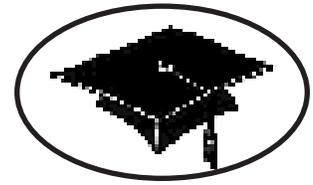


# Berkeley Emeriti

# T I M E S



March 2005

**Professor Emeritus Robert Durling**

**Italian and English Literature, UC Santa Cruz**

**“A New Translation of Dante’s *Purgatorio*”**

**Saturday, March 12, 2005**

Professor Emeritus Robert M. Durling will discuss the goals of his translation of Dante’s *Purgatorio* and of the commentary to the volume. Reviewers have praised his translations: *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems : The “Rime sparse” and Other Lyrics* (Harvard, 1976) “...both graceful and accurate, conveying a real understanding of what this difficult poet is saying”; of the ongoing Oxford series *Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno* (1966), “...splendid, elegant, accurate, and highly readable.” *Purgatorio* (2003), the second volume in this series, was named one of the “International Books of the Year” in the *Times Literary Supplement*. “Like the *Inferno* edition that preceded it, the Durling-Martinez *Purgatorio* with its beautiful translation and superb apparatus of notes is simply the best edition of Dante’s second Canticale in English.”

Durling was born in New York City and educated at Harvard University (A.B. 1950, A.M. 1952, Ph.D. 1958), spending the academic year 1950-51 at the University of Florence in Italy. He has taught at Haverford College (1954-56), Cornell University (1957-66), and the University of California at Santa Cruz (1966-93), where he was one of the founders of Stevenson College. He has served as visiting professor at Princeton University, Cornell University, Stanford University and the University of Oregon as well as the San Diego and Berkeley campuses of the University of California.

Professor Durling will read passages from his translation. To increase your enjoyment and appreciation

## **Special Event**

UC Berkeley Emeriti Association  
and the

Committee on University-Emeriti Relations of the Berkeley Academic Senate  
invite you to meet

**Chancellor Robert J. Birgeneau**

**at the Faculty Club-Heyns Room**

**on Tuesday, April 26, 2005, from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.**

*Reservations required. Because we expect this will be a well-attended event, we ask that you fill out the enclosed reservation form and return it before April 15, 2005.*

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**Berkeley Emeriti**

**F I M E S**



Volume 14, Number 4

Published before each meeting of the UC Berkeley Emeriti Association: To provide closer networking for members with meeting announcements, meeting reviews, executive committee actions, pertinent campus news, and to reach out to members who cannot attend the meetings.

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**Molecular Biology, Evolution and Aging**

On January 22, 2005, Professor Judith Campisi of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory spoke to the Association about aging, a subject all too familiar to most of this audience.

Aging is a complex process that begins when an organism starts to function less than optimally, and, although it is not a disease, aging makes an organism more subject to disease and stress. Our genes and our present and past environments influence aging. The contemporary study of aging has at hand the remarkable tools of molecular biology and the insights of evolutionary science.

Our present environment includes the recent past centuries in which human life expectancy has been extended to about 80 years. This “environment” to which our speaker was referring is something far beyond the purview of the Environmental Protection Agency. It includes advances made in public health, medicine, nutrition, education, etc., and protection from the rigors of the elements. (Just think of the stress and increased mortality in the older population when air conditioning goes off during summer power failures.)

The past environment shaped our genome as our ancient ancestors struggled to survive over many generations. Two centuries ago life expectancy was about 40 years. A mutation in the human genome that would produce a fatal or serious impairment only after 50 years of living would not have affected natural selection in that 40-year life span. Therefore, the mutation would persist. The genetic certainty of prostate cancer in older men is an example. Natural selection operates too slowly to update our genome to match our current and future life expectancy. Enter molecular biology.

We now know that the mouse is quite closely related to us, sharing 97 percent of our genes, but there is a large difference in that part of the genome of mice and humans that sets the life span potential. Professor Campisi displayed two plots of declining fitness (morbidity) vs. age, one for mice and one for humans. In both cases the curve is flat in early age, but then begins to rise, increasing rapidly when a certain age is reached. For mice this sharp rise begins at about 18 months of age, whereas for humans the rise begins between 50 and 60 years of age. The startling similarity in the form attests to the similarity noted above of the mouse and human genomes. Our close kinship to this tiny fellow mammal is good news because the compressed time scale of the mouse’s life facilitates our study of aging.

