

The Dante Society Newsletter

v.21:no.2/v.22:no.1

Fall 2015/Spring 2016

Letter from the President

2015 marked another very eventful year for the Dante Society, so eventful, in fact, that the Fall edition of this Newsletter was deferred until the current double issue because my attention focused on other priorities. Major initiatives included:

1. the inauguration of our exciting new relationship with Johns Hopkins University Press, which has expanded our publishing capabilities in numerous ways, including online access for *all* members to *current* issues of *Dante Studies* beginning with 2015 while most current and past issues are available through either Project Muse or JSTOR (for details, see “Access *Dante Studies*” on our website);

2. a new and vastly improved website, with online membership management, charitable donation, and voting capabilities, hosted by JHUP and most ably managed by our Secretary-Librarian, Christian Y. Dupont;

3. a new timetable for the publication of *Dante Studies* (and the consequent appearance of both the 2014 and 2015 issues during the past calendar year), along with the passing of the editorial torch from Richard Lansing to Justin Steinberg;

4. the establishment of a new prize for secondary school educators in the name of our late colleague, Robert M. Durling;

5. the re-naming of and expanded role for *Dante Notes* (formerly the *EBDSA*), under the editorship of Simone Marchesi;

6. the first meeting of the Dante Society of America ever to be held outside of Cambridge, Massachusetts, hosted by the University of Chicago, including the first annual conference of the DSA, “Dante’s Political Theology,” organized by Justin Steinberg;

While, we hope, not quite as action-packed as 2015, 2016 will also be a very active year for us, with our first online vote for Council members; our second annual conference, to be held at Brown University and organized by Ronald L. Martinez; the implementation of a new investment policy under the guidance of Treasurer Vickers; the awarding of the first Durling Prize; along with all of our regular activities. In addition, as we emerge from the 750th anniversary of Dante Alighieri’s birth, we are already

making plans for our participation in the celebration of the 700th anniversary of his death (1321/2021).

As the DSA continues to move through this exciting period of transition, the Society is more than ever in need of the support and active involvement of you, the membership. We thank all of you (and there were many) who contributed to the Durling Prize fund, while, at the same time, we ask you to bear in mind that to accomplish the goals we have set requires your continued support through membership dues and, where possible, much-needed contributions to the Society’s general fund. And we will look increasingly for volunteers willing to participate in many different ways in the DSA’s activities. Keep an eye out in the weeks and months to come for an appeal for volunteers in specific areas. Don’t hesitate to contact me (ascoli@berkeley.edu) or Secretary-Librarian Christian Y. Dupont (dante.society@gmail.com) with your suggestions and comments (and even criticisms!) on how to maintain and improve the DSA. And, last but not least, I hope to see as many of you as can make it at the Annual Meeting on April 23!

—Albert Russell Ascoli

2015 Election Results

In April, the membership of the Dante Society elected Kristina M. Olson (George Mason University) and Antonio Rossini (Windsor University) to the Council for three-year terms (2015-2018). In June, Deborah Parker was elected Vice-President for a one-year term by the Council. In November, Michael Sherberg was named Treasurer-Designate by the Council. He will assume the role of Treasurer after the upcoming annual meeting for a three-year, renewable term (2016-2019). As Treasurer, he automatically becomes a voting member of the Council. Sherberg (Washington University) will replace Nancy Vickers, who is stepping down after years of outstanding service as director of our first Capital Campaign, Council Member, two-term President of the DSA, acting Secretary and Treasurer.

Spring 2016 Elections

It is once again time to elect two new members to the DSA Council. For the first time ever this will be done on-line. As part of the suite of online membership services that Johns Hopkins University Press is now providing us, all current members of the Society will be soon be invited to login into their account on our DSA website to cast their ballots electronically. Please look for announcements on our DSA listserv and website for further details. The election will close on April 15 (Tax Day!). If you are unsure whether your membership is current or have questions or concerns about participating in the online voting process, please contact our Secretary-Librarian, Christian Dupont, at dantesociety@gmail.com

The 2016 Nominating Committee chaired by Ronald L. Martinez, with members Olivia Holmes and Antonio Rossini, proposes the following nominees for election to Council to serve three-year terms to fill the two vacancies that will be left by Beatrice Arduini and Simone Marchesi, whose terms expire in April:

