CAXTONIAN

JOURNAL OF THE CAXTON CLUB VOLUME XXII, NO. 5 MAY 2014

Picturing Damnation and Redemption

Diverse illustrations to Dante's *Divine Comedy* over the Last Two Centuries

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There are probably few educated persons, at least in the Western world, who have not heard of Dante Alighieri (c 1265-1321) or his great literary work, *The Divine Comedy* (originally called simply *Commedia*). However, many fewer persons have actually read the poem in its entirety, translated or otherwise. I admit that I have not, except for selected passages translated into English.* Nonetheless, a multitude of scholarly studies of the work has been written, and it is generally acknowledged as the greatest poetic work in the Italian language and one of the greatest literary accomplishments of humankind. Even contemporary novelist Dan Brown has found in Dante fodder for one of his novels of mystery and intrigue (*Inferno*, 2013). Of course, the *Commedia* has also been the inspiration for many artists and writers over the centuries since the poem was completed, probably shortly before Dante's death in 1321. Since its completion, it has taken its place as the literary paradigm on the theme of the Christian pilgrim in search of spiritual truth.

Fig. 1 Leonard Baskin, frontispiece to Dante's Inferno, *1969.*

As scholars have frequently noted, the *Commedia* is at the very foundation of modern literature, having demonstrated during the late Middle Ages that serious poetic work need not be composed in Latin but could be written in a vernacular language. Education in Europe was essentially ecclesiastical up to the 14th century, and the conception of time and evolving history, as taught by the Church, was based largely on biblical scripture. Consistent with these ideas, Dante in his poem tells us that "God's judgment develops and fixes the complete and ultimate form of the individual."[1] And Dante in the *Commedia* further warns us of the consequences of sin:

> My eyes, which had been satisfied in seeking
> new sights – a thing for which they long – did
> not
> delay in turning toward him. But I would
> not have you, reader, be deflected from
> your good resolve by hearing from me now
> how God would have us pay the debt we owe.
> Don't dwell upon the form of punishment:
> consider what comes after that; at worst
> it cannot last beyond the final judgment.
> [*Purgatorio*, Canto 10, lines 103-111]

Consequently, while we often think of Dante at the forefront in the evolution of modern literature, Dante's theology was firmly grounded in the preconceptions of the Middle Ages. And Dante's *Commedia*, like Holy Scripture, was intended as a guide and caution for those still living who sought God's salvation. Dante organized his guide with great forethought, authority, and aesthetic skill. Perhaps Leonard Baskin's expressive drawing of Dante's profile (Fig. 1), distorted by the angst of so much abstract and semi-abstract American art of the mid-20th century, best embodies his stern authority, rather than the 15th-century profile of the poet by Sandro Botticelli, most often reproduced. We will be returning to Baskin's disturbing illustrations for the *Commedia* later. As Ernest Hatch Wilkins observes of Dante and his great *Commedia*:

> No other great poem was ever so completely determined by a dominant sense of purpose; no other poet ever spent himself so utterly in the effort to fulfill his ordained responsibility; no writer ever sought more valiantly to gather

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* There are numerous English translations of the *Divine Comedy*. The first American translation was provided by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and published in 1867. However, I have used Allen Mandelbaum's blank-verse translation as found in his three-volume *Divine Comedy* published by the University of California in 1980-1983 and including drawings by Barry Moser.

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PICTURING DANTE, *from page 1*

> and to set forth all the true treasures of human thought and human experience; no drama was ever enacted in a setting of more convincing vividness, or amid sounds of more convincing resonance.[2]

In his poem Dante interweaves actual events and contemporary personalities in explication of how Divinity has ordained order and judgment in the universe. Dante also firmly believed that a balance between imperial power (the enlightened monarch) and spiritual guidance (the uncorrupted Papacy) was the supreme model for society. Unfortunately, reality was otherwise as Dante also observed: "The imperial power, ordained to unite and govern human society, is despised and almost destroyed; the papacy has forgotten its spiritual function."[3]

Fig. 2 John Flaxman, Paola and Francesca, engraving, Inferno, *1793.*

Between 1283 and 1288, Dante's life was shattered, first by warfare (the Campaldino campaign among other political challenges), and then the early death of Beatrice Portinari, the single individual around whom much of his greatest writing circulates. Florence was ruled as a city-state with power often held tenuously by family factions. In January 1302, as a consequence of one of the many feuds between powerful families, Dante (a member of the White Guelphs political faction) was exiled from Florence for what was to be the remainder of his life. It was presumably around this time that he began to compose the first cantos of the *Commedia*. The distress of his continuing exile undoubtedly had an emotional impact on his poem as it progressed over the next two decades.

