

Draft Minutes
142nd Annual Meeting of the Dante Society of America

Friday, May 17, 5:00-6:15pm EDT
Zoom meeting, hosted by Julie Van Peteghem, Secretary
(meeting recording is publicly accessible via the Society's YouTube channel)

President's Welcome and Report

President Alison Cornish convened the 142nd annual meeting of the Dante Society of America at 5:01pm and welcomed those present on Zoom.

Following is an abridged version of Cornish's report:

This has been another busy year for the Dante Society of America, which was formed in 1881 and whose membership goes well beyond the Academy.

2024 Spring Council Meeting and Conference

This year the Society held a split Council meeting: the Council met for an online business meeting on May 5, and on May 10 the Society held three DSA-sponsored panels and a keynote on "Black Limbo: Dante and Global Ethnic Studies" by Martin Eisner (Duke University) as well as in-person meetings and a dinner at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo, MI.

Other DSA-sponsored Panels at International Conferences

Cornish highlighted some of the other DSA-sponsored panels held at the MLA and RSA conferences this past year, thanking liaisons Anne Leone and Filippo Gianferrari. The call for papers for the 2025 conferences were already circulated via the DSA mailing list.

2024 Annual Symposium in Lima, Peru

The Annual Symposium will be held for the first time in South America, in Lima, Peru, in July 2024, and is organized by Jorge Wiese (Universidad del Pacífico) and Donatella Stocchi-Perucchio (University of Rochester). The title of the conference is "*Il mondo senza gente. Dante in the Americas. Visibility and Invisibility.*" The following representatives of the Society are attending and presenting: Dennis Looney, Sara Diaz, Alessandro Vettori, and Albert Ascoli (virtually).

2025 Annual Symposium in New York City

Cornish announced next year's Symposium will be held on April 10-11 in New York City in the Casa Italiana, sponsored by NYU. DSA Councilor and Vice President Alessandro Vettori is organizing the Symposium focusing on the theme of money.

2026 Annual Symposium in Mexico City

Planning has already started for a possible DSA Symposium in Mexico City in 2026. Cosette Bruhns Alonso, Natale Vacalebri, and Alejandro Cuadrado are part of the planning committee.

Dante Studies

Justin Steinberg, who ably steered *Dante Studies* since 2015, decided to step down after the 2023 issue. As previously announced, his successor is Kristina Olson, Associate Professor of Italian at George Mason University and erstwhile President of the American Boccaccio Association. Cornish took this opportunity to thank Justin and to welcome Kristina as Editor-in-Chief. Olson is already working on the 2024 issue, and submissions will be accepted until July 1. For future issues, April 15 (Tax Day) will also be the deadline for *Dante Studies* submissions.

Extension Archivist Role

Last May Christian Dupont stepped down as Secretary-Librarian, a post he had ably executed through several presidents since 2014, and was appointed for a one-year term as Archivist, to get some of the Society's physical possessions in order. Council has recently extended his term for another year. In this interim period Dupont has been updating the website, since he knows how, and the Society is on the cusp of a whole new website upgrade. Dupont has made himself available to his successor as Secretary, Julie van Peteghem, and his other successor, in the new role of Communications Director, Danielle Callegari.

PBS Documentary on Dante

The free streaming of the PBS documentary *Dante: Inferno to Paradise*, which some members may have already seen, has been extended to June 30.

Presidential Service Awards

The Presidential Service Awards were instituted last year in the spirit and culture of volunteering for this Society that have sustained it for 143 years. This year's winners are Martina Franzini (Johns Hopkins University), Massimiliano Lorenzon (University of Pennsylvania), and Jessica Ruffolo (University of Calgary), the 2023-2024 leaders and organizers of the Dante Society of America Graduate Group. They will each be awarded \$1,000. The Graduate organized a reading group on Dante's *Monarchia* (Fall 2023) and Andrea Cappellano's *De Amore* (Spring 2024). They also organized two roundtables on Dante-related topics.

First Annual DSA Graduate Student Conference

This conference is spearheaded and organized by Martina Franzini together with Stefano Scandella, graduate student at NYU. The conference on "Dante's Other Worlds" will be held on September 28, at NYU, Casa Italiana. A call for papers has been circulated.

