

Dante Society Newsletter

Volume 14, Number 1

November 2007

Members Meet and Reflect on Longfellow's Legacy for the Study of Dante in America

The Dante Society of America's 125th Annual Meeting took place on May 5, 2007, at the Longfellow House in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Members heard an outstanding series of papers addressing the



contributions to Dante studies made by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his circle of friends. Presenting the papers were Professors Kevin Van Anglen, Christof Irscher, Wai Chee Dimock, and Kathleen Verduin (seen flanking left to right the Society's President, Giuseppe Mazzotta, above). In recognition of the event which marked Longfellow's 200th birthday, every person attending received a handsome commemorative lapel pin from Jim Shea, the Longfellow Historic Site's manager who hosted the convocation. After a stimulating discussion of the papers, members enjoyed the fair spring weather and partook of a light outdoor collation offered by the Society.

Spring Election Results

Last spring the membership of the Dante Society elected Susanna Barsella and William Franke to the Council for 2007-10. Todd Boli was elected to the office of Secretary-Treasurer for a one-year term. In May, Dana Stewart was re-elected Vice President of the Society by the Council for a term of one year.

Winter Meeting

The Dante Society will meet at the 2007 MLA Annual Convention in Chicago on Saturday, December 29, from 1:45 to 3:00 p.m., in room Superior B in the Sheraton Chicago Hotels and Towers. Albert Russell Ascoli of the University of California, Berkeley, will speak on "The Language of the Author: *Paradiso* 26." Giuseppe Mazzotta will preside. All MLA attendees are invited to join us.

ADFL Honors Emeritus Editor of *Dante Studies*

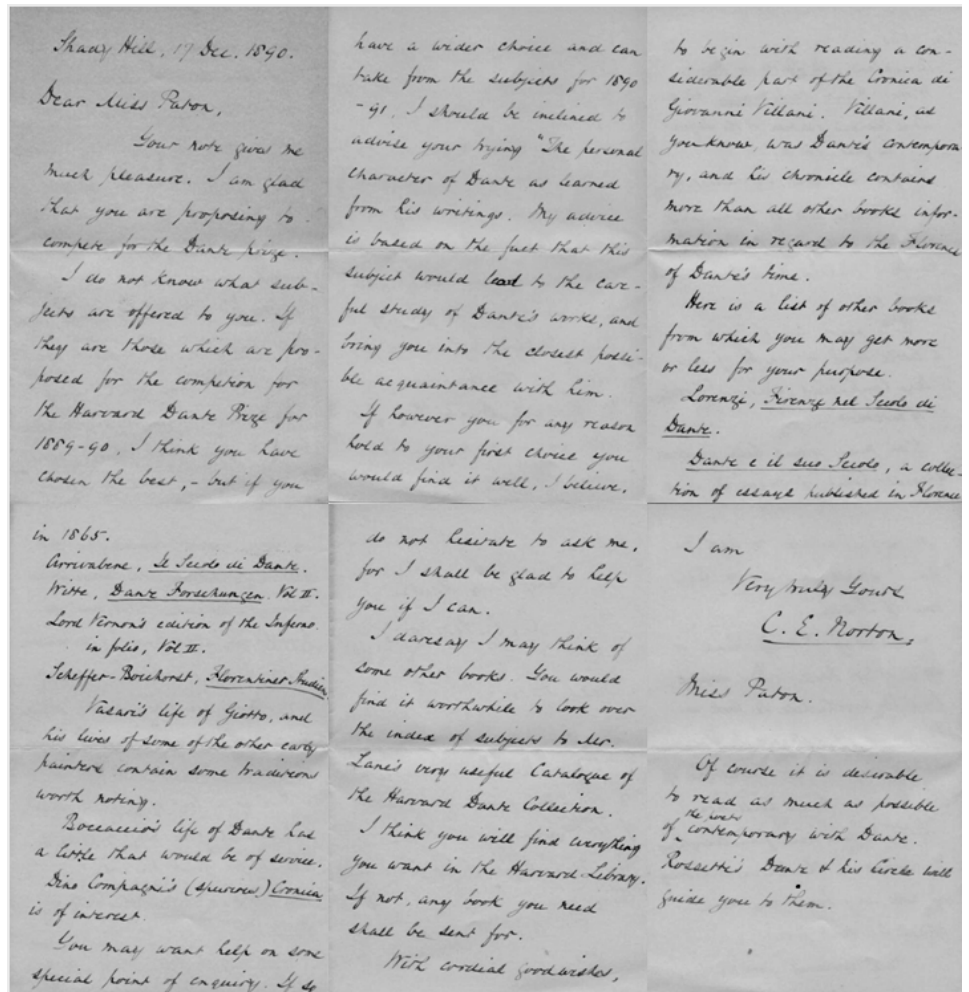
The Association of Departments of Foreign Languages has awarded its twelfth Award for Distinguished Service in the Profession to Christopher Kleinhenz, Carol Mason Kirk Professor of Italian at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and

Associate Editor of *Dante Studies* from 1984 to 1987, and Editor of *Dante Studies* from 1988 to 2002. To mention but a few of his many distinctions, Chris is a former president of the American Association of Teachers of Italian, a prime mover in the creation of an Italian language advanced placement program with the College Board, author of many books and articles, including the recent two-volume *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, and the first Italianist to receive the ADFL award. A proud and grateful Society congratulates him.

