

Blair Hughes-Stanton and D. H. Lawrence

The wood engraver and the priest of love

Jerry D. Meyer

About three years ago I was introduced to the wood-engraved works of several British artists active primarily in the first third or so of the twentieth century, among them Blair Hughes-Stanton (1902-1982). My passion for these books and their illustrations has led to some investigations into the artists' backgrounds and the books they produced, including that of Hughes-Stanton. His most notable work as an illustrator was done from the late 1920s until the outbreak of World War II (see Fig. 1). Although he remained active as an artist following the war, wounds he suffered during that conflict made it impossible for him to do the sort of delicate, detailed wood engraving that characterizes his best work prior to 1939.

At its qualitative peak, Hughes-Stanton's illustrations have a sensuality, even a feeling of transcendence, informed by the influence of and friendship with the English writer D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) (Fig. 2). That interaction took place during the last few years of Lawrence's life, when the writer's literary career was reaching its conclusion. In this article I will explore the relationship between Hughes-Stanton and Lawrence. But first a brief note about the nature of wood engraving in England.

Wood engraving differs from its relative the woodcut. Instead of having the relief-cut design rendered on the soft surface of a wood plank, the wood engraving is executed on a cross-section of hardwood, usually boxwood. This very hard and close-grained surface allows for much finer detail than the plank surface of traditional woodcuts. Both wood engravings and woodcuts are a type of relief printing, with ink



ABOVE: Fig. 1 Hughes-Stanton, *Lawrence, Ship of Death*, p. 46.
BELOW: Fig. 2 Blair Hughes-Stanton, left, and D. H. Lawrence.



transferred to paper from the surface of the cut wood.¹

During the nineteenth century, wood

engraving was used almost exclusively for book and periodical illustration and Thomas Bewick's highly detailed wood engravings, especially of animals, represent the height of the craft in England.² By the end of the century, however, copper engraving was supplanting wood engraving as a preferred print medium, and photographically reproduced illustration, beginning in the 1880s, eventually all but eliminated the need for wood engraving, a craft that had been especially important for periodical and commercial catalog production. Nonetheless, both woodcuts and wood engravings enjoyed revivals as art forms in the 20th century due to their particular expressive and tactile qualities.³

Hughes-Stanton had studied under Leon Underwood (1890-1975), first at the Byram Shaw School of Art beginning in 1919 and then at the Leon Underwood School of Painting and Sculpture at Hammersmith in 1921, when the school was newly founded. Underwood was part of the modernist generation of British artists that included such notable international figures as the sculptor Henry Moore, but Underwood also taught drawing as a crucial foundation for all the arts.

It was particularly in Underwood's drawing classes that Hughes-Stanton began to evolve his distinctive semi-abstract, figurative style emphasizing spherical and curvilinear patterns. Of the impact of Underwood's drawing classes on his own work, Hughes-Stanton remarked:

...the whole point of a good line drawing is what the line express[es].... In a good drawing you have an empha-

See HUGHES-STANTON, page 2



CAXTONIAN

Caxton Club, Founded 1895

Bruce H. Boyer, President
Thomas E. Swanstrom, Vice-President
Jo Ellen Dickie, Secretary
Don Chatham, Treasurer
David S. Mann, Past President

Council

Class of 2013
Matthew Doherty
Tom Joyce
Nancy Lynn
Lynn Martin
Jackie Vossler

Class of 2014
Michael Gorman
Celia Hilliard
Wendy Husser
Hal Kugeler
Dorothy Sinson

Class of 2015
David Hartmann
Jeffrey Jahns
Bob Karrow
Michael Thompson
Steve Woodall

Appointed Officers

Jill Gage, Programs
Paul F. Gehl, Archivist-Historian
Hayward R. Blake, FABS
Representative

Committees

Tom Joyce, Dorothy Sinson (Co-Chairs), Audio Visual
J. William Locke, Dorothy Sinson (Co-Chairs), Friday Luncheons
Dan "Skip" Landt, Margaret Oellrich, Membership
Susan Rossen, Kim Coventry, Publications and Exhibitions
Martha Chiplis, Scholarship
Charles Spohrer, John M. Dunlevy, Matthew Doherty, Web Site and Directory

Caxton Club Staff

Dan Crawford, General Manager

Caxtonian

Robert McCamant, Editor
Brenda Rossini, Copy Editor
Robert Cotner, Founder
Matthew J. Doherty, Wendy Husser, Paul Ruxin Contributing Editors

©2013, Caxton Club. The Caxtonian is published monthly by the Caxton Club, whose office is in the Newberry Library.

HUGHES-STANTON, from page 1

sis.... If you had to draw a bottom, you start to make a model of a sphere, push the sphere about, then you come to your contour in the end.⁴

And from the expressive possibilities of often overlapping spherical shapes embracing and echoing the contours of male and female figures, Hughes-Stanton's very sensual, often erotic linear style developed.

Hughes-Stanton's first major book illustration project came in the mid-1920s when T. E. Lawrence (of Lawrence of Arabia fame) met the artist through the good graces of a resident of Hammersmith, Eric Kennington. Lawrence was working on his famous book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926), and Hughes-Stanton, among several other artists, was commissioned to produce some plates for the publication, in this case 10 tailpieces, a rather modest but nonetheless important beginning for the artist.

By 1928, major book projects finally started coming Hughes-Stanton's way, first among them an ambitious two-volume, limited edition of John Bunyan's popular moralistic story, *Pilgrim's Progress*, produced by the Cresset Press (Fig. 3). Hughes-Stanton and his wife Gertrude Hermes (1901-1983), a fellow artist he had married two years earlier, created a total of ten full-page wood engraved illustrations for the publication. In the six plates designed by Hughes-Stanton (in spite of the presumed religious morality of the story) one can already discern the sort of erotic disposition that would define a majority of the artist's figurative work in the next several years.

In her plates, Gertrude Hermes preferred to concentrate on the lyrical dynamics of landscape. In contrast, Hughes-Stanton focused on the struggles of Christian, always shown nude and often accompanied by nude, or nearly-nude, female figures. We see this in his frontispiece to the first volume, "Christian and the Evangelist" (Fig. 4). Our hero, plagued by the burden of perceived sin, is beginning his dream-like mythic journey through the trials and tribulations of life, pushed forward by female figures. A robed and mysterious looking man, appropriately named Evangelist, urges him toward his distant goal, the Celestial City atop Mt. Zion. While a certain overt sexuality is preserved in the human figures, the flat, jagged, sharply skewed elements of the surrounding landscape reflect the artist's modernist absorption of Cubism and distances him from the Pre-Raphaelite-inspired realism that informed C. R. Ashbee's diminutive frontispiece of the same scene for the earlier, 1899 Essex House production of *Pilgrim's Progress* (Fig. 5).

Both Hughes-Stanton and his wife were early on effusively praised by the English critic John Gould Fletcher, writing for *The Print Collector's Quarterly*.

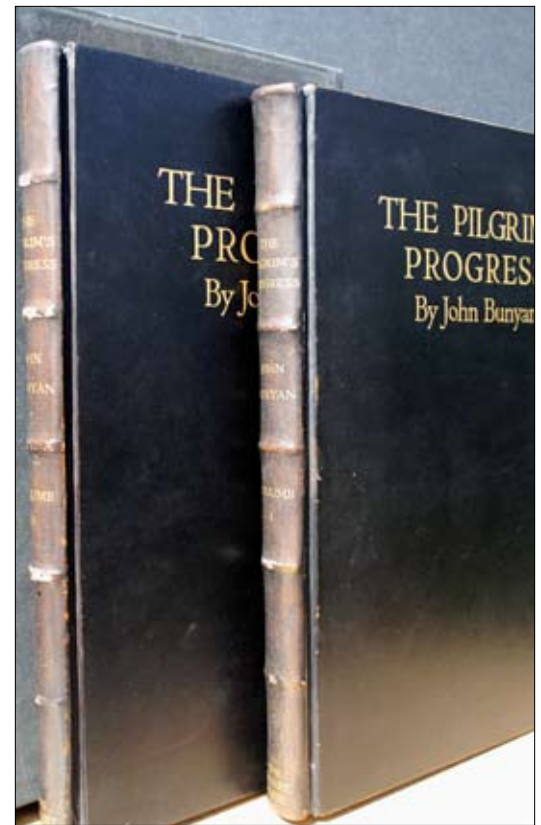


Fig. 3 Cresset Press 2-vol. edition of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, view of bindings.

He referred to them as "two brilliant young artists" who, in their Cresset Press plates for *The Pilgrim's Progress*, had demonstrated to the public "the superiority of the woodcut medium over every other form of illustration."⁵ For Fletcher, Hughes-Stanton, in particular, was a harbinger of modernism in the "architectural" and "sculptural" way in which his velvety black forms, framed against the white ground, created dynamic tension. "He is trying," Fletcher asserted, "to reach abstraction, not so much through geometry of form as through light sensation itself. Thus his work assumes importance in the great research effort of modern art."⁶

In 1929 more book projects came Hughes-Stanton's way, including another commission from Cresset Press. Fourteen British artists, including both Hughes-Stanton and his wife, were each asked to provide one full-page wood-engraved illustration to a large, slip-cased edition of *The Apocrypha*.⁷ Hughes-Stanton chose one of the most sexually charged of scriptural subjects, traditionally titled *Susannah and the Elders* (Fig. 6, page 4). It is a story of the lecherous advances of two community elders who spied surreptitiously on the young Susannah bathing.

