally, he thanked the members of the committee for their service.

Prize Committee

President Ascoli asked Secretary-Librarian Dupont to present the report of the 2014-2015 Prize Committee on behalf of its former chair, Dennis Looney. Dupont began by noting that in addition to Looney, Vittorio Montemaggio, and Ronald Herzman served as members.

The committee received fifteen submissions for the Dante Prize for the best undergraduate student essay, which carries an award of \$500. The committee awarded the prize to Christian Coppa of the University of Notre Dame for his essay titled, "From the 'selva oscura' to the 'divina foresta': Sylvan Symbols in Inferno and Purgatorio." It also awarded an honorable mention to Andrea Acosta of Stanford University for an essay titled "(A)temporal Language of the Sacred: The Project of Divine Representation in Dante's Paradiso."

The committee received seven submissions for the Charles Hall Grandgent Award for the best graduate student essay, which carries an award \$750. The committee did not find that any of the submissions met the rigorous criteria for the award, and so declined to grant it. Following discussion with President Ascoli, who in turn consulted Council members, it was decided to apply the award monies to offering all of the students who submitted essays a complimentary one-year membership in the Society, most of whom accepted.

Following the report, Ascoli encouraged all members present to solicit submissions from their students and to encourage their colleagues to do the same. The deadline for submissions, as in previous years, is June 30.

President's Report

President Ascoli began his report by thanking Christian Dupont, Arielle Saiber and Deborah Parker for their work on the ad hoc Website Redesign Task Force over the past year.

Ascoli noted that the transition to the new website and online membership registration and renewal has created a delay in receiving renewals for current, calendar-year membership. He encouraged members to renew their memberships if they have not done so already, and to invite friends and colleagues to join.

Ascoli recognized and thanked Richard Lansing for his long service as editor of *Dante Studies*. Members were recently sent the 2014 issue of *Dante Studies*, the last under Lansing's editorship.

Ascoli noted that Lansing had also been serving as editor of the *Electronic Bulletin of the Dante Studies of America* (EBSDA) until very recently. The new editor will be Simone Marchesi. The EBDSA was the brainchild of Robert Hollander, who has continued to provide its vision. Under new editorship, the EBSDA may align itself with the pedagogical initiatives of the Society's Education and Outreach Committee.

The Education and Outreach Committee was constituted by Council following the last Annual meeting at which Ronald Herzman and Terry Quinn gave a presentation about their experiences teaching Dante in high school and supporting high school teachers who teach Dante. Herzman has agreed to serve as chair of the new committee and Quinn is serving as a member. By next year's annual meeting, the committee will have developed some concrete plans for action, which might include initiatives like creating a third prize for a high school essay or project related to Dante.

Ascoli announced the names of three new honorary members whom the board had elected during its fall meeting and who have more recently communicated their acceptance of the honors: Prue Shaw, Enrico Fenzi, and Ruedi Imbach. Ascoli commented that it has been several years since honorary members had been named, but Council is presently considering some additional nominations of honorary members and fellows (fellows being artists whose work promotes Dante).

This year, the annual membership meeting will be immediately followed by a conference on a Dante-related theme in what Ascoli hopes will become an annual tradition. Plans are in process for holding a conference at Brown University, organized by Ronald Martinez on the topic of “Dante and protocols of performance.” The conference will be held in early May in conjunction with the annual membership meeting, which may be held, as in years past, at Longfellow House-Washington’s Headquarters National Historic Site.

Meanwhile, the tradition of holding a winter membership meeting during the Modern Languages Association meeting will be discontinued as of this year. It is not fair to the general membership to require non-MLA members to have to pay the MLA conference registration fee simply in order to attend the Dante Society membership meeting. Nevertheless, the Society will continue to exercise its right to organize and sponsor Dante-related sessions during the MLA annual meeting. Beatrice Arduini is currently organizing a panel on Digital Dante for the 2016 MLA annual meeting, which will be held in Austin, TX.

Deborah Parker has been charged with creating a new affiliation between the Dante Society and the Renaissance Society of America. Alison Cornish will continue to serve as the Dante Society liaison to the International Congress on Medieval Studies held annually in Kalamazoo, MI.

Ascoli closed his remarks by welcoming in absentia Antonio Rossini and Kristina Olson to their elected roles on Council. He also thanked Arielle Saiber for her service on Council, including her term as Vice-President during the past year.

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 9:45am. Following a short break, the Annual Conference on “Dante’s Political Theology” convened in the same room.

Respectfully submitted,

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