Field Notes

Director of Education and Outreach Beth Coggeshall has been pursuing a special feature for *Dante Notes* called “Field Notes,” which would involve short discussions of the philosophical underpinnings of our various sister societies around the world. The principal organizers of the Dante Society of South Africa have promised one entry, and the Centre for Dante Studies in Ireland (Cork) signaled that they would be interested in writing one. Coggeshall would be eager to hear suggestions for other organizations to contact, particularly outside of Europe.

Speakers Bureau

This summer, with the help of the Education and Outreach Committee, Coggeshall hopes to put together promotional materials for the Dante Speakers Bureau. Short video testimonials and brief written accounts can be distributed to the membership through social media channels and the listserv.

Social Media

Communications Director Danielle Callegari is exploring a different social media platform to replace Twitter (X), perhaps Instagram. This could present a volunteer opportunity for an undergraduate student.

Bibliography

After several years of remarkable service, including spearheading a collaboration with the Società Dantesca Italiana, Elisa Brilli’s term has come to an end. The end of her term on the committee also means a change in who enters the many entries in each year’s bibliography: from two University of Toronto graduate students, Martha Culshaw and Eva Plesnik, to two NYC-based graduate students, Giuseppe Vicinanza (New School) and Stefano Scandella (NYU). The composition of the Bibliography Committee has changed: Sara Diaz is now a member of the committee, as well as Julie Van Peteghem in her role as secretary for the DSA.

Simile Project

Members interested in contributing to the Simile Project, run by Akash Kumar and Alejandro Cuadrado, should reach out to Alejandro.

Holiday Card

Last December members received a DSA holiday card instead of the usual membership renewal notice. The card was designed by a member, and all members are invited to contact Secretary Van Peteghem if they would like to submit a design or have suggestions for an artist.

Approval of Minutes from the 141st Annual Meeting

Proceeding with the business aspects of the meeting, Secretary Julie Van Peteghem reported that the criteria for achieving a quorum had been met. The Society’s by-laws require attendance or representation by proxy of 25% of the total membership, which thus far for 2024 includes a total of 365 members across all categories, yielding a quorum

threshold of 92 members. A quorum is required to transact business requiring a vote, including the approval of minutes and reports.

Prior to the start of the meeting, a total of 100 members responded via a Google Form to indicate that they would not attend the meeting, but would assign Van Peteghem to serve as their proxy, yielding a total of 100 proxies. The number of Zoom registrations for the meeting totaled 46, most of which were from current members of the Society. A total of 38 people joined the meeting. Thus, a quorum was achieved, with 138 total meeting participants and proxies.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Van Peteghem posted and distributed the draft minutes of the 141st Annual Meeting of the Society, held online on Saturday May 6, 2023. Van Peteghem noted a small typographical error in the pre-circulated draft minutes. Van Peteghem called for further additions or corrections to the minutes. There being none, approval of the amended minutes was moved, seconded, and conferred unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Michael Sherberg presented the following Treasurer's Report, which Sherberg had presented at the Spring 2024 Council meeting, held on May 5, 2024.

Sherberg announced that the Society is in very good financial shape. As of April 21, the Society had total assets of \$424,790.35, taking in \$64,000+ and spending \$19,787. Sherberg noted that this year we have a slightly larger budget than typical, as the Society is investing some money in the Lima Conference in terms of travel for some of our member speakers, and also to support the conference. The size of some of our prizes has increased as well. Sherberg drafted a budget of \$44,350, which he suspected will not be spent all. He remarked that the Society is in fine condition, which supports a rather more amplified budget than we have in the past. Sherberg concluded that this budget was submitted to the Council at the Spring 2024 meeting and approved.

Audit Committee Report

Secretary Van Peteghem presented the following summary report of the Audit Committee.

The Audit Committee, consisting of Dennis Looney (Chair), Susanna Barsella, and Julie Van Peteghem, met on Zoom with Treasurer Michael Sherberg on April 2, 2024 to review the 2023 year-end reports prepared by the Treasurer along with statements from the Society's Vanguard investment and Bank of America checking accounts. The Committee found the accounts in good order and the financial health of the Society to be sound.