By the late 13th century, Dante had begun to focus much of his poetry around his now idealized and spiritualized love for Beatrice Portinari. This includes his great poem *La Vita Nuova* (completed in 1294). But it is the *Commedia* that climaxes his obsession with this now transfigured female personality. On May Day 1274, when Dante was almost nine years old, he was taken to a festivity by his father, hosted by the great Florentine banker Folco Portinari. Among those present was Folco's eight-year-old daughter Bice (short for Beatrice), and this was Dante's first glimpse of the person who would become his passion and obsession. Much later, in his *Vita Nuova*, Dante quotes Homer in his reverence to the now dead Beatrice: "She seemed the daughter not of a mortal man but of God."[4]

The poet saw Beatrice as a young woman only a few times later in his youth and cherished each brief attention she gave him. She remained a distant, unattainable dream. It is interesting to note that when he was twelve, Dante's marriage was prearranged to one Gemma di Manetto Donati, the daughter of a powerful Florentine family. Family members were expected to participate in expedient arrangements that would enhance the family's political influence. When he was of age (the exact date is unknown) he married Gemma, with whom he fathered several children. It is noteworthy that Gemma is never mentioned in any of Dante's surviving written material.

The *Commedia* is divided into three parts in homage to the Trinity: the *Inferno*, *Purgatoria*, and *Paradiso*. Scholars have discovered a complex numerological structure in the poem, consistent with such interests in the late Middle Ages. Each part of the *Commedia* has 33 cantos except the *Inferno* which has 34 (the first canto may be considered an introduction), and it is carefully structured around *terza* rhyming, evident in the rhyming of the original Italian, lost, of course, in translations.

The three parts and much of the symbolism of the poem center on and elaborate the number three and its multiples. Beatrice is represented by the number nine (her name appears 63 times in the *Commedia*, 6 + 3 equals 9). Additionally, Dante tells us in his *Vita Nuova* that he first met Beatrice in the ninth year of his life, and her death occurred on the ninth day of the 9th month of the 9th year of the century. Beatrice first appears to Dante in the 30th canto of *Purgatoria* which is the 64th canto of the poem; thus she is preceded by 63 cantos and followed by 63 cantos. Finally the poem's total of 100 cantos represents the square of 10, considered at the time to be the number of perfection.[5]

Dante the pilgrim begins his great journey, as

elaborated in the *Commedia*, at the beginning of Holy Week 1300 as he strays into a dark forest, lost and seeking guidance.

> When I had journeyed half of our life's way,
> I found myself within a shadowed forest,
> for I had lost the path that does not stray. [*Inferno*, Canto 1, lines 1-3]

His journey of discovery will last one week. The great Classical poet Virgil becomes his guide through Hell and Purgatory until, at the top of Mount Purgatory, they reach the Earthly Paradise. Virgil is then succeeded by Beatrice as Dante's guide. The poem concludes with Dante's celestial vision on Easter Sunday. Like Christ's Resurrection, it represents a transforming spiritual experience.

While a number of artists in the 15th and 16th centuries in Italy were inspired to include scenes or images from the *Commedia* in their paintings and frescos, few major artists provided illustrations to published editions of Dante's poem during this time. In between the mid-16th until the last half of the 18th century, interest in Dante was largely dormant. However by the late 18th century, several artists in England began to revive interest in the *Commedia*, including Swiss-born Henry Fuseli and Sir Joshua Reynolds. And throughout the 19th century, especially among the so-called Romantic artists (Delacroix and his early painting, *The Barque of Dante*, 1822, an example), the drama and tragedy, especially of the *Inferno*, attracted major attention.[6] Seeing the damned in various twisted states of torture and pain, of course, was much more interesting than seeing the saved in eternal bliss. This artistic and scholarly interest in Dante continued, in fact was amplified, throughout the 20th century. I will discuss a selection of some of what I consider the more interesting artistic representations, reflecting a variety of styles.

Fig. 3 Auguste Rodin, detail, Paola and Francesca, *from a bronze cast of the Gates of Hell, early 20th century.*

Fig. 4 William Blake, "Circle of the Lustful," Hell, *Canto 5, watercolor, 1824-27, Birmingham, City Art Museums and Gallery.*

One of the first highly influential "modern" illustrators of the *Commedia* was the English classicist John Flaxman (1755-1826) who was commissioned by English banker Thomas Hope to provide 111 outline drawings for the poem, then engraved by the Italian artist Tomasso Piroli. This was a small limited edition published in Italy in 1793 and intended primarily as gifts for Hope's friends.[7]

But unauthorized reprints had begun to appear by 1802 and for a time were very influential. During the later 19th century, the Romantics found Flaxman's highly ascetic style too minimalist, lacking in the drama sought so often beginning, in particular, with the later illustrations of Frenchman Gustave Doré (1832-1883), by the 1860s. Comparison of Flaxman's illustration to the highly popular episode of lovers Paola and Francesco from the *Inferno*, Canto 5 (Fig. 2) with Auguste Rodin's highly emotional detail of the same scene in his famous bronze *Gates of Hell*, a little over a century later (Fig. 3), provides only one such striking contrast. The pair had been consigned to Hell for their illicit love after reading the romantic story of the knight Lancelot, and in the poem Dante is briefly overcome by their tragic fate:

> When we had read how the desired smile
> was kissed by one who was so true a lover,
> this one, who never shall be parted from me,
> while all his body trembled, kissed my mouth.
> A Gallehault indeed, that book [of Lancelot] and he
> Who wrote it, too; that day we read no more.
> And while one spirit said these words to me [Dante],
> the other wept, so that – because of pity –
> I fainted, as if I had met my death.
> And then I fell as a dead body falls.
> [*Inferno*, Canto 5, lines 133-142]

The exception to the rather unfruitful influence of Flaxman over time was his friendship with and impact on his English contemporary William Blake (1757-1827), whose love of line he shared with Flaxman. Flaxman died one year before Blake. At the end of his life, Blake created 102 designs intended to be engraved, illustrating Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The project remained unfinished, and Blake's designs were not brought together, seen by the general public, nor finally published until the end of the 19th century.