Can we alter our genome? An encouraging development is that small polymorphisms, the small differences in the human genome between individuals, particularly those that may be reducing the ~~life span~~ <sup>life span</sup> may be

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**Editor’s Note**

When President Timiras was curious to know when UCBEA was founded, several early members knew a formal organization was founded in 1981. The early years, which I’m counting as the time before the move to Boalt Hall, should have a collection of interesting as well as amusing events. If

*continued, page 3*

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*Molecular Biology, continued*

subject to alteration. The genes ApoE 1,2,3,4 were cited as an example. A person having two copies of ApoE4 has a high chance of developing Alzheimer's disease. Replacing at least one of the E4's with one of the other three Apo genes would reduce this risk. Professor Campisi said there is very active ongoing commercial research to tweak the small polymorphic differences that make large differences in the course of aging. The use of embryonic and adult stems cells is promising.

There is still much improvement to be made in our present environment. Dietary fads abound with dubious influence on life span, but a diet severely restricting caloric intake does work. Our oxidative metabolism produces energy but also spins off damaging reactive products. Restricting caloric intake has been repeatedly demonstrated to prolong life in laboratory animals. Animals raised on restricted caloric intake diets thrive, look good, and are active compared to animals free to eat as much as they wish. However, Professor Campisi notes that they're not contented animals, giving credibility to the old joke that life just seems longer to them.

Exercise is very favorable to longevity, giving protection from oxidative stress, tending to curtail obesity, and improving circulation and mental attitude. However, studies of super athletes, those persons who train continually and compete in extraordinarily strenuous competitions, show that their health is seriously impaired. As in many things, moderation is important.

Stress hormones, great for emergencies requiring sudden bursts of activity, are damaging in excess. But on the other hand, some level of stress is actually beneficial. Mice subjected to low-level radiation (stress) are predisposed to better withstand subsequent higher levels of radiation than are unstressed mice.

The continuing extension of a good quality life span for a coming generation may be jeopardized by the current epidemic of obesity among younger people in the

*Larry Waldron*

*Editor's note, continued*

you'd like to share, please E-mail me at [emeriti@berkeley.edu](mailto:emeriti@berkeley.edu) for an article which will be in the last issue of the academic year (covering the May meeting, which will also be election of officers).

Book Table: The scoop is that the books have been put in storage at the Faculty Club, where I'm not sure. But bring in some of your already-read treasures in May—we all need some beach reading.

*Claude Babcock*

## Upcoming Campus Events

Spring comes to Berkeley early with a wide assortment of special delights.

Sun., March 6, 2 p.m., "Folk and the Tales They Tell,"  
Hearst Museum

Sat., April 16, 11 a.m., Cal Day Concert, Herz Hall  
Edmund Campion, Hold That Thought  
(2004); Chopin, Piano Concerto No. 2

Fri., April 29, 5 p.m., Spring Plant Sale, Botanical  
Garden. Members only

Sat., April 30, 9 a.m., Public Plant Sale,  
Botanical Garden

### Noon Lunch Poems, Mondays, Morrison Room, Doe Library

March 3 Eugene Ostashevsky

April 7 Suji Kwock Kim

May 4 Student readings

### Noon Concerts, Wednesdays, Hertz Hall

Feb. 16 American Songs, chamber chorus

Feb. 23 In Black and White, music by  
Professor Jorge Liderman

March 2 Mozart, Fuga KV 401  
Mozart Sonata No. 15, K. 454S

March 9 Handel & Telemann, early instruments

March 16 Mozart, Quartet in F major, K37  
Chopin, Ballade No. 1

March 30 Masterpieces from early 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy

April 6 Jazz standards by Tyner, McFarland &  
Chick Corea, Vocals by Perfect Fifth, a capella  
vocal ensemble

April 13 Shostakovich, Piano Trio No.2, op. 67  
Webern, Sonata for Cello, Three Miniatures

April 20 Love Songs by Robert and Clara Schumann

April 27 Gamelan

May 4 New Works by students, graduate  
composition seminar

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### Seeing Through the Screen: Buddhism and Film

Mondays at 3 p.m., PFA Theater, 2575 Bancroft Way at Bowditch

Professor Robert Sharf, professor of Buddhist Studies in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures presents a film series which will be looking at Buddhism through film and film through Buddhism, considering such themes as the Buddhist notion of the “empty self,” the role of imagination and visualization in Buddhist meditation and the role of projection and fantasy in cinematic representations of Buddhism.

*It is recommended you buy tickets ahead of time at the Box Office; with your retiree ID card admission is \$4.*

- **March 7** *Lost Horizon* (U.S., 1937)
- **March 14** *The Matrix* (U.S., 1999)
- **March 28** *The Tokyo Story* (Japan, 1953)
- **April 4** *My Dinner With André* (U.S., 1981)
- **April 11** *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East?* (South Korea, 1989)
- **April 18** *Himalaya* (U.K./Nepal, 1999)
- **April 25** *The Reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche* (U.K., 1991)  
*The Marathon Monks of Mt. Hiei*  
(U.S., 1993)
- **May 2** *Little Buddha* (U.K./France, 1993)
- **May 9** *Words of My Perfect Teacher*