Martin Eisner (Duke University) is Associate Professor of Italian Studies at Duke University, where he serves as the Director for Graduate Studies for both the Department of Romance Studies and the Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies. He is the author of *Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature: Dante, Petrarch, Cavalcanti, and the Authority of the Vernacular* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) and editor-in-chief of a new Mellon-supported online research project entitled *Dante’s Library*, which aims to reconstruct Dante’s intellectual and material world in virtual form. His new monograph, *Dante and the Afterlife of the Book: Rematerializing Literary History*, uses Dante’s *Vita Nuova* to experiment with a new mode of literary history that reinterprets Dante’s work through the lens of its transmission history. His research has been supported by the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the American Philosophical Association, the Fulbright Foundation, and the American Academy in Rome.

Jason Houston (University of Oklahoma) is Associate Professor of Italian and Director of the Italian program at the University of Oklahoma. He regularly teaches courses on Dante to a variety of audiences: majors and minors, general education students, high school students, and community groups in the Oklahoma City area. His research focuses on Dante and Boccaccio, with special interest in the material and intellectual interaction between the two and other authors in the Trecento. Publications include *Building a Monument to Dante: Boccaccio as Dantista* (Toronto, 2010) as well as articles and book chapters. He is finishing a collection of translations from Italian and Latin that will be published as *Boccaccio's Shorter Latin Works* in the *I Tatti Renaissance Library Series* with Harvard UP. He was elected Secretary of the American Boccaccio Association (2014-17). He currently serves as Executive Director of the South Central Modern Language Association.

Francesca Southerden (Wellesley College) (D.Phil., University of Oxford, 2008) is Assistant Professor of Italian Studies at Wellesley College, where she also teaches courses in the Medieval-Renaissance Studies Program. She has published several articles on Dante, Petrarch, and twentieth-century Italian poetry, with a focus on the study of medieval and modern discourses of desire, language, and subjectivity. She is author of *Landscapes of Desire in the Poetry of Vittorio Sereni* (Oxford University Press, 2012), and co-editor with Manuele Gagnolati, Tristan Kay, and Elena Lombardi, of *Desire in Dante and the Middle Ages* (Legenda, 2012). She is currently working on a book entitled, *Dante and Petrarch in the Garden of Language: Towards a Relational Poetics*. In 2016, she begins a three-year term serving on the Dante Society prize committee.

Jelena Todorović (University of Wisconsin-Madison) received her B.A. from the University of Belgrade, Serbia, and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Indiana University at Bloomington. Currently she serves as Associate Professor of Italian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she is also affiliated with the Medieval Studies and the Religious Studies programs. Her teaching and research interests span from medieval Latin, Old Occitan, and Italian poetry, to material philology, textual criticism, history of the book. She authored a monograph titled *Dante and*

the Dynamics of Textual Exchange: Authorship, Manuscript Culture, and the Making of the 'Vita Nova' (Fordham University Press, 2016) and has co-edited with Ernesto Livorni the volume titled *Petrarch and His Legacies* (forthcoming with the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies). Her essays on Dante's *Vita Nova* in its manuscript and printed traditions, on Boccaccio's editorial activity, and his *Decameron* were published in *Studi danteschi*, *Dante Studies*, *Heliotropia*, *Boccaccio in America*, *Lectura Boccaccii*, *Medioevo letterario d'Italia*, and so on.

Annual Meeting and Conference Set for April 22-23, 2016, Brown University

The Dante Society of America will hold its Annual Meeting at Brown University in Providence, RI, on *Saturday morning, April 23, 2016*. In conjunction with the Annual Meeting, on April 22-23, Professor Ronald L. Martinez will be hosting a conference at Brown University titled "Dante and the Protocols of Performance: Theatricality, Ritual, Feasts." Additional details will be posted on the "Events" section of the DSA website. All meetings and sessions will be held in Smith-Buonanno Hall, Room 106. The tentative schedule is:

Friday, April 22

6:10 PM. Welcome and Introduction: Ronald L. Martinez, Brown University

6:30 – 7:30 PM: Opening Keynote Address: Marvin Trachtenberg, Institute of Fine Arts, NYU: "Visual Regimes in the Age of Dante".