In the engraving, we see the nude Susannah, alone, writhing in a colonnaded bath niche, the spying elders in the background. As the text narrates, "the two elders rose up, and ran unto her, saying, 'Behold,



Fig. 4 Hughes-Stanton, "Christian and the Evangelist," frontispiece, vol 1, *Pilgrim's Progress* (cropped slightly).

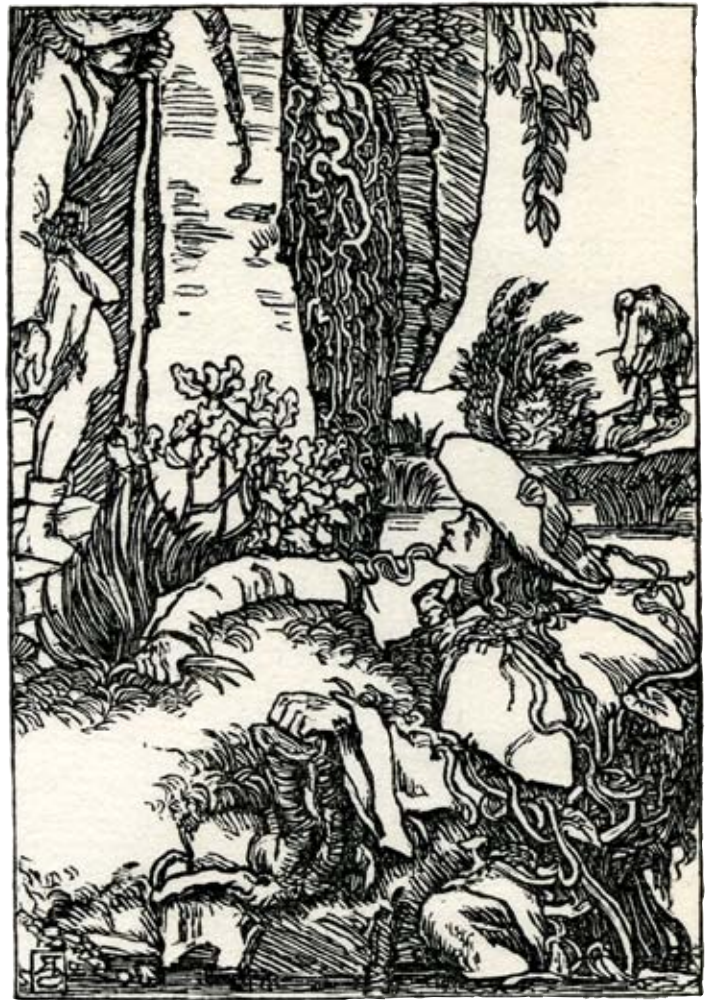


Fig. 5 Ashby, frontispiece, woodcut, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 1899.

the garden doors are shut, that no man can see us, and we are in love with thee; therefore consent unto us, and lie with us." She refused their advances and later suffered their accusations of adultery, to be saved from stoning only by the intervention of the young prophet Daniel. Hughes-Stanton's stylized architecture and rich black and white contrasts animate the scene in the continuing "modernist" manner so praised by Fletcher earlier.

Hughes-Stanton's choice of the Susannah subject became ironic, for by 1929 he had come under the spell of the sexually liberated ideas of D. H. Lawrence and would shortly stray from his marriage and begin a passionate relationship with the British writer and poet, Ida Graves. Lawrence's earlier novels, such as *Women in Love* (1920), among others, had established him as a writer of graphically explicit sexuality. In 1928, upon completing his last and most notorious novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence tried to avoid outright censorship by privately publishing the book from Italy. The influential Lawrence scholar Harry T. Moore would later refer to the writer

as the "Priest of Love," an appellation that certainly, for better or worse, defined Lawrence for most of his contemporaries.⁸

Hughes-Stanton was in contact with Lawrence, perhaps as early as 1925, having been introduced to the writer through Frieda Lawrence's daughter, Barbara Weekley Barr. She, like Hughes-Stanton, had also been a student at the Leon Underwood School.⁹ In spite of age differences, the two men, of similar temperament, got along well. As the artist's daughter, Penelope Hughes-Stanton, wrote:

BHS was permanently affected by Lawrence's belief in the vital importance and indeed rightness of responding to one's basic animal instincts rather than to any superficial, taught morality, and by his new and frighteningly frank, if ultimately unresolved, examination of relations between the sexes.¹⁰

Hughes-Stanton was among a sizable group of individuals who had pre-ordered a copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The artist undoubtedly looked forward to reading passages of graphically described love-making, and, indeed,

Lawrence fully recognized that such would be one of the book's main attractions, aside from other, more complex literary and philosophical qualities scholars have since elaborated in myriad books and articles. As Lawrence wrote a friend, George Conway, in March 1928, from the Villa Mirinda in Florence where he was staying:

...I'm busy here printing my new novel for a private edition.... I expect the publishers will publish an expurgated edition in the autumn. But I *must* bring out the book complete. It is – in the latter half at least – a phallic novel, but tender and delicate. You know I believe in the phallic reality, and the phallic consciousness: as distinct from our irritable cerebral consciousness of today.¹¹

Of course, renegade copies of Lawrence's book began to appear almost immediately in Europe, and the unexpurgated book, when discovered by mail services in Great Britain and the United States, was often confiscated and destroyed. It was not until court decisions

See HUGHES-STANTON, page 4



Fig. 6 Hughes-Stanton, *Susannah and the Elders*, *Apocrypha*, Cresset Press, 1929.

HUGHES-STANTON, from page 3

in both England and the United States in the late 1950s that unexpurgated trade editions of the novel by Grove Press became widely available. I remember obtaining my copy sometime around 1961 and reading, breathlessly, Lawrence's explicit passages detailing fornication, orgasm, and ejaculation. Ah, to be twenty-one again – I was not disappointed.

But Lawrence's importance as a writer of prose and poetry far exceeds, as scholarship has ceaselessly demonstrated, a superficial understanding of human sexual relationships. And, as I hope will be apparent in my remarks below, the inventiveness and nuances of Blair Hughes-Stanton wood engravings of the

period, a number illustrating Lawrence's work, parallel the richness of the writer's prose and poetry.

Like the great eccentric William Blake (1757-1827) a century earlier, Lawrence was a Romantic who in his writings attempted to unify life, art, thought, spirituality, and even the apocalyptic. And like the Romantic Blake, Lawrence's writings often dwell on the creative interaction of "contraries": good/evil, male/female.¹² Robert Montgomery has called Lawrence, "perhaps the last" of the great English Romantics.¹³ And even though Lawrence soon set aside his staunch Congregationalist upbringing in favor of a more liberated spirituality, he never forgot the great hymns and

Bible stories of his youth, some of which were to be transformed (and radically updated) in his writings.¹⁴

Although he came to reject both didactic science and dogmatic religion as "dead and boring" by early adulthood, even late in life he would claim that the echoes of his youthful Sunday school lessons were woven deep into his being:

...the miracle of the loaves and fishes is just as good to me now as when I was a child. I don't care whether it is historically a fact or not. What does it matter? It is part of the genuine wonder. The same with all the religious teaching I had as a child, *apart* from the didacticism and sentimentalism. I am eternally grateful for the wonder with which it filled my childhood.¹⁵

The basis of much of Lawrence's revised concept of spirituality and a *leitmotif* repeated continuously in his prose and poetry was the belief in the creative, animate life of man. This led him to reject a traditional theology of "Christ crucified" in favor of a "risen Lord of life."¹⁶ As early as 1913, in a letter to Edward Garnett containing a draft of a forward to his latest novel, *Sons and Lovers*, Lawrence re-invents the Johannine doctrine of the *Logos*:

John, the beloved disciple, says, "The Word was made Flesh'.... And the Father was Flesh. For even if it were by the Holy Ghost His spirit were begotten, yet flesh cometh only out of flesh. So the Holy Ghost must either have been, or have borne from the Father, at least one grain of flesh. The Father was flesh – and the Son, who in Himself was finite and had form, became Word. For form is the uttered Word, and the Son is the Flesh as it utters the Word, but the unutterable Flesh is the Father."¹⁷

For Lawrence, flesh and blood animated by the emotions – not the intellect – was the manifestation of man's true spiritual renewal. And man along with all flora and fauna participated in this animated life in various ways. "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect," Lawrence wrote to Ernest Collings in 1913. "We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle.... I conceive a man's body as a kind of flame, like a candle flame forever upright and yet flowing..."¹⁸

During the last few years of Lawrence's life, as his body was increasingly devastated by the tuberculosis that would take his life in

March of 1930, and as he now, in a Messianic state, often dwelt on the passion and death of Christ, he could yet conceive of a Resurrection that preserved the fleshly existence of Jesus, even initiating a new, active aspect of Jesus's post-Resurrection life as a physician.