Blake's drawings for the *Commedia* often modify Dante's strict Catholic prescriptions in favor of Blake's own, often contrary, ideas. A case in point is Blake's own interpretation of the Paolo and Francesca motif, called – in allusion to Canto 5 – "Circle of the Lustful," pairing the looping stream of carnal lovers

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PICTURING DANTE, *from page 3*

with the separate "flame" of Paolo and Francesca rising above the prostrate Dante. But in Blake the two lovers have been reunited and redeemed by their love, their embracing figures mirrored in the sunburst above Virgil's head (Fig. 4).

Though modest in size, Blake's magnificent color illustrations to Canto 5 and to *Purgatory*, Cantos 29-30, are among the great imaginative works of the 19th century, presaging the Romanticism that will reach full flower several decades later. In an image for *Purgatory*, Beatrice, riding in a celestial car, appears before Dante in a visionary swirl, succeeding Virgil as his guide to Paradise (Fig. 5). Blake's interpretation, however, transforms Dante's text, and references such Old Testament Biblical contexts as the whirlwind of Ezekiel's vision including a mystical vortex with the likeness of "four living creatures" (with "four faces"), each creature enveloped by "four wings" (Ezekiel 1:4-6).

Fig. 5 William Blake, "Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Car," Purgatory, *Canto 31, watercolor, 1824-1827, London, Tate Gallery.*

When they finally became known in the late 19th century, the great Irish poet and critic W. B. Yeats found Blake's Dante drawings much more interesting than Doré's, calling the French artist's later Dante illustrations "a noisy and demagogic art" in comparison to Blake's.[8] Nonetheless, Gustave Doré's drawings for various parts of the *Divine Comedy* (translated into steel engravings), begun in the late 1850s and continued through much of the 60s, became immensely popular. They quickly established a benchmark for many later artists interested in illustrating the poem. In his first engraving for the poem, Doré effectively shows Dante beginning his voyage, a fearful, dark forest offering no clear path, a metaphor for the uncertainty of life's journey. (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 Gustave Doré, Dante Entering the Dark Woods, Inferno, *Canto 1, 1860s.*

> When I had journeyed half of life's way,
> I found myself within a shadowed forest,
> for I had lost the path that does not stray.
> Ah, it is hard to speak of what it was,
> that savage forest, dense and difficult,
> which even in recall renews my fear:
> so bitter – death is hardly more severe!
> [*Inferno*, Canto 1, lines 1-7]

A little over a hundred years later, contemporary artist and highly regarded book illustrator Barry Moser (b. 1940), a master of linear virtuosity in the late 20th century, provides a similarly effective image for the same scene with Dante disappearing into a dark forested void (Fig. 7).

Upon coming out of the wood, Dante sees a hill and starts up a path only to be driven back by a spotted leopard, then a hungry lion, and finally a famished she-wolf (all ultimately complex historical symbols). A man appears and identifies himself as the classical poet Virgil, who explains in Canto 2 that "a fair, saintly Lady" called to him and asked that he help a friend. The fair Lady we presume to be Beatrice. The Italian artist Amos Nattini (1892-1985), little known in the United States, provides a large evocative lithograph of the Beasts and Virgil's appearance in probably the largest three-volume, elephantine folio illustrating the *Divine Comedy* ever published (Fig. 8).[9]

In the *Commedia*, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise are complex structures. Hell is composed of a series of nine concentric circles, each circle reserved for one particular type of sinful action, although the first circle, Limbo, has been created for the un-baptized and virtuous pagans. This realm is devoid of harsh punishment, but the inhabitants can never ascend to Paradise. Virgil resides in Limbo but has been given permission (via Beatrice) to guide Dante to the top of Mount Purgatory, where the Earthly Paradise (Eden) resides, but no further.

Doré's depiction of the opening to Hell surrounded by a storm-laden landscape and

Fig. 7 Barry Moser, Dante Entering the Dark Woods, Inferno, *Canto 1, 1980.*

first mentioned in the *Inferno* at the beginning of Canto 3, while adequately descriptive, is rendered very traditionally (Fig. 9), in contrast to what we see in some later renditions. Above the cave-like entrance are the following words,

> Through me the way into the suffering city,
> through me the way to eternal pain,
> Through me the way that runs among the lost.
> Justice urged on my high artificer;
> My maker was divine authority,
> the highest wisdom and the primal love.
> Before me nothing but eternal things
> were made, and I endure eternally.
> Abandon every hope, who enter here.
> [*Inferno*, Canto 3, lines 1-9]

Much more to the point, and a symbol of the troubled modern age, is Auguste Rodin's (1840-1917) great sculptural piece, left incomplete at his death, the "Gates of Hell" (Fig. 10).