Saturday, April 23

9:00 – 10:00 AM, Annual Meeting, Dante Society of America

10:30 – 10:45 AM, Welcome: Albert Russell Ascoli, President, DSA

10:45 AM – 12:15 PM, First session:

William Caferro, Vanderbilt University: "Reconciliation on Rubaconte Bridge, June 1273"

Carol Lansing, UC Santa Barbara: "Piccarda Donati (*Paradiso* 3) and Magnate Abduction of Women in the 14th Century"

12:15 – 2:00 PM, Lunch.

2:00 – 3:30 PM, Second session:

Henrike Lange, UC Berkeley: "Shared Romanitas: Reverberations of Antiquity in Dante and in Giotto"

C. Jean Campbell, Emory University: "Running for the Green and Facing *Porta Sole*: Dante and the Ritual Framework of *Adventus*."

3:30 – 3:45 PM, Coffee break

3:45 – 5:15 PM, Third session:

Giuseppe Ledda, Università di Bologna: "The Dances of the Saints"

Danielle Callegari, Visiting Scholar, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: "Structuring a Meal: Dante's Table from *Convivio* to *Commedia*"

5:30 – 6:30 PM, Closing Remarks: Leonard Barkan, Princeton University.

7:30 – 8:30 PM, Reception

Essay Prize Winners for 2015

The 2015 Dante Prize for the best undergraduate essay was a shared prize this year and was awarded 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 Grandgent Prize for the best essay submitted by a student enrolled in a graduate program in the USA or Canada 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*."

DSA Prizes for 2016

Dante and Grandgent Essay Prizes

The deadline for submissions for the 2016 Dante Prize and the Charles Hall Grandgent Award is June 30th. The Dante Prize of \$500 is offered for the best essay submitted by an undergraduate enrolled in any college or university in the USA or Canada, or by anyone not enrolled as a graduate student who has received an undergraduate degree from a college or uni-

versity in the USA or Canada within the past year. The Grandgent Award of \$750 is offered for the best essay submitted by a student enrolled in any graduate program in the USA or Canada.

The Robert M. Durling Prize

The DSA Council 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 school and middle school). The prizewinner will receive a monetary award in the amount of \$1,000.

The Durling Prize will be awarded to an educator who demonstrates effective and innovative pedagogical approaches to teaching Dante, whether in a single unit, semester or year-long course. Submissions must include the following items: 1) a two-page resume that highlights the instructor's involvement with Dante; 2) a description of the applicant's involvement with Dante (between 500 and 1,000 words in length); 3) an annotated syllabus and detailed assignment descriptions; and 4) one letter of support from a former student or colleague involved with the project who is not the applicant (i.e., a peer observation). Applicants may (but are not required to) send in additional supplementary materials, such as: recordings of class instructions, examples of digital and other teaching aids used in the classroom, sample student work, student evaluations, or additional letters of support.

Nominations for the prize – either self-nominations or nominations submitted by someone who is not the applicant – must be received by July 1st of each year. Nominated parties will be contacted by The Dante Society of America and asked to submit a complete dossier by September 1st.

All nominations and submissions must be sent as e-mail attachments to The Dante Society of America at dantesociety@gmail.com. Files should be saved as documents with either a .doc, .docx, or an .rtf extension. No hardcopy submissions will be accepted.

A special committee of the Society will judge the submissions. The announcement of the winners will be made in late autumn and published in the spring issue of the Society's Newsletter; they will also appear in the Annual Report of the Society. Candidates not in receipt of the award

remain eligible to participate in a future competition, for which submission guidelines must be followed.

Conference Sessions

Sessions at the RSA Annual Meeting

The Dante Society of America will be sponsoring two sessions at the 62nd annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, which will be held in Boston on March 31-April 2, 2016. The session DANTE AND SCIENCE is organized by Arielle Saiber (Bowdoin College), and the session COMMUNITIES OF READING AND DANTE'S *DIVINE COMEDY* is organized and will be chaired by Deborah Parker (University of Virginia).

Dante Sessions at Kalamazoo

The 51st International Congress on Medieval Studies will be held at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, on May 12-16, 2016. The Dante Society will be sponsoring three sessions organized by Alison Cornish (University of Michigan): DANTE I: GENRE AND MEDIUM; DANTE II: PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS; and DANTE III: FEMALE FIGURES.

Sessions at the 2017 MLA Conference

The Dante Society is proposing two sessions at the next Modern Language Association Annual Convention, which will be held in Philadelphia, January 5-8, 2017. Send a title, 300-word abstract, and short bio to Beatrice Arduini (barduini@uw.edu) by 15 March 2016.