Because of the persecution Lawrence experienced due to the perceived pornography of some of his early writings as well as harassment by British authorities during World War I (in great part because his wife Frieda was of German descent) an unhappy Lawrence went into self-imposed exile beginning in November 1919, spending some of that time in Australia, in America (particularly on property he purchased near Taos) and in Mexico, returning to his native England only twice, for very brief periods, before his death. Most of his final five years, beginning in September of 1925, were spent in various locales in Italy and France.

It was on Palm Sunday 1927, while walking around Volterra, Italy, with a friend, Earl Brewster, that Lawrence saw a little toy white rooster emerging out of an egg, an Easter memento in a shop window. This, he wrote a bit later to Brewster, suggested to him the inspiration for a revised story of the Resurrection, which he titled *The Escaped Cock* – the title intended as a sort of double entendre effort at risqué humor.¹⁹

In the story, as he relates in his letter,

...Jesus gets up [in the tomb cave] and feels very sick about everything, and can't stand the old crowd any more – and so cuts out – and as he heals up, he begins to find what an astonishing place the phenomenal world is, far more marvelous than any salvation or heaven – and thanks his stars that he needn't have a 'mission' anymore.²⁰

After leaving the tomb, Jesus finds a rooster bound by a leg in a peasant's yard, releases it, says goodbye to Mary Magdalene, and walks out into the world with the cock under his arm.²¹ This is his "risen Lord of life" replacement for "Christ crucified."

Lawrence's philosophical overview of life's meaning incorporated all aspects of nature, of



Fig. 7 Hughes-Stanton, "Flowers," *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*.

which humanity was intimately a part. In one of his essays, *Study of Thomas Hardy* (composed in 1914), Lawrence pondered what he termed the two principles (or poles), Law and Love, male and female, and the possibilities of attaining maximum being and perfect unity between these poles. He concluded that it is not the fruit, but the flower that is the "culmination, the climax" of life's meaning.

In explanation Lawrence offered the parable of the Paleolithic man sitting at the door of his cave (a transformation of Plato's famous cave metaphor), contemplating a flaming red poppy blossom and worrying about the coming winter:

...the old man watched the last poppy coming out, the red flame licking into sight; watched the blaze at the top clinging around a little tender dust, and he wept, thinking of his

youth....

[but, like the tale of the Phoenix]...the flame was all the story and all the triumph. The old [man] knew this. It was this he praised, the red outburst at the top of the poppy[;] in his innermost heart [he realized] that he had no fear of winter. Even the latent seeds were secondary within the fire. No red; ...[they, the seeds] were just a herb, without name or sign of poppy. But he had seen the flower in all its evanescence and its being.²²

The flower as a metaphor for sexuality and renewal appears in several of Hughes-Stanton's illustrations for Lawrence's poetry where we find amorous images of a couple nestling in the center of a blossom (see Figs. 7 and 8).

Some of Lawrence's best poetry focused on his idea of unification and rebirth in nature can be found in his series of poems collectively titled *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, initially published in 1923. The title was adapted from a line in the familiar hymn, "Now the Day Is Over," written by Sabine Baring-Gould in 1865.²³ Probably sometime in early 1929, as their discussions became more animated, Hughes-Stanton proposed to Lawrence that he do a series of wood engravings for a

new edition of *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*.

Because he had already been involved in two earlier publications for the Cresset Press, Hughes-Stanton suggested his Lawrence project to them and they consented. Although Lawrence himself knew nothing of the press, he gave his go-ahead in an August 1929 letter to the artist from Germany:

...I am very pleased for you to make drawings for *Birds Beasts*. Don't know anything about Cresset Press – but if they are going ahead, tell them not to approach [Martin] Secker [who had earlier published the poems], but to write to L. E. Pollinger...and get him to arrange it. He will fix better terms all around, for me & for you as well. Tell me the scheme – how many copies, at what price, how many signed – and tell them, if they like I will do

See HUGHES-STANTON, page 6

them a new foreword, on the essential nature of poetry or something like that...²⁴

Indeed, Lawrence provided a brief introduction to each of the nine parts of the Cresset Press edition of 530 copies, 500 on mould-made paper and 30 on Batchelor's hand-made paper with extra prints. Tragically, Lawrence died just before the publication was completed, but it is almost certain that he had been able to see some of Hughes-Stanton's remarkable wood engravings for the poems. For the book's section on "Flowers," Hughes-Stanton had created a plate showing a barely visible nude couple (rendered in extremely delicate white line) embraced by the dark velvety petals of a blossom (Fig. 7). A similar composition was to be included by the artist in one of his plates for the 1933 edition of Lawrence's *The Ship of Death and Other Poems* (Fig. 8).

While Hughes-Stanton did not usually attempt to illustrate specific passages in Lawrence's writings literally, he did capture something here of the writer's on-going theme of sexuality and renewal. For instance in his introduction to "Flowers" (p. 40) facing Hughes-Stanton's wood engraving, Lawrence provides the following texts:

And long ago, the almond was the symbol of resurrection – But tell me, tell me, why should the almond be the symbol of resurrection? –

Have you not seen in the wild winter sun of the southern Mediterranean, in January and in February, the re-birth of the almond tree, all standing in clouds of glory? –

...Yet even this is not the secret of the secret.

Do you know what was called the almond bone, in the body, the last bone of the spine? This was the seed of the body, and from the grave it could grow into a new body again, like almond blossom in January –

One additional example of Hughes-Stanton's art for *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* will have to suffice here, but it is one that also looks forward to interests that both Lawrence and the artist shared: the apocalyptic writings of St. John. One of Lawrence's final writing proj-



Fig. 8, Hughes-Stanton, "Gentian," from Lawrence, *Ship of Death*, 1933.

ects at the time of his death was an interpretation of the last book of the New Testament, and almost in tandem, Hughes-Stanton was to provide illustrations for a 1933 Gregynog Press limited edition of *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*.

In the Cresset Press publication, Lawrence had divided his poetry dealing with beasts into several sections, including one titled "The Evangelistic Beasts." In his introduction to this section, Lawrence wrote (p. 63):

Oh put them back, put them back in the four corners of the heavens, where they belong, the Apocalyptic beasts. For with their wings full of stars they rule the night, and man that watches through the night lives four lives, and man that sleeps through the night sleeps four sleeps, the sleep of the lion, the sleep of the bull, the sleep of the man and the eagle's sleep....

Hughes-Stanton's facing wood engraving to this passage (Fig. 9) shows a nude male, his

body frontally stretched, perhaps here distantly reflecting such primordial Blakean figures as the naked "Albion Rose" (Fig. 10) (itself based on Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man*), so that the upraised arms and spread legs of Hughes-Stanton's figure point to the four corners of the heavens where apocalyptic beasts reside. Female nudes frame the four sides of the scene, evidently in homage to the male figure and his passion: his groin area appears to be exuding some essence. The stylized, patterns effectively express a kind of electric charge, even as we interpret that energy sexually.

In the late twenties, in addition to his illustration work for the Cresset Press and other publications, Hughes-Stanton became involved with the Gate Theatre Studio in London, a small, independent theater committed to new, experimental work.²⁵ In particular, Hughes-Stanton designed several playbills for theater productions, including one for the controversial play *Maya*, by French playwright Simon Gantillon (1891-1961). This play, in fact, initiated the re-opening of the theater, in late November 1927, at its new quarters near Charing Cross Station.

The play *Maya* revolves around a prostitute, Bella, whose room is near the port of Marseilles. As the foreword to the play explains, "The prostitute [is] to be considered, in her passive rhythm, as clay to be moulded to the desire of man."²⁶ During the course of the drama, she is visited by "sailors of all grades...from all lands...seekers after escape, lonely, haunted men."²⁷ Bella, in other words, is simply the "intermediary," during sexual encounters, of the sailors' search for "something infinite."

(At this point, the astute reader is probably asking him-or-herself how a play revolving around prostitution could have been tolerated by conservative England during this period. In fact, the Gate Theatre Studio, like a number of other small, independent theaters in London, avoided the Lord Chamberlain's censorious hand through the ploy of operating as "theater clubs" requiring membership by attendees.)

Gantillon had seen Hughes-Stanton's wood engraving for the *Maya* playbill, so when the Golden Cockerel Press decided



Fig. 9 Hughes-Stanton, "The Evangelistic Beasts," wood engraving, D H. Lawrence, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*, p. 62.

to publish a limited edition of the play in its English translation (in 1930), Gantillion insisted that Hughes-Stanton provide the illustrations. This was Hughes-Stanton's first commission from this press; and following several conflicts with Robert Gibbings about the quality of the printing, he insisted on supervising the inking of the blocks himself. In contrast to the rather ascetic linear style of Eric Gill's wood engravings for the same press (see Fig. 11) – a style Hughes-Stanton had earlier rejected when contracted to illustrate the Cresset Press edition of *Pilgrim's Progress* – Hughes-Stanton's blocks for *Maya* utilize densely black areas with delicate white line.²⁸ As the artist explained, "...Mr. Gibbings was not very good at printing my rather black wood-engravings. He used a lot of ink; we ended hardly on speaking terms..."²⁹

While the *Maya* book is modest in size and rather unimposing in its binding, unlike Gill's *Four Gospels* a bit later by the same

gold impressed Golden Cockerel logo (Fig. 12). In contrast to the book's plain exterior, Hughes-Stanton's wood engravings for *Maya* are strikingly inventive and, like some of his earlier illustrations, evidence his penchant for expressing an overt sexuality, reinforced by the ideas of D. H. Lawrence.