Rodin's complex was originally commissioned in 1880 and intended as the grand entrance to a new Museum of Decorative Art with doors to focus on Dante's poem. However, due to financial and political situations in France, the museum was never built. Rodin, nonetheless, continued the ambitious project as a personal artistic effort, left incomplete at his death. Over several decades of the artist's life the doors also became the womb for many well-known individual pieces, such as the familiar *Thinker*.

Fig. 8 Amos Nattini, Inferno *Canto 1, Dante meets Virgil, 1928.*

Rodin dispensed with the original idea of a series of illustrational panels depicting various episodes from the poem and transformed the two large entrance "doors" (crowned above by a lintel with the *Thinker* surrounded by various tortured souls) as a low-relief surface of free flowing, intermingling, largely anonymous nude figures, representing human suffering "isolating and exploring states of despondency."[10]

The Divine Comedy continued to attract 20th century artists, among them East Coast graphic artist and painter Harry R. Bennett (1919-2012), a prolific illustrator during the 1960s and 70s, who provided drawings for a three-volume, boxed edition of the *Divine Comedy*, published by the Washington Square Press in New York

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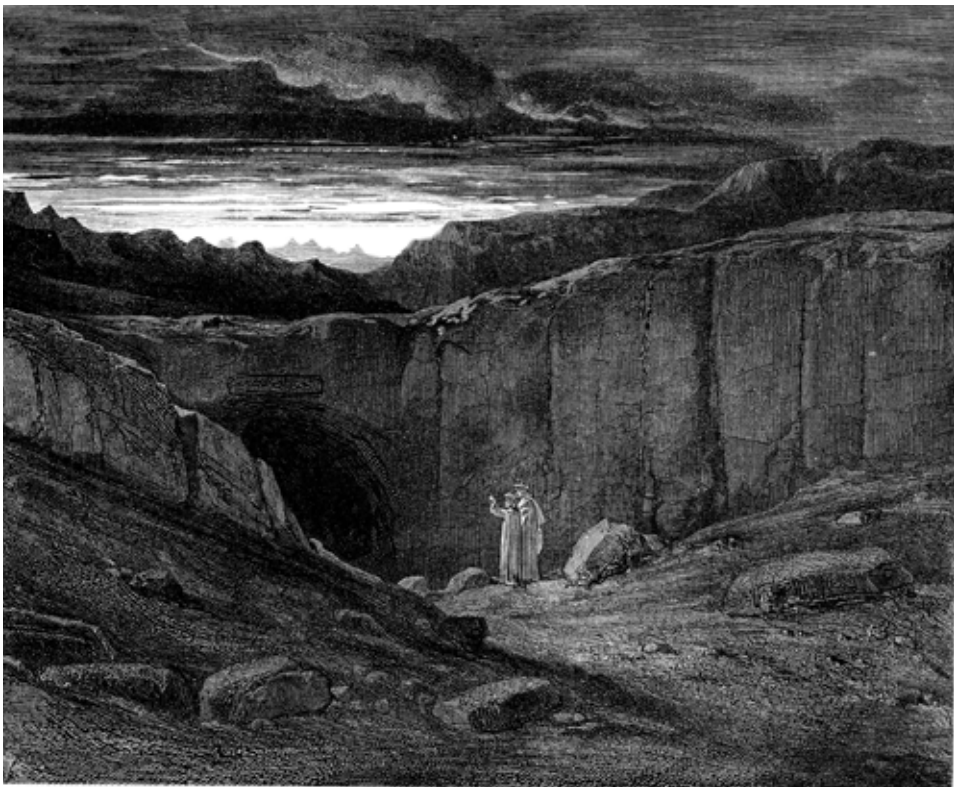

Fig. 9 Doré, Dante and Virgil approaching the Gates of Hell, Inferno, *1860s.*

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in 1966.[11] Like Leonard Baskin and Rico Lebrun (to be discussed below), Bennett's illustrations utilize semi-abstraction to effectively add mystery and emotional drama to his ink drawings, here showing Dante and Virgil entering a forbidding tunnel leading to Hell (Fig. 11). Cowering figures intertwine in the dark tunnel depths before our pilgrims.

Condemned souls were consigned to the various circles of Hell for eternal punishment by the monstrous figure of Minos, residing in the second circle, who wrapped his serpent tail around his body to indicate which circle the damned should be placed:

> So I descended from the first enclosure
> down to the second circle, that which girdles
> less space but grief more great, that goads to weeping.
> There dreadful Minos stands, gnashing his teeth:
> examining the sins of those who enter,
> he judges and assigns as his tail twines.
> [*Inferno*, Canto 5, lines 1-6]

This monster has provided a prime opportunity for artistic imagination. Doré's image (Fig. 12) is wonderfully frightening, showing the crowned Minos wrapping his tail around his body before a crowd of frightened and distraught souls.

Fig. 10 Rodin, The Gates of Hell, bronze casting of the plaster original, 1880-1917.