1. "How Dante Became Dante"

Explorations of Dante's production before the *Commedia*.

2. "Dante and Material Culture"

Investigations of physical objects, resources, and spaces used in the study of Dante.

Detailed programs of the sessions appear in the "Events" section of the DSA website.

Call for Papers – *Dante Studies*

Dear Friends,

I hope you have had a chance to see the new issue of *Dante Studies*, published in December 2015. In keeping with this ac-

celerated publication schedule, we invite submissions for the 2016 issue, and ask that they be submitted by April 15, 2016. As usual, we welcome all scholarly essays pertaining to Dante's work, reception, and context. We especially encourage early-career scholars to submit their work to the journal, as a venue open to innovative and original voices. Thank you for your interest in *Dante Studies*, and we look forward to reading you soon.

Regards,

Justin Steinberg,
Editor-in-Chief, *Dante Studies*

The EBDSA and *Dante Notes*

Having published more than a hundred short essays about Dante's texts and culture in the twenty years elapsed from its founding, the *Electronic Bulletin of the Dante Society of America* is an established online resource for Dante Studies. To add to its success and widen its mission of disseminating new and exciting work on Dante, the EBDSA is now adding a new space: *Dante Notes*. Included under the Publication tab on the Dante Society's website, *Dante Notes* will feature for one calendar year all newly released scholarly articles accepted for publication in the EBDSA. Developed in collaboration with the Education and Outreach Committee, *Dante Notes* will also include two new categories of contributions: *Student Encounters* (essays and projects by students in secondary education) and *Pedagogy* (essays arising from, and relating to, the experience of teaching Dante in varied settings). The first scholarly contribution of 2016 "[Virgil's Digression and Dante's *Comedia*](#)," by Matthew Collins (Harvard University) has just been uploaded, with more entries coming soon in all sections.

New Honorary Members

President Ascoli announced the naming of two new Honorary Members of the Dante Society of America, Professor Giorgio Stabile of the University of Rome and Professor Paolo Trovato of the University of Ferrara. The very different, but in each case extraordinarily important contributions of Giorgio Stabile and Paolo Trovato are known to students of Dante throughout the world. We are honored that they have accepted the nomination of the Council and welcome them into our

community. Below you will find brief biographies of both scholars.

Giorgio Stabile

Giorgio Stabile is *professore ordinario* of the history of science in the Department of Philosophy at the Università di Roma “La Sapienza.” His studies move from antiquity to Galileo and Newton, with a focus on the middle ages. His publications on Dante have earned him a reputation as the greatest living expert on Dante and medieval philosophy. He was the one of the editors of the monumental *Enciclopedia Dantesca*, in charge of philosophy, theology, and science. Many of his own entries to the *Enciclopedia*—such as those on “autore,” “autorità,” “epicurei” and “volontà”—remain the required starting point for any investigation into these topics because of their lucidity, comprehensiveness, and originality. His massive *Dante e la filosofia della natura. Percezioni, linguaggi, cosmologie* (Florence, 2007) gathers essays from a forty-year period of reflection on Dante and medieval thought and is a masterpiece of erudition and clear-thinking. For instance, in the essays “Teoria della visione come teoria della conoscenza,” “Cosmologia e teologia nella *Commedia*: la caduta di Lucifero e il rovesciamento del mondo,” and “Il canto II di *Paradiso*: navigazione celeste e simbolismo lunare” he brilliantly demonstrates the neoplatonic patterns that underlie Dante’s thought, following in the tradition of Bruno Nardi and Tullio Gregory (who supervised his university thesis). However, unlike these scholars, he has also focused on Dante’s poetics and rhetoric, especially in two fundamental essays about Dante and the philosophy of language: “La torre di Babele. Confusione dei linguaggi e impotenza tecnica” and “Si-oc-oil: *in signum eiusdem principii* Dante contro le barriere di confini e linguaggi.” Giorgio Stabile has been visiting professor of Fribourg, Tours, and Lausanne, and is a frequent guest on Italian radio and television in his capacity as expert on Galileo, Newton, and, of course, Dante.