His frontispiece for *Maya* (Fig. 13) appropriately sets the stage for the various scenes of sexual encounters to follow. In its stylized, semi-abstract rendering, the viewer is offered a plethora of interpretations. A nude male is seen kneeling before a dominating nude female (in our story presumably the prostitute Bella). Is she comforting him, or, in a more blatant reading, is he performing cunnilingus on her? Shifting to a Freudian interpretation, is the oval, vulva-like shelter with sharp, rib-like protrusions, which encapsulates the two figures, intended as a symbol of threat and foreboding? Or is the woman protecting her mate from prevailing dangers? Several of

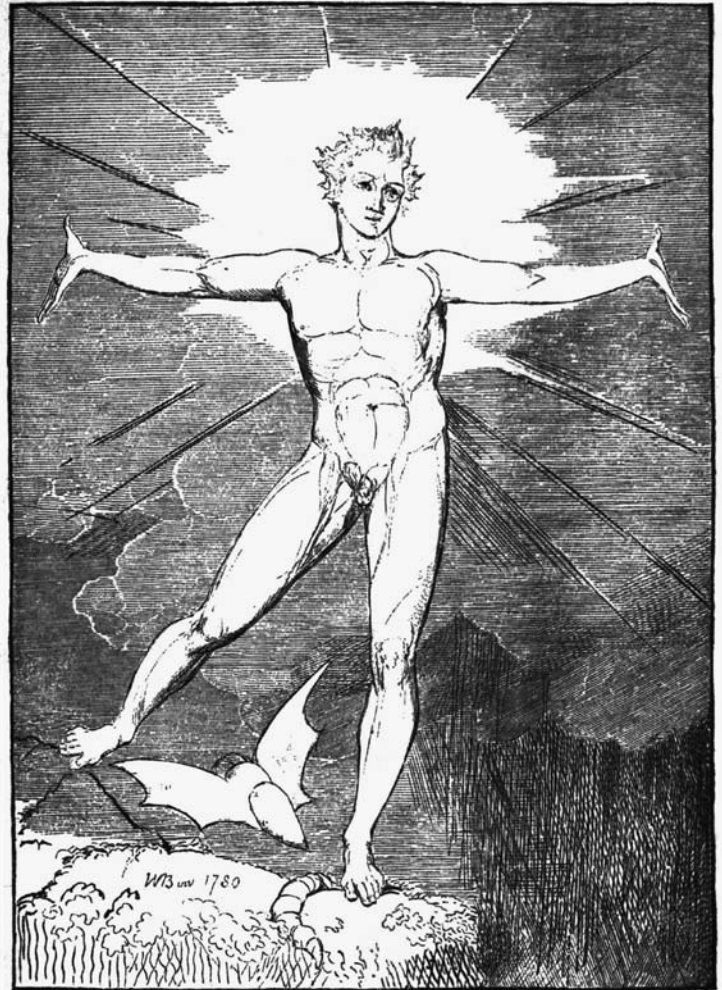


Fig. 10 William Blake, "The Dance of Albion" ("Albion rose from..."), engraving, 1794-95.

press, the *Maya* front cover is embellished by a charming,

the book's smaller wood engravings, (such as Figure 14), are even more abstractly abbreviated, depicting nude male figures being consumed/embraced by suggestive female parts, such as hands and breasts.

By 1929-30, Hughes-Stanton and Lawrence had become very fond of each other, perhaps perceived by both as a sort of father-son relationship. Lawrence's health began to deteriorate quickly in early 1930 at the time that *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* was in process. By early February, Lawrence decided to admit himself to the Ad Astra sanatorium in Vence, France, for treatment, and arrived there February 6. Upon learning that Lawrence was traveling to Vence, Hughes-Stanton, living in the area, met him at the station in Antibes, drove him to Vence, and carried an extremely weak Lawrence into the sanatorium.³⁰ What treatment Lawrence received at Ad Astra, however, was ineffective; and perhaps sensing approaching death, Lawrence insisted on moving out to a nearby rental villa. On March 1, 1930, he was transferred to the villa and died there within

See HUGHES-STANTON, page 8



Fig. 11 Gill, "The Juice of My Pomegranates," from *Song of Songs*, GCP, 1925, p. 40.

HUGHES-STANTON, from page 7

24 hours.

Following Lawrence's death, Hughes-Stanton provided wood engravings for two additional books closely related to his relationship with the writer: the Gregynog Press limited edition of *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (1932) – perhaps the press's masterpiece – and Lawrence's *The Ship of Death and Other Poems*, published by Martin Secker in London in 1933.

In 1930, Hughes-Stanton and his wife Hermes contracted as artists with the prestigious Gregynog Press at Gregynog House, Tregynog. But because of her husband's increasing infatuation with Ida Graves, Hermes decided to leave Hughes-Stanton by year's end, settling in London with their two children. In 1932, after having completed several books for the press, Hughes-Stanton was given the opportunity to illustrate their edition of *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*. This was not Hughes-Stanton's first encounter with this scriptural text as a possible art project. Just before his death, Lawrence had discussed a collaborative effort with Hughes-Stanton focused on the Book of Revelation. As the artist related much later in an interview, "[Lawrence told me] you should do *Revelations* but we must have a talk about the symbolism..."³¹ Unfortunately, Lawrence's death aborted the project.

Lawrence himself had, since childhood, been well acquainted with St. John's Revelation, and its mythic dimensions frequently influenced his later prose and poetry. In December of 1922, while residing in Taos, New Mexico, Lawrence received a letter from

Frederick Carter, who was preparing a book on the symbolism of St. John's apocalyptic writings. A correspondence between the two was initiated with contact intensifying in early January 1924, when Carter visited Lawrence in Shropshire, England. Lawrence had returned there briefly after having lived abroad for several years.

Carter gave Lawrence a manuscript, tentatively titled *Dragon of the Apocalypse*, and Lawrence toyed with the idea of a joint publishing effort. But other projects intervened and it was not until later in August 1929 that such collaboration was revisited. Carter had still not published his book but had continued to work on his manuscript. Lawrence read Carter's new draft and critiqued it in a letter dated October 1, 1929: "The 'Apocalypse' came yesterday, and I have read it. And again I get a particular pleasure and liberation out of it. It is very fragmentary.... But in fragments fascinating."³²

At one point Lawrence intended to take Carter's manuscript and edit it into a joint effort, but Mandrake Press had already announced the publication of Carter's book to include only an introduction by Lawrence. Unfortunately, the press was suspended, and what Lawrence had intended as an introduction eventually became his last lengthy manuscript, a 5000-word essay, posthumously published in the July 1930 issue of *The London Mercury*.

Both Lawrence and Carter associated St. John's text with earlier mythology, for Lawrence beginning at least two centuries before Christ. Through their revisionist reading of Revelation, both writers developed radical



Fig. 12 Front cover of *Maya*, by Simon Gantillion, 1930, with embossed Golden Cockerel Press logo.

concepts of the way in which the evolution of humankind was understood. In his own essay, Lawrence wrote: "...the sense of the living astrological heavens gives me an extension of my being, I become big and glittering and vast with a sumptuous vastness. I am the macrocosm, and it is wonderful."³³ In 1931 Carter did finally publish his book, now titled *The Dragon of Revelation*. While no introduction by Lawrence was included, Carter did reference Lawrence in a publisher's "Note." Carter also created an elaborate, if confusing, astrological "Map of the Heavens," reproduced on the paste-down front and back pages of the book (Fig. 15).

Hughes-Stanton's contractual arrangement with Gregynog Press gave him the opportunity to revisit the Biblical text of St. John's Revelation. Although some of the artist's contemporaries were troubled by the tendency of his artwork to depart from strict adherence to traditional Christian iconography, Hughes-Stanton did more or less follow the scriptural texts in his 41 wood engravings for the book, 13 of which were full-page. Among them is the wood engraving titled "There Was a Wonder in Heaven" (Fig. 16). In its traditional identification this subject is usually referred to as the "Woman Clothed with the Sun" from Chapter 12, verse 1 [KJV]: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars..." She is pregnant, presumably bearing the Christ child, but threatened by the satanic "great red



Fig. 13 Hughes-Stanton, *Maya*, frontispiece.

dragon.”

While there is a small protrusion near the woman’s abdomen, Hughes-Stanton does not emphasize her pregnancy, as we often see in earlier representations of this subject. In Hughes-Stanton’s representation, she is wearing an extremely sheer covering, while hovering over a wonderfully rendered, evil-looking creature with bat wings. The dragon’s flaming breath merges with the white aura surrounding the woman. A small nude male, visible just above the moon sliver, rises up between her legs like swimming spermatozoa. This is a trope we have seen often in other erotically charged illustrations by Hughes-Stanton.