Fig. 11 Harry Bennett, Dante and Virgil approaching the Gates of Hell, Inferno, *1966*

Fig. 12 Doré, Minos, Inferno, *Canto 5, 1860s.*

Fig. 13 Rico Lebrun, Minos, Inferno, *1963.*

In contrast to earlier representations, the Italian-born American artist Rico Lebrun (1900-1964) reduces Minos to a serpentine pile, one hand holding the wreathing snake's body, the serpent's head assuming the position where Minos's own head should be, thus melding the concept of humanoid monster and snake into one image (Fig. 13). Lebrun, part of the generation that produced the American Abstract Expressionists (Pollock and Rothko, among others), rejected pure abstraction and insisted on the primacy of drawing. As he wrote to David, his son, of his illustrations to Dante's *Inferno*, published in 1963 in a large format, limited edition, boxed folio by the Kanthos Press, "…the drawings are coming along all right. Some are bloody and horrifying as the cantos in the *Inferno* are; there is no other way to depict terror as Dante describes it…"[12] Lebrun's formable drawings for the *Commedia* were restricted to the *Inferno*, perhaps because he had seen so much misery and pain during his lifetime, and drawing became one means of liberating the emotion generated by the inhumanity he had experienced. His illustration for Canto 24 of the *Inferno*, depicts the gruesome image of a thief on the seventh circle being attacked by snakes (Fig. 14).[13]

Lebrun was to die of cancer the next year; thus, his *Inferno* drawings were among his last projects, and were much admired by both Leonard Baskin and Barry Moser, friends and colleagues. While Lebrun delineates his Minos as a suggestive serpent mound, both Baskin and especially Moser retain a recognizable monster man-figure with a snake-like tail (Figs. 15 & 16). Moser's nude male figure of Minos, in addition, incorporates a masochistic suggestion of sexual pleasure involving his otherwise harsh responsibilities.

Among the delights of the *Commedia* are the specific personalities that Dante in the poem has consigned to Hell. Dante references 126 specific figures by name, among them 56 Italians including 23 from Florence.[14] And

Fig. 14. Lebrun, Inferno, *Canto 24, 1963.*

Fig. 15 Leonard Baskin, Minos, Inferno. *1969.*

Fig. 17 Nattini, Inferno, *Canto 15: Virgil meets Lattini, 1928.*

Fig. 16 Barry Moser, Minos, Inferno, *1980.*

Fig. 18 Doré, Inferno, *Canto 15: Virgil meets Lattini, 1860s.*

the Papacy is not spared. Dante was clearly disappointed in the lack of spiritual purity in the Vatican and distressed at the selling of indulgences as well as the Vatican's political intrigues affecting centers of power in Europe. Of the popes of Dante's maturity, only Benedict XI was not immediately condemned by him to the *Inferno.*[15]

Among those Florentines Dante meets in Canto 15 is his old teacher and the learned Florentine statesman Brunetto Lattini (1220-1294). Much of Dante's early learning was provided by Lattini, and the poet had great affection for him.[16] He was like a father figure to the young Dante. However, Lattini has strangely been cast by the mature Dante into the seventh circle of Hell among the sodomites.

There are no surviving documents to suggest that Lattini was homosexual, and Dante does not explain why his teacher has been condemned to this circle of Hell. Lattini approaches Dante and Virgil with a band of naked men who must continue to run on burning sand or suffer additional fiery pain for a hundred years, while flame is raining down upon them. Upon recognizing Lattini, Dante treats him with great respect (unusual in Hell):

> And when that family looked harder, I
> was recognized by one, who took me by
> the hem and cried out: "This is marvelous!"
> That spirit having stretched his arm toward me,
> I fixed my eyes upon his baked, brown features,
> So that the scorching of his face could not
> prevent my mind from recognizing him;

See PICTURING DANTE, page 8

PICTURING DANTE, *from page 7*

and lowering my face to meet his face,
I answered him: "Are you here, Ser Brunetto?" [*Inferno*, Canto 15, lines 22-30]

Not surprisingly, Lattini asks how Dante has come to be there, and warns him of the bad blood back in Florence. Dante thanks him and Lattini hurries away.

Lacking specific proof of Lattini's sexual orientation, several scholars have pondered the reason for Lattini's inclusion in Hell, since there are also homosexuals in Purgatory.[17] There is no clear answer, although we assume that Dante must have had additional information about his beloved teacher which has not survived. The scene, however, has been treated in several ways. Both Doré and Nattini provided rather realistic and straightforward images, Nattini's bright color lithograph in particular is represented seductively with its rain of fire and includes both male and female figures (Figs. 17-18). In contrast, Moser has reduced the complex canto to a single somewhat sensual nude man running (Fig. 19).