Van Peteghem made a motion to approve the 2023 Treasurer's Report and 2023 Audit Committee report. The motion was seconded and approved.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Van Peteghem presented the following report regarding the Society's membership.

Van Peteghem explained that Johns Hopkins University Press presents the Society with monthly membership reports, including the most recent one for May 2024 on which the quorum for today's meeting was based. The Dante Society of America currently has 365 members, which is a slight decrease from 374 last year. After the boom of membership during the anniversary year of 2021, Van Peteghem reminded the members that our previous Secretary Dupont had been reporting on the decline in membership, anticipating a further drop-off for this year. She noted that in the end this decrease turned out to be very modest.

Van Peteghem also shared that during the past year she and the Communications Director Danielle Callegari had been working on the redesign of the Dante Society of America website, in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University Press. Part of these conversations include the decision on a new social media platform to be integrated into the new website, and Van Peteghem announced that more details on the new platform will follow in the months ahead. She also announced that they would present a sneak peek at the new site after the conclusion of the business meeting.

Nominating Committee Report

Secretary Van Peteghem presented the following report on behalf of the Nominating Committee.

The members of the 2024 Nominating Committee were Laura Ingallinella (Chair, University of Toronto), Theodore Cachey (Notre Dame), and Christian Dupont (Boston College).

The four candidates who stood for election for the two seats to be vacated by outgoing Councilors Jelena Todorović and Dennis Looney were:

- Susanna Barsella, Professor of Italian at Fordham University
- Martin Eisner, Professor of Italian and Chair of Romance Studies at Duke University
- Filippo Gianferrari, Assistant Professor of Literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz
- Anne Leone, Assistant Professor of Italian Studies at Syracuse University

A total of 70 ballots were received from a total eligible voting membership (in April) of 333, for a voting participation rate of 21%.

Van Peteghem announced that Susanna Barsella and Martin Eisner had been elected. Cornish congratulated them and thanked outgoing Councilors Looney and Todorović for their service.

Van Peteghem noted that the new Council will elect from its membership a Vice-President to serve a one-year term. She will conduct the balloting and announce the results to the membership.

Prize Committee Report

Secretary Van Peteghem presented the following report on behalf of the Prize Committee.

The 2023 Prize Committee included Paola Ureni (Chair, Staten Island and the Graduate Center, CUNY), Fabian Alfie (University of Arizona), and Grace Delmolino (University of California, Davis).

The Prize Committee announced the winners of the three prizes sponsored by the Dante Society of America for the 2023 competition cycle:

- The **Dante Prize** for best undergraduate essay was awarded to Holly Nelson (Johns Hopkins University), “Absolving Matelda: Engaging with Ecofeminism in Dante’s *Purgatorio*”
- The **Charles Hall Grandgent Award** for best graduate student essay was presented to Charles Firestone East (Columbia University) “Se la prima materia delli elementi era da Dio intesa: Metaphysical and Natural Views of Prime Matter in Aristotle and Dante”
- The **Robert M. Durling Prize** for excellence in teaching Dante at the secondary level was awarded to Catelyn Boze (Q.I. Roberts Jr-Sr High School, Florahome, FL)

The Dante Prize carried a monetary award of \$500, the Grandgent Award \$750, and the Durling Prize \$1,000. Starting this year, following the recent decision of the Council, the prize amount for the Grandgent Award will be \$1,000 as well.

Van Peteghem reminded that the submission deadlines for the Dante Prize and Grandgent Award is June 30, 2024, and the new deadline for the Durling Prize is September 15, 2024. Submissions should be sent to dantesociety@gmail.com.

Adjournment

Cornish adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:30pm EDT. Cornish invited attendees to remain online for a program that included “flash talks” by Ph.D. candidates Chas Firestone East, Matteo Maselli, and Alexander Schmid, on their dissertations, and a sneak peek at the Dante Society of America website redesign by Danielle Callegari and Julie Van Peteghem.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Van Peteghem
Secretary, The Dante Society of America