In their inventiveness and technical craftsmanship, the plates are magnificent. Hughes-Stanton said later that there had been a symbiotic relationship between artist and printer in the production of this book: “The composer and I were simply working side by side. I’d never had an opportunity like that before to really go chapter by chapter and work out how far it was going to go.”³⁴ The English critic John Gould Fletcher thought that the artist’s illustrations to this Gregynog publication were among his masterpieces, forming the “logical culmination [of his art] in the extraordinary baroque imagination that riots and plays through the pages of [the book].”³⁵ However, we should not overlook the artist’s last book project directly associated with the writings of D. H. Lawrence.

Hughes-Stanton’s identification with Lawrence’s iconography of life, death, and resurrection is poignantly interpreted in the

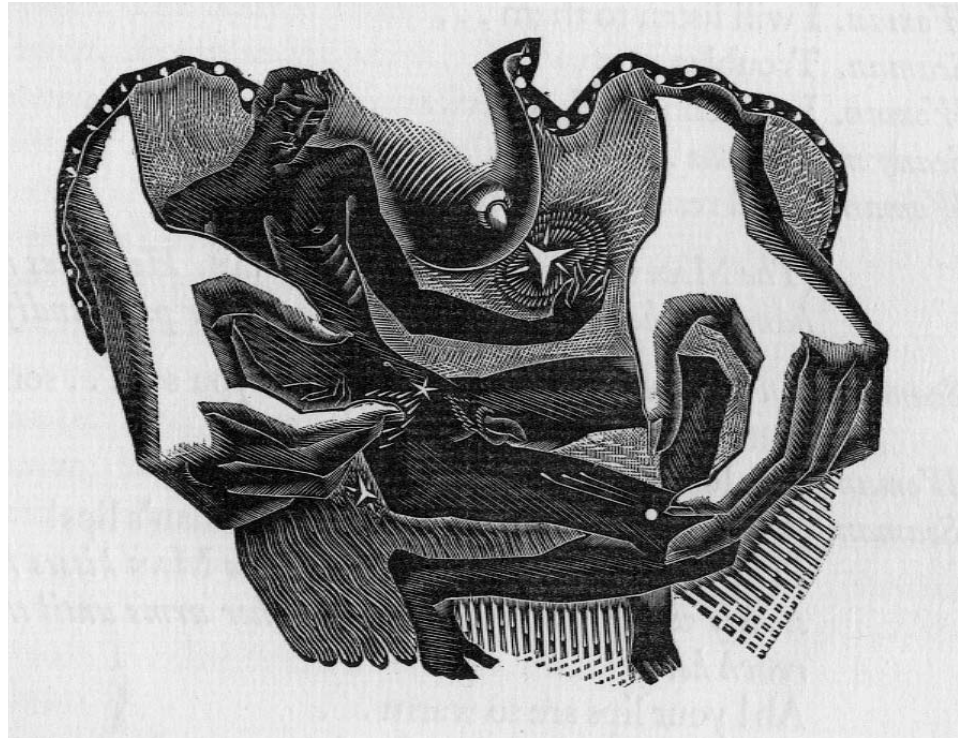


Fig. 14 Hughes-Stanton, *Maya*, small plate, p. 6.

ten full-page wood engravings he provided for Lawrence’s series of late verses, *The Ship of Death and Other Poems*, posthumously published in 1933 by Martin Seeker. Hughes-Stanton and Ida Graves selected the verses for the book.³⁶ As the title of the initial poem denotes, Lawrence ruminates in these poems on the meaning of aging, death, and the possibility of escape into oblivion. His opening poem, “Ship of Death,” begins with these melancholy lines:

Now it is autumn and the falling fruit
and the long journey towards oblivion.
The apples falling like great drops of dew
to bruise themselves an exit from themselves.
And it is time to go, to bid farewell
to one’s own self, and find an exit
from the fallen self.

Hughes-Stanton’s wood engravings of male and female figures interacting together in various imaginative, choreographed patterns, suggest the ascendancy resulting from their sexual or spiritual strivings (Figs. 1, 8, & 17). All of the full-page plates include a lean, bearded, muscular figure, intended by Hughes-Stanton to represent Lawrence, no longer now the ill, wasted individual he was at the time of his death. For instance, in Fig. 1, illustrating Lawrence’s poem, “The Triumph of the Machine,” male and female figures, guided by ascending swans, fly upward toward the ethereal light and away from the materiality and destruction of the city below:

Then, far beyond the ruin, in the far, in the
ultimate, remote places
the swan will lift up again his flattened, smitten
head
and look around, and rise, and on the great
vaults of his wings
will sweep round and up to greet the sun with a
silky glitter of a new day... [pp. 47-48]

In Hughes-Stanton’s illustration for the poem, “The Cross” (Fig. 17), reference is made to Lawrence’s revisionist Christology. We see the tall, nude, messianic figure of the poet lifting two human figures, one in each hand, above the morass of earthly existence, a crucifix visible at the juncture of his buttocks.

Behold your cross, Christians!
With the upright division into sex
men on this side, women on that side
without any division into inferiority and
superiority
only differences,
divided in the mystic, tangible and intangible
difference.

...
That sex is an eternal upright division, before
which we must bow
and live in the acceptance of it.... [pp. 57, 59]

Finally, in the book’s next to last poem, “Bavarian Gentians,” Lawrence returns to his flower metaphor (Fig. 8):

See HUGHES-STANTON, page 10

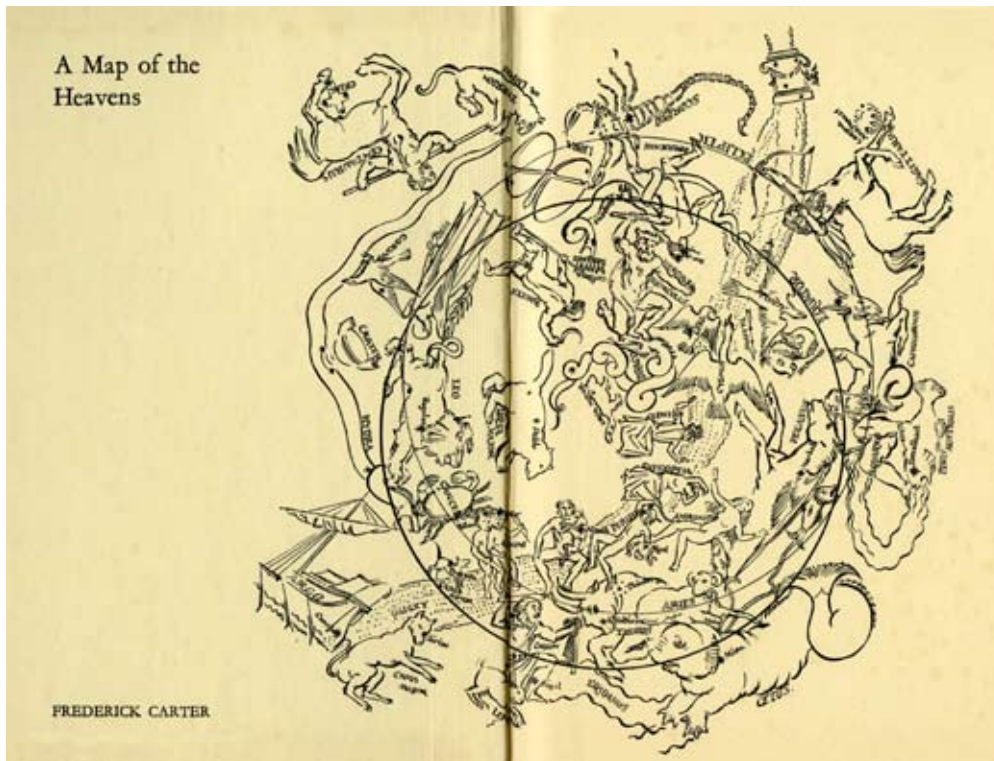


Fig. 15 Carter, "Map of the Heavens," Dragon of Revelation, 1931.

HUGHES-STANTON, from page 9

Reach me a gentian, give me a torch
 let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch
 of this flower
 down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is
 darkened on blueness.
 even where Persephone goes, just now, from the
 frosted September
 to the sightless realm where darkness is awake
 upon the dark...[p. 103]

In Hughes-Stanton's interpretation, a nude, diminutive figure of Lawrence stands in the upper right side of the dark lily-like blossom observing a couple passionately embracing in the flower's center. As if in orgasmic consent, the flower's pistils splay out around the man and woman.

Hughes-Stanton remains, today, part of a very special group of British artists who made wood engraving a special art form, particularly during the second quarter of the twentieth century. Other printing processes, such as lithography and serigraphy were to be favored after mid-century by much of the modern art world, although the cut wood in various forms was by no means neglected.

As I have also attempted to emphasize in this essay, the crest of Hughes-Stanton's artistic contribution coincided with his D. H. Lawrence association. In his most ambitious wood engravings, Hughes-Stanton was able to give visibility to some of those transcendent

ideas of sensuality and spirituality that define the core of Lawrence's philosophy of life and sexuality, a fortuitous coincidence of visual arts and literature.