Paolo Trovato

Paolo Trovato holds a Laurea in Letters and Philosophy from the University of Venice, and a Ph.D. in Letters from the University of Leiden. He has been a visiting professor at the Université de Provence and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has taught Italian Linguistics

and Philology at Leiden, Venice and Salerno and, since 1994, he has been full professor of the History of the Italian Language at the University of Ferrara. His interests and activities are wide-ranging, with a number of influential even transformative contributions to the study of the texts and reception of Dante Alighieri. He has analyzed the language and style of Dante, Petrarca, and Machiavelli, as well as the intense Renaissance debates over the “questione della lingua.” He is renowned for his expertise in textual criticism and for the editing of medieval and renaissance texts. He has published several fundamental monographs including: *Con ogni diligenza corretto* (Bologna, 1991); *Storia della lingua italiana. Il primo Cinquecento* (Bologna, 1994); *L’ordine dei tipografi. Lettori, stampatori* (Rome, 1998); *Il testo della ‘Vita Nuova’* (Roma, 2000). His 1979 study, *Dante in Petrarca* (Florence, 1979), in many ways redefined our understanding of Petrarch’s massive debts to Dante and has had incalculable influence on subsequent scholarship. In addition, he has edited, with F. Nicolodi, three collections of musical lexicology, along with other studies on Renaissance courts, literature, and music. He is co-directing, with Franco Cardini, the series “Storie e linguaggi di Libreria universitaria.it.” He is a member of the editorial boards of *Stilistica e metrica italiana* and *Ecdotica*. In 2004, Trovato founded the important journal *Filologia italiana*, of which he serves as co-director, and he has also directed the Ferrarese unit of the Centro Interuniversitario Biblioteca Italiana Telematica (CIBIT). Since 2002, he has led a small team of scholars whose goal is to produce a new critical edition of the *Commedia* based on rigorous and innovative philological principles.

New Fellows

President Ascoli announced the election of two new Fellows to the Society: Sandow Birk (printmaker, sculptor, filmmaker) and Roberto Benigni (actor, screenwriter, director), both of whom have accepted the title. The designation “Fellow” is used for artists of great accomplishment (verbal, visual, performance, and so on) who have made outstanding contributions to encouraging “the study and appreciation of ... Dante Alighieri.” The only other current Fellow is the poet W. S. Merwyn (two Pulitzer Prizes, the National Book Award). Past

Fellows have included the late Seamus Heaney (winner of the Nobel Prize for his poetry).

Acclaimed artist **Sandow Birk**’s work deals with a broad range of contemporary social issues as well as lifestyles such as inner city violence, graffiti, prisons, surfing and skateboarding. Birk, along with his collaborators, has re-imagined Dante’s poem twice—once as an illustrated poetic adaptation of the *Divine Comedy* into contemporary language and vivid images, and as a darkly comedic film, the *Dante Film* (<http://www.dantefilm.com/trailer.html>).

These undertakings have brought new readers to Dante and inspired other reinventions. A graduate of Otis/ Parsons School of Design, Birk has been the recipient of Guggenheim, Fulbright and Getty fellowships, a National Endowment of the Arts International Travel Grant. In 2007 he was an artist in residence at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC and at the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris in 2008. His most recent project, “American Qu’ran” explores the relevance of the Qu’ran to contemporary life in America.

As actor, screenwriter and filmmaker, **Roberto Benigni** needs no introduction. One of his numerous films, *La Vita è Bella*, won three Oscars, including for his own acting performance. And he first became known to Anglophone audiences through his collaborations with Jim Jarmusch in *Down by Law* and, later, *Coffee and Cigarettes*. In recent years he has dedicated himself largely to the performance and promotion of “public texts,” including the Italian national anthem, Italy’s Constitution, the Ten Commandments and, most notably, the *Divina Commedia*. The latter enterprise began as a series of public recitations of individual cantos in the *Lectura Dantis* tradition (following in the footsteps of Vittorio Gassman among others), became a touring theatrical performance known as *Tutto Dante*, which included a North American tour, and then a series of televised performances of selected cantos, excerpts of which are easily accessed on YouTube, and owned as DVD’s. Benigni’s Dantean interests include the work of North American dantisti, notably Robert Hollander, whose friendship with the actor generously facilitated the Society’s ability to extend the invitation to Fellowship to him. Most recently Benigni was the featured speaker at a session of the Italian Senate celebrating the 750th anniversary of Dante’s birth.

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