Fig. 22 Nattini, Purgatorio, Canto 31, "Beatrice Appears to Dante in her Chariot," 1936.

but set our sight on earthly things instead,
so justice here impels our eyes toward earth.
As avarice annulled in us the love of any other good, and thus we lost our chance for righteous works…
[*Purgatorio*, Canto 19, lines 118-123]

Finally after climbing all seven terraces of Mount Purgatory, Dante and Virgil reach the mountain's summit where the Earthly Paradise with its Sacred Wood and the Biblical Garden of Eden reside. This is the last earthly destiny before the complex of the Heavenly Paradise above. Virgil crowns Dante and leaves, as Beatrice arrives in a splendid Chariot pulled by a Griffin and accompanied by a retinue of Heavenly hosts.[19] Earlier we saw William Blake's magnificent representation of Beatrice arriving (Fig. 5), which is also rendered, but much more conventionally, by Nattini in one of his large color lithographs (Fig. 22). In his rendering we see a confection of bubbly tree foliage and wreathing female figures surrounding the pale griffin and gold chariot bearing the figure of Beatrice.

From her chariot in Canto 31, Beatrice addresses Dante and rebukes him, prompting him to confess his sins, represented in a evocatively modern representation by Harry Bennett (Fig. 23), showing Dante prostrate on his back while an ethereal Beatrice hovers above him:

"O you upon the holy stream's far shore,"
so she [Beatrice], turning her speech's point against me –
even its edge had seemed too sharp – began again, without allowing interruption,
"tell, tell if this is true; for your confession must be entwined with such self-accusation."
Confusion mixed with fear compelled a *Yes*
Out of my mouth, and yet that *Yes* was such –
One needed eyes to make out what it was.
[*Purgatorio*, Canto 31, lines 1-6, 13-15]

In *Purgatorio*, Canto 32 there are additional emblematic beings representative of the evils that have attempted to destroy or distort the

Dante and Virgil eventually reach the center of the earth and the depths of Hell shaped as a cone. They emerge in the antipodes of Jerusalem at the shores of Mount Purgatory just before dawn on Easter Sunday, a symbol of the emerging light of possible salvation. Mount Purgatory, romantically represented rising in mists by Barry Moser (Fig. 20), is more clearly organized than Hell and is divided into seven spiral terraces that purify the seven capital vices: Pride, Envy, Wrath, Sloth, Avarice (including Prodigality), Gluttony, and Lust.[18] At the gate to Purgatory are three steps with an angel sitting on the threshold. The angel inscribes the letter P seven times with his sword on Dante's brow, once for each of the cornices above the gate. These P's are removed one at a time as Dante progresses up each terrace, until at the mount's top he reaches the Earthly Paradise.

On the fifth terrace, Dante and Virgil encounter those who are enduring penance for their earthly Avarice, and are chained to the ground, as depicted by Doré (Fig. 21):

Just as we did not lift our eyes on high

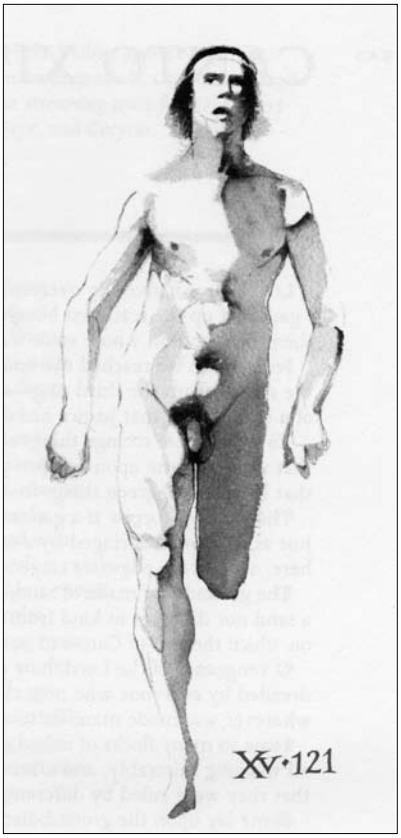

Fig. 19 Moser, Inferno, *Canto 15: Lattini, 1980.*

Fig. 20 Moser, Mount Purgatory, 1980.