§§

NOTES

- ¹ The earliest surviving woodcut on paper in Europe dates from about 1418, and the process was particularly fostered in northern Europe with the invention of the printing press as well as the illustrative work of German artists such as Holbein and Dürer. See Albert Garrett, *British Wood Engraving of the 20th Century: a personal view*, London: Scholar Press, 1980.
- ² The largest American collection of original wood engraved blocks created by Bewick – more than 100 – is in the Newberry Library in Chicago.
- ³ For a detailed overview of the evolution of wood engraving in England in the first half of the twentieth century, see Joanna Selborne, *British Wood-Engraved Book Illustration 1904-1940: A Break with Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- ⁴ Penelope Hughes-Stanton, *The Wood-Engravings of Blair Hughes-Stanton*, Pinner, England: Private Libraries Association, 1991, pp. 5-6.
- ⁵ John Gould Fletcher, "Gertrude Hermes and Blair Hughes-Stanton," *The Print-Collector's Quarterly*, Vol. 16, April 1929, p. 183. Fletcher's use of "woodcut" rather than "wood engraving" reflects a common haziness, even among experts, about the two processes.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 196.
- ⁷ In addition to the Cresset Press's limited editions of the *Aprocrifha* and Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the 1920s, the Nonesuch Press also published limited editions of these two works during the same decade: *Aprocrifha*, 1924, with copperplate illustrations by Stephen Gooden (1892-1955); and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 1928, with woodcut illustrations by the German

artist Karl Michel (1885-1966); see Michael Gorman's article, "The Nonesuch Dickens," *Caxtonian*, Vol. XX, No. 10 (Oct. 2012), pp. 2-3.

⁸ Harry T. Moore, *The Priest of Love: A Life of D. H. Lawrence*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, (several earlier editions) rev. ed., 1974.

⁹ David Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game, 1922-1930*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 717, note 42.

¹⁰ Hughes-Stanton, *The Wood-Engravings of Blair Hughes-Stanton*, pp. 19-21.

¹¹ Letter dated 15 March 1928, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. VI: March 1927-Nov. 1928, edited by James T. Boulton and Margaret H. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 323-324.

¹² For William Blake one of the great battles of "contraries" was narrated in the Revelation of St. John, where good/evil, male/female interact. Jesus, in the radical mind of Blake, was a product of the sexual interaction of the Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun; see my article, "The Woman Clothed with the Sun: Two Illustrations to St. John's Revelation by William Blake," *Studies in Iconography*, Vol. 12, 1988, pp. 148-160. It is notable, as will be discussed, that D. H. Lawrence was also obsessed with St. John's Apocalyptic narrative towards the end of his life.

¹³ Robert E. Montgomery, *The Visionary D. H. Lawrence: Beyond Philosophy and Art*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 7.

¹⁴ It is interesting to note that Lawrence's grandfather, George Beardsall, was a noted, and "fiercely religious," Wesleyan preacher, while his great-grandfather, John Newton, was a famous Nonconformist hymn writer; see Moore, *The Priest of Love*, p. 9.

¹⁵ D. H. Lawrence, "Hymns in a Man's Life," in *Late Essays and Articles*, edited by James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 132; probably written in August 1928, initially for a German publication.

¹⁶ George A. Panichas, *Adventure in Consciousness: The Meaning of D. H. Lawrence's Religious Quest*, London: Mouton & Co., 1964, p. 19.

¹⁷ Postcard dated 20 January 1913: "I was fearfully anxious to write a Fore-word to *Sons and Lovers*, and this is what I did. I am a fool – but it will amuse you." [the foreword was actually sent in a separate post]; *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, edited with an introduction by Aldous Huxley, New York: The Viking Press, 1932, pp. 97-98.

¹⁸ Letter to Ernest Collings, dated 17 January 1913; *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. I, edited by James T. Boulton, Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp. 502-503.

¹⁹ Letter to Earl Brewster, dated 3 May 1927; *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, Vol. VI, pp. 49-50.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Ellis, *D. H. Lawrence: Dying Game*, pp. 356-357. The *Escaped Cock* was published in an initial edition of 500 copies by Harry Crosby's Paris-based Black Sun Press in 1929; after Lawrence's death it was re-issued by English and American publishers under the "detumescent" title, *The Man Who Died*; see Moore, *The Priest of Love*, p. 443.

²² D. H. Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, edited by Bruce Steele, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 8.

²³ Moore, *The Priest of Love*, p. 21. While most of the poems were written while Lawrence and Frieda were in residence at Fontana Vecchia in Taormina, Italy, a small group was composed after their arrival in

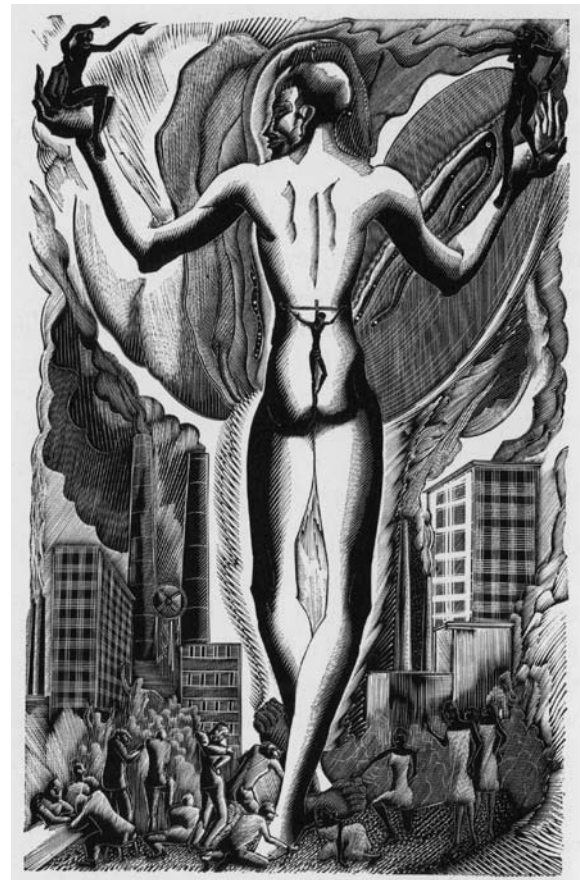


Fig. 17 Hughes-Stanton, *Lawrence, Ship of Death*, p. 58.

Fig. 16 Hughes-Stanton, "There Was a Wonder in Heaven," from *The Revelation of St. John*, Gregynog Press, 1933.

America and settlement in New Mexico.
²⁴ Letter dated 30 August 1929, quoted in Hughes-Stanton, *The Wood-Engravings of Blair Hughes-Stanton*, p. 19.
²⁵ The Gate Theatre Salon, as it was initially named, was founded by Peter Godfrey and his wife and established in the area of Covent Gardens in London. In March of 1927 it closed and moved to new quarters near Charing Cross Station, re-opening in late November 1927, with the revised name Gate Theatre Studio.
²⁶ Simon Gantillon, *Maya*, Paraphrased into English by Virginia & Frank Vernon, with XIII Wood Engravings by Blair Hughes-Stanton, Waltham Saint Law-

rence: Golden Cockerel Press, 1930, p. v.
²⁷ Ibid.
²⁸ Hughes-Stanton, *The Wood-Engravings of Blair Hughes-Stanton*, p. 13.
²⁹ Paul Collet, "Blair Hughes-Stanton on Wood-engraving," *Matrix; a review for printers and bibliophiles*, Issue No. 2, Winter 1982, p. 46.
³⁰ Ellis, D. H. *Lawrence: Dying Game*, p. 529
³¹ Collet, "Blair Hughes-Stanton on Wood-engraving," p. 47.
³² Quoted in D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse and the Writings on Revelation*, edited by Mara Kalnins, Cambridge University Press, 1989, (Introduction) p. 12.
³³ D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, pp. 46-47.

³⁴ Hughes-Stanton, *The Wood-Engravings of Blair Hughes-Stanton*, p. 30.
³⁵ John Gould Fletcher, "Blair Hughes-Stanton," *The Print-Collector's Quarterly*, Vol. 21, October 1934, p. 368.
³⁶ Hughes-Stanton, *The Wood-Engravings of Blair Hughes-Stanton*, p. 35.

§§

NOTE ON BOOKS: The following books, from which illustrations for this article have been reproduced, are in the collection of the author:

- Apocrypha* (limited ed.), London: Cresset Press, 1929.
- John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (limited ed.), London: Essex House Press, 1899.
- John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, two-vols. (limited ed.), London: Cresset Press, 1928.
- Frederick Carter, *The Dragon of Revelation*, London: Desmond Harmsworth, 1931.
- Simon Gantillon, *Maya, A Play... Paraphrased into English by Virginia & Frank Vernon with XII Wood Engravings by Blair Hughes-Stanton* (limited ed.), Waltham Saint Lawrence: The Golden Cockerel Press, 1930.
- D. H. Lawrence, *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (limited ed.), London: Cresset Press, 1930.
- D. H. Lawrence, *Ship of Death and Other Poems*, London: Martin Secker, 1933.