With Generous Gift of Letter, Dante Society Looks Back, Looks Forward

The gift of a manuscript letter, dated December 17, 1890, from Charles Eliot Norton, third president of the Dante Society of America, to Lucy Allen Paton, prospective competitor for the Dante Prize, has shed light on the early history of the Society's prizes as our organization looks

longtime contributor to the consequence and vitality of the Dante Society of America. Chris joined the Society in 1972 and served as Council Associate from 1980 to 1984, Council Member from 1985 to 1990,



forward to increasing the amount of its annual awards. Sharon Weinman, the generous donor of the letter, has thoughtfully given items of interest to the Society before, and her current gift offers a glimpse into how the Dante Prize evolved in its earliest period.

When the Dante Prize was first proposed in 1885, the competition was open only to students of Harvard. The first year for which the Dante Prize was awarded was 1887, and the winning essay for the prize of 1888 was published in the Society's Annual Report for 1889. No prize was awarded for 1889. The prize for 1890 was awarded posthumously, and upon renewal of the prize with a gift from the recipient's mother, the competition was opened to students from "any college or university in the United States."

In the letter donated to the Society, Norton advises Paton not to choose from the topics proposed for the Dante Prize for 1890, perhaps because the recipient for the 1890 award has already been determined, and encourages her to choose instead "The personal character of Dante as learned from his writings," one of the topics proposed for the prize of 1891. "I am glad that you are proposing to compete for the Dante Prize," Norton writes and, "I shall be glad to help you if I can."

The Society's report for 1892 announces Paton's submission as "the successful essay in competition for the Timmins Prize of 1891, at the Harvard Annex," and publishes, on pages 73-109, "The Personal Character of Dante as Revealed in his Writings . . . [b]eing the Essay by a Member of the School of the Society for the Collegiate Instruction for Women, in Cambridge, Mass., to which 'The Sara Greene Timmins Prize' was awarded in 1891." The Harvard Annex, founded in 1879, was incorporated in 1882 as the Society for the Collegiate Instruction for Women, but would not become a "college or university" until it was chartered as Radcliffe College in 1894. As late as 1900, the Society's reports did not include Paton in its list of past prize winners, but in the Annual Report for 1901, Lucy Allen Paton is listed as the 1891 winner, not of the Timmins Prize, but of the Dante Prize. Paton's standing as a winner of the Dante Prize was brief, however, as her name disappears from the list after 1904.

In 1960, the Society added a prize for essays submitted by graduate students, and invited students in Canadian institutions to join in competing for prizes, and in 1965 named its graduate award for Charles Hall Grandgent. Beginning next year, the Dante Society will raise the amount of the Dante Prize to \$500 and the amount of the Grandgent Award to \$750. With amounts that underscore the importance of its prizes, the DSA looks ahead to another century and more of recognizing young scholars.

Essay Prize Winners for 2007

The Dante Prize for the best undergraduate essay was awarded to Sherif Girgis of Princeton University for "The Anti-Sacrament of [*Inferno*] Canto XIII." The Grandgent Award for the best essay by a graduate student went to Kristen Allen of the University of Toronto for "'The Foot Fails': Isidore's Etymology of Despair and the Opening Canto of the *Divine Comedy*." Cited for honorable mention were, for the Dante Prize, Kelsey Abbruzzese of Bowdoin College for "The Stately Tree: Longfellow and Dante at Bowdoin College" and Eric Baldetti of Bard College for "Dante and Fellini" and, for the Grandgent Award, Davide Bolognesi of Columbia University for "Di alcune ramificazioni dell'*Arbor Vitae* di Ubertino da Casale nella *Commedia*." Prize Committee members Dana Stewart and Olivia Holmes read and judged the essays.

Next Annual Meeting Set for May 17

The Dante Society of America will hold its Annual Meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Saturday, May 17, 2008. Please mark your calendar. Further information will follow in the spring Newsletter.

Dante Sessions at Kalamazoo

The Forty-Third International Congress on Medieval Studies will be held at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, May 8-11, 2008. The Dante Society is sponsoring the following sessions. To learn more, please go to the Kalamazoo Web site at www.wmich.edu/medieval/congress.

Dante I: Desire, Allegory and Gender in the *Divine Comedy*

Chair: Nicholas R. Havelly (University of York)

Fortunato Trione (University of Toronto), "The Structure of Desire in Dante's *Divine Comedy*"

Ann R. Meyer (Claremont McKenna College and The National Endowment for the Humanities), "Dante's Mary: Incarnational Allegory and the Philosophers in *Purgatorio* I-III"

BJ van Damme (New York University), "Dante's Rosebud: *Vedovo* in Dante"

Dante II: Poetry, Politics and Music in the *Divine Comedy*

Chair: Christopher Kleinhenz (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Teresa Gualtieri-Clark (Independent Scholar), "The Hollow Hunt: Falconry and Fraud in the *Inferno*"

Pina Palma (Southern Connecticut State University), "*Inferno* XXV: The Puzzle of the Missing Myth"

Filippo Naitana (University of Oklahoma), "Dante and the Riddle of Music"

Dante III: Dante Commentaries, Written and Visual

Chair: Pina Palma (Southern Connecticut State University)

Karl Fugelso (Towson University), "Mural Morality: Manipulating Walls to Condemn Florence in *Commedia* Miniatures"

Christopher Kleinhenz (University of Wisconsin-Madison), "Art in Dante's *Purgatorio*"

Nicholas R. Havelly (University of York), "Serravalle's Dante in Fifteenth-Century England"

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