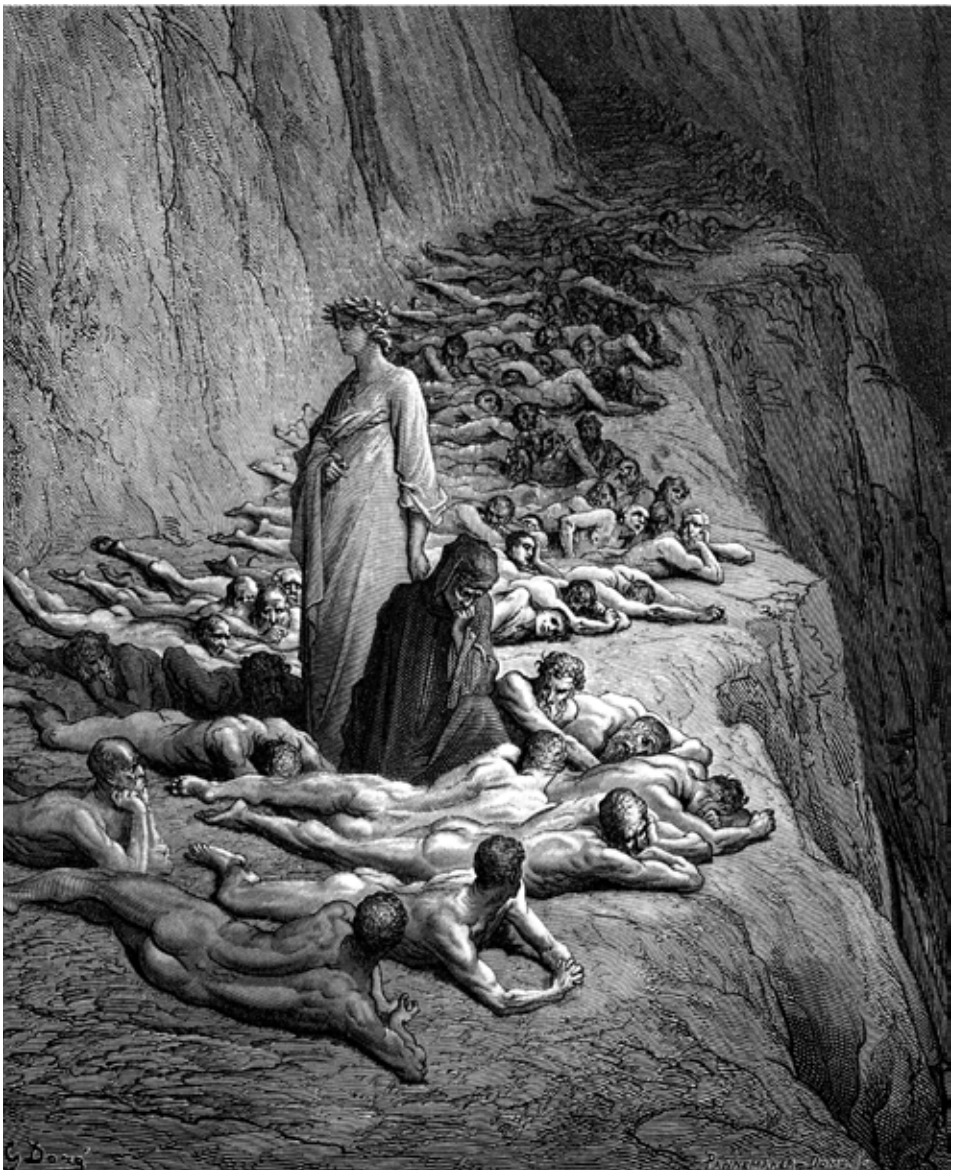

Fig. 21 Doré, Purgatorio, *Terrace 5, "The Avarice," 1860s.*

truth of Holy Scripture, including the Eagle representing the Roman Empire; the Fox representing heresy; the Dragon which may represent the Anti-Christ; the Giant, probably representing the dynasty of France; and the Whore of Babylon representing the corrupted Church.[20] Leonard Baskin has provided a delightfully wicked looking Whore of Babylon from Canto 32 (Fig. 24):

> Just like a fortress set on a steep slope,
> securely seated there, ungirt, a whore,
> whose eyes were quick to rove, appeared to me;
> And I saw at her side, erect, a giant,
> who seemed to serve as her custodian:
> and they – again, again – embraced each other.
> [*Purgatorio*, Canto 32, lines 148-153]

It should be remembered that the Pope for a time left Rome and established himself in Avignon, the so-called Avignon captivity, beginning in 1305. France under Philip the Fair became the protectorate of the prostituted Church.[21]

Finally, in *Paradiso*, Dante is introduced to the Empyrean, where all saved souls reside, where Love reigns supreme under the guidance of God and where in the Primo Mobile (*Paradiso* Canto 27) Beatrice deconstructs Dante's notions of space and time. Like the two previous sections of the Divine Comedy, Paradise is described as a complex of concentric spheres of creation, a world of light and everlasting praise. After traversing the several spheres of heaven beginning with the moon and ascending through each of the planets, stars, and Primo Mobile, Dante reaches The Empyrean, now guided by St. Bernard, who shows him the rose of Paradise, in which reside the blessed, among them Beatrice, seated among the petals along with the Virgin Mary.[22] Baskin, again, has represented the rose rather abstractly, appropriate since it is in reality visionary (Fig. 25):

> So, in the shape of that white Rose, the holy
> legion was shown to me – the host that Christ,
> With His own blood, had taken as His bride.
> The other host, which, flying, sees and sings
> the glory of the One who draws its love,
> and that goodness which granted it such glory…
> [*Paradiso*, Canto 31, lines 1-6]

Contemplating the Rose in the Empyrean, Dante sees the Eternal Light, the three circles of the Trinity, the mystery of the Incarnation, and the flashing light that fulfills Dante's vision and his desire and will to be at one with Love. Dante's *Commedia* ends with these words:

> But then my mind was struck by light that
> flashed
> and, with this light, received what it had asked.
> Here force failed my high fantasy; but my
> desire and will were moved already – like
> a wheel revolving uniformly – by
> the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.
> [*Paradisio*, Canto 33, lines 140-145]

Perhaps it is appropriate that Dante's earthly life comes to an end as the Divine Comedy itself reaches its conclusion with Dante's vision fulfilled. Within less than a century, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) had made Dante a heroic figure, writing a sometimes fanciful biography of the poet and bringing together collections of his written work,