Caxtonians Read: Understanding Our Affliction

Two books on the passion to collect

Robert McCamant

Book collectors have it made. Most of us acquire books which are fundamentally rectilinear, allowing them to be placed comfortably on shelves in some sort of order (whether by size, date, or alphabetically by author). I suppose collecting postcards would be even simpler: all you'd need would be some custom drawers for the bulk of your collection, and a few picture frames for your favorites.

But pity the poor collector of handmade glass floats! True, if he has a house with some ground around it, some could be left outside. But if put on a shelf, they'd require some sort of stop to prevent their rolling off and smashing to bits on the floor. They are heavy, frequently have no flat sides, and breakable.

Or car fresheners. How to keep the smell of your collection from driving the whole family to live on the front porch? Or combination footstool/spitoons.

How many could one's wife tolerate in the living room?

In my own modest book collection, I have two books about other kinds of collectors, which I thought I'd share.

One came into my life recently, *In Flagrate Collecto*. It's an odd hybrid of book-to-read and coffee table book, written by Marilynn Gelfman Karp. It weighs in at 4 pounds and 4 ounces of glossy paper. If you just look at the pictures, you might guess that Karp had gone out

and discovered collectors of a huge variety of items. There are more conventional collections pictured, such as bottle caps, washboards, or glass electrical insulators. But it turns out there are a lot of pretty exotic specialties: Naughty Nellie bootjacks, sugar skulls, wax fruits intended to use in coating sewing thread, photographs of misspelled signs, seed packets, airplane security cards.

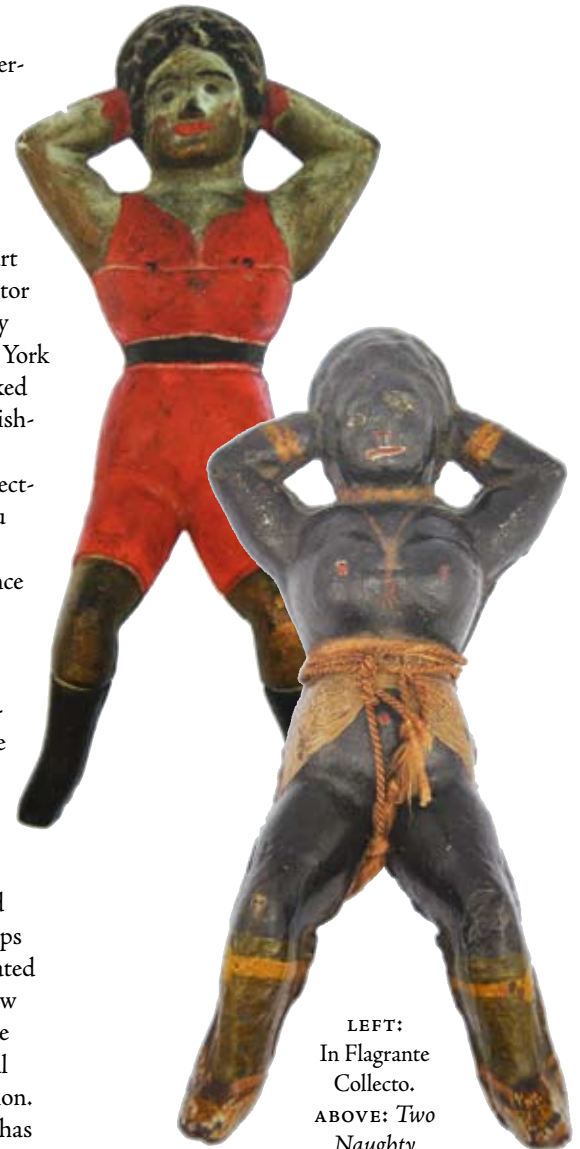
What changes everything about your perception of the book is the discovery, when you actually read it, that most of the pictured collections are her own. Then you read the back flap of the jacket and you discover that Karp is a professor of art at NYU, and that her husband is the art dealer Ivan C. Karp. This inveterate collector is a sophisticated woman, who presumably holds her head up without shame at New York cocktail parties. And who presumably talked art-publisher Harry N. Abrams into publishing her self-outing!

She has quite a bit to say about the collecting urge. "Collecting is not about what you collect as much as it is about who you are. Possession somehow connotes transference of the object's virtues to its owner. Collections are about recollection. Collections exclude the world and are symbolic of it." Mind you, she doesn't still own all the col-

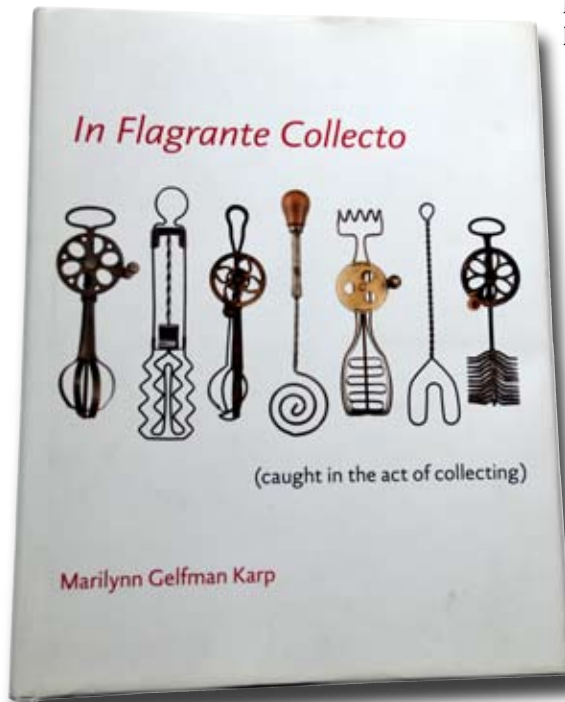
lections she has assembled. Her cast-iron carriage, buggy, and wagon steps were donated to the New York State Historical Association. And she has regrets: "Had I started in the 1970s, when egg-beaters of the past were affordable, I might have had the mighti-

est and most brilliantly sculptural collection of eggbeater models." But, alas, she waited to start acquiring them.

The other book, *Collectors' Tales*, is more typical of the books in my own collection, in that it was made by hand and by someone I know. Jessica Spring was a Chicagoan (getting a master's at Columbia College) when she made it. She now runs the Springtide Press in Seattle. The book consists of a handmade



LEFT:
In Flagrate Collecto.
ABOVE: Two
Naughty
Nellie
bootjacks
from 1880.



box that features a deck of letterpress collectors cards with one object from each collector – ranging from a beetle to a pair of handcuffs – displayed on a velvet pillow. I have copy 13, which includes a National Semiconductor Model 600 pocket calculator, which was representative of the collection of Guy Ball of Tustin, California, who has calculators and LED watches.

Other copies have other objects on their velvet pillows, each representative of a different collector: a giant beetle, vintage bubble gum, an action figure, an antique hanger. The box also includes a booklet with an essay by Annie Morse which explores the collecting

urge, citing examples from the pictured collectors and from a brief bibliography of books about collecting. The essay is highlighted with charming scratchboard illustrations by Susan Estelle Kwas, depicting animals caught in the act of collecting for themselves.

Morse quotes one of the depicted collectors,

Virginia Heaven. "This is the stuff I rescue...as a curator I am a cultural preserver." Virginia's day job is as curator at a motorcycle museum. Among the things she collects for herself: hooked pillows, beaded fruit, enameled turkey platters, and effigies of shoes.

§§



The author's copy of *Collectors' Tales*. ABOVE: illustration by Susan Estelle Kwas of a Patagonian viscacha, which collects objects without respect to their nutrition or usefulness.



One of Karp's favorite collections is of decorative waxed paper. FAR LEFT: packaging. NEAR LEFT: nursery rhyme pattern. Both circa 1938.

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Lisa Pevtzow

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: "They Seek a City: Chicago and the Art of Migration, 1910-1950" (more than 80 works, primarily by south-ern- and foreign-born artists, portray Chicago's transformation to the polyglot, cosmopolitan place that it is today), Galleries 182-184, through June 2. "The Artist and the Poet" (a collection of works on paper that surveys the ways visual artists have been inspired by poets in the 20th century), Galleries 124-127, through June 2. "Picturing Poetry" (dynamic interpretations of verse by children's picture book artists), Ryan Education Center, through May 12.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: "Historic Landscapes: Architectural Design in Print" (rare books with engravings of landscape design from the past four centuries in Europe and America), through May 19.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: "Vivian Maier's Chicago" (Maier spent her adult life as a nanny but devoted her free time and money to photography), through summer 2013.

Columbia College Center for Book and Paper Arts, 1104 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, 312-369-6684: "Structures for Reading: Text (Infra)Structure & The Reading Body in Contemporary Art" (features artworks that house, modulate or mediate books or texts), through April 6. "MFA Thesis Exhibition" (final projects by thesis students in Interdisciplinary Arts Department), opens April 26.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: "Illustrated Press: 'Chicago Home in One Place: A South Side Story' and 'Kathy Has a Question'" (comics panels by Darryl Holliday and Erik Nelson Rodriguez, displayed oversize), through July 28.

DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 East 56th Place, Chicago, 773-947-0600: "Geoffrey & Carmen: A Memoir in

Four Movements" (more than 90 paintings, sculptures, photographs, costumes, books and designs by artist Geoffrey Holder and his wife, Carmen DeLavallade), through May 30. "Red, White, Blue & Black: A History of Blacks in the Armed Services" (featuring more than 100 artifacts, objects, images and documents from the Revolutionary War through the Vietnam War), continuing.

Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, 312-280-2660: "Color Bind: The MCA Collection in Black and White" (artists who significantly limit their palette or produce works of one color in order to explore and emphasize the most basic formal aspects of art making), through April 28.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: "Politics, Piety, and Poison: French Pamphlets, 1600-1800" (French pamphlets published during the transitional period from the Ancien Régime to the French Revolution), through April 13. "Treasures of Faith: New Acquisitions," April 24 through July 6.

Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, 773-702-9514: "Between Heaven & Earth: Birds In Ancient Egypt" (explores the impact that birds had on ancient Egyptian religion, design, and the conception of the state), through July 28.

Smart Museum of Art, 5550 S. Greenwood Avenue, Chicago, 773-702-0200: "The Sahmat Collective: Art and Activism in India since 1989" (works in a variety of media from over sixty artists), through June 9.

Spertus Center, 610 S. Michigan, Chicago, 312-322-1700: "Uncovered & Rediscovered: Stories of Jewish Chicago" (the work of influential Jewish artists active in Chicago between 1920 and 1945), extended through April 26.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery, 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: "My Life Is an Open Book: D.I.Y. Autobiography" (zines and other self-publishing as a natural fit for personal narratives, such as autobiography, which allow for self-expression as well as self-protection), through April 13. "The Seminary Co-op Bookstore Documentary Project" (Exhibition documents the history of the Seminary Co-op and the experiences of its patrons and staff through photographs, interviews, artifacts, and memorabilia), opens April 22. "Recipes for Domesticity: Cookery, Household Management, and the Notion of Expertise" (looks at the relationships among food, class, and gender, as well as the ways in which domestic expertise became formulated through these books), opens April 22.

Send your listings to lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net



Columbia College: Structures for Reading

ABOVE: JUDITH LEEMANN, READING ALOUD. BELOW: WORK BY LIZ SALES FROM EXHIBITION POSTER.



Photograph by Robert McCamant

Caxtonians Collect: Arthur Frank

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Arthur Frank opened his Winnetka bookstore, Round Table Books, in 2012, a year when it is safe to say that a good many more bookstores closed than opened. Why do such a crazy thing?

"I was convinced that there would be a niche for us. Do you know that we are the only antiquarian bookstore in the North Shore? There are none in Wilmette, Kenilworth, Glencoe, Highland Park, Northbrook, or Glenview! I have to believe that quite a few people read and collect books in those communities," he says.

What is more, Frank had a different business model than a typical used book store. "We sell books on consignment," he explained. "Typically we get books when someone decides to clear out his or her library. We go in, pack them all up in sealed cartons, and bring them back to inventory." He pauses here.

"Actually, we've had excellent luck acquiring libraries. Right now I'd estimate we have 50,000 books in cartons waiting to be un-sealed and inventoried." In the more typical way of working, an antiquarian dealer goes into a library and cherry-picks only the items he is confident of selling. He makes an offer and buys them on the spot. But the original owner is then left with the rest of the books to do something else with, and the antiquarian dealer has his money tied up in books he must now sell as quickly as possible.

Selling books is also going well. He estimates that half of his sales are to walk-in customers at the store in Winnetka, while the other half are through his own and other web sites. "We have open houses and author readings just like a new-book store. It develops people's connection to the store, and we sell a few of the author's books." Apparently North Shore residents can figure it out; rarely do people drop in expecting to find tables of current best-sellers.

You may have guessed that bookselling is a second career for Frank. He grew up in

Glencoe, went to Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, then started work on a law degree at the University of Illinois. Two years serving in the Peace Corps in Swaziland interrupted. (He taught high school at a Methodist missionary school. In what might be considered a foreshadowing, his main accomplishment at the school was to build and stock a library. "Schlepping books is my fate," he says.)



But he came back and finished his law degree and had a general law practice in Illinois for fifteen years. That was followed by fifteen years in the Washington, D.C. area as an administrator for Hyatt Legal Services. While he was working in Washington, his wife, Mary Kay Davison, remained as a political consultant mainly in the Chicago area. So when the Hyatt job ended, Frank moved back to Chicago. They acquired a large townhouse in the city with the plan that he would sell off his book collection from home.

By 2012, however, the house was overflowing with books, and his wife thought it would be desirable to move them out – thus the plan for the bookstore in Winnetka, close to his childhood home of Glencoe. It makes for an unusual commute, but it keeps the parts of his life separate.

The closing of Caxtonian Florence Shay's Titles Books in Highland Park has provided an additional labor pool of people experienced with identifying and describing old books, and Frank has hired three to work on his inventory of sealed boxes. "I'd like to have an inventory of about 20,000 books at a time," he says. There is room for 5000 titles, displayed by topic, in the storefront. The remainder will be stored by acquisition number in the basement or other nearby spaces.

Books which do not come up to a specific value (currently about \$5) are passed on to other dealers or offered, un-inventoried, at \$1 apiece in a bin. "Our system of hand-numbering and describing books means that we cannot make a profit on supermarket paperbacks. We looked into ways we could mark books with a machine-readable barcode, but they either hopelessly marred the book or tended to separate from the book. Since these books don't belong to us, we have to be absolutely sure we know where they are and who they belong to."

The name of the bookstore harkens back to Frank's first collecting interest: King Arthur. "Guess I thought of it because of my name," he muses. The store has a general inventory, but specializes

in history.

He showed me several exotic, finely-printed books he's taking his time to figure out. All were brought in by the older adult children of the original purchasers. None knew where or how they had been acquired. "I love researching books," Frank confesses. "It's also fun to speculate on how the books made it from Europe to the North Shore."

He joined the Club in 2012, nominated by Caryl Seidenberg and seconded by Paul Gehl.

§§

Photograph by Robert McCamant



NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 416
FOX VALLEY, IL

CAXTONIAN

Caxton Club
60 West Walton Street
Chicago, IL 60610
USA

Address Correction Requested

Bookmarks...

There will be no
April luncheon meeting.

Saturday, April 6, 2013, Newberry Library
The 2013 Caxton/Newberry Symposium:

Outsiders: Zines, Samizdat, & Alternative Publishing

We will explore how self-produced books and pamphlets express individualized, unconventional, controversial, and prohibited messages with papers from Lisa Gitelman, Ann Komaromi, and Jenna Freedman. Afterward, they will be joined in a panel by Davida Breier, Johanna Drucker, Anne Elizabeth Moore, and Steve Tomasula, moderated by Alice Schreyer. Topics will range widely historically and geographically, and the speakers will consider the current state of self-publishing as well as its history.

8:30 AM: COFFEE
9:15-10:45 SESSION I
10:45-11:15 COFFEE BREAK
11:15-1:30 PM: SESSION 2

Beyond April...

MAY LUNCHEON

On May 10, Caxtonian Susan Allen will speak about her journey from Director of Libraries at Kalamazoo College to Chief Librarian at the Getty Research Center in Los Angeles, and then about her current position as Director of the newer (8 years old) Rare Book School at UCLA.

MAY DINNER

We will meet at the Union League Club on May 15. James Caudle, Associate Editor of the Boswell Editions at Yale, will speak on "In the Midst of the Jovial Crowd: Boswell in London 1762-1763."

Dinner: Wednesday, Apr. 17, 2013, Union League Club
Julia Miller
Not Just Another Beautiful Book:
American Scaleboard Bindings

Julia Miller will discuss the use of thin wooden boards (scaleboard or scabboard) as covers on early American imprints dating from as early as 1682; the use of scaleboard continued until the 1840s. Numerous examples of these bindings survive in public and private collections, but to date very little effort has been made to study or describe them. Miller has published several short articles on the topic and recently published a typology of American scaleboard bindings in Volume I of *Suave Mechanicals: Essays on the History of Bookbinding*, published by The Legacy Press.

Julia Miller has been a rare book conservator for over thirty years and now spends most of her time studying, teaching, and writing about the structure, materials, and decoration of historical bindings. She is the author of *Books Will Speak Plain – A Handbook for Identifying and Describing Historical Bindings* published by The Legacy Press in 2010.

April dinner: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Timing: spirits at 5:00, dinner at 6:00, program at 7:30. \$48. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org; **reservations are needed by noon Friday for the Wednesday dinner.**

JUNE LUNCHEON

On June 14, Dr. Piermaria Oddone, Director of Fermilab in Batavia, and known to be exuberant when talking about the mysteries of the universe, will speak. His title: "Have We Found the Higgs?" referring to the Higgs Boson particle, of which it has been asked, "...is this a footprint of God?"

JUNE DINNER

We will meet at the Union League Club on June 19. Paul Durica, PhD candidate at the University of Chicago, will speak. Topic to be announced.