See PICTURING DANTE, page 10

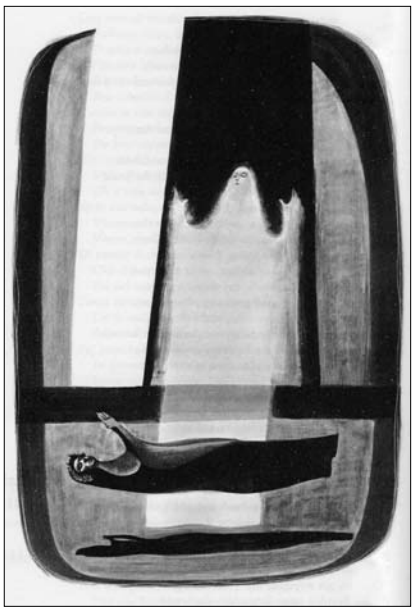

Fig. 23 Bennett, Purgatorio, *Canto 31, "Beatrice Entreats Dante to Confess his Sins," 1966.*

Fig. 24 Baskin, Purgatorio, *Canto 32, "The Whore of Babylon," 1969.*

PICTURING DANTE, *from page 9*

including the *Commedia*. Boccaccio, of course, along with such later Renaissance artists as Raphael, Leonardo, and Michelangelo, is a harbinger of the new age of Humanism while Dante's Middle Ages with its concept of balanced governance is no more. The Church will never again hold quite the intellectual power it did in Dante's time, nor will it in the future. And the *Commedia* will exert tremendous influence over such later masters of literature as Milton and William Blake, among others, Dante's gift to the Modern Age.

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NOTES

[1] Erich Auerbach, "Typological Symbolism in Medieval Literature," in Robert J. Clements, ed., *American Critical Essays on* The Divine Comedy, New York: New York University Press, 1967, p. 110.

[2] Ernest Hatch Wilkins, "The Living Dante," in *American Critical Essays*, p. 8.

[3] Erich Auerbach, "Dante's Addresses to the Reader," in *American Critical Essays*, p. 44.

[4] William Anderson, *Dante the Maker*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p. 73.

[5] Ibid., pp. 284-285

[6] For an overview of artistic interest in the *Divine Comedy*, in particular the *Inferno*, see Eugene Paul Nassar's Introduction to *Illustrations to Dante's Inferno*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994, pp. 11ff.

[7] See Francesca Salvadori, ed., *John Flaxman: The Illustrations for Dante's Divine Comedy*, London: The Royal Academy of Arts, 2005.

[8] W. B. Yeats, "William Blake and His Illustrations to *The Divine Comedy*," (1897) in *W. B. Yeats: Early Essays*, edited by George Bornstein and Richard J. Finneran, New York: Scribner, 2007, p. 104. It should be noted that Blake's philosophy was much different than that of Dante, and he often found himself at odds with the 14th century poet. Consequently, Blake's illustrations often modify the meaning of Dante's narratives.

[9] Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), *La Divina Commedia, Imagini di Amos Nattini* (Milano: Istituto Nazionale Dantesco, [1923-1941]). Three volumes; each volume, leather cover 32.75 H x 26.5 inches W, total of 100 color lithographs by Amos Nattini (1892-1985). In 1921, the occasion of the 600th anniversary of Dante's death, the Instituto Nazionale Dantesco in Milan commissioned an illustrated edition of the poet's *Divine Comedy*. Amos Nattini was selected to create one plate for each canto. The first volume, leather-bound, was completed in 1928, the second in 1936, and the third in 1941. There are few copies of the publication in the United States (their weight and size an obvious factor). The rare books collection of Northern Illinois University's has one copy. Princeton University owns two copies.

[10] Robert E. Elsen, *Rodin's Gates of Hell*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1960, p. 49. Only two groups of figures in the two vertical panels actually refer to specific dramas in Dante's poem: "Paola and Francesca" and "Ugolino and His Sons." The other swirling figures are anonymous. The original complex, assembled after Rodin's death, is in plaster and resides in the Rodin Museum in Paris. To date, ten official full-size bronze castings have been authorized for various sites around the world, one for the façade of the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia.

[11] Following World War II, Bennett traveled to Chicago and studied at both the Art Institute and the American Academy of Art over two years, before finally settling back on the East Coast. The New York Society of Illustrators awarded Bennett a bronze medal for the ink drawings he made for the 1966 boxed set of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

[12] Letter to Lebrun's son, David, January 30, 1961, *In the Meridian of the Heart: Selected Letters of Rico Lebrun*, edited by James Renner and David Lebrun, Boston: David R. Godine, 2000, p. 14.

[13] Relative to the inhumanity that those of Lebrun's generation had seen, the artist did a series of paintings and drawings memorializing the victims of the Holocaust in the mid-1950s.

[14] See Thomas G. Bergin, "On the Personae of the *Comedy*," in Clements, *American Critical Essay*, pp. 118-120.

[15] See Anderson, *Dante the Maker*, p. 159.

[16] Lattini was for a time a significant political force in Florence. He was a magistrate of the Guelph Party and notary to the Anziani, the rulers of Florence from 1250-1260. See Anderson, *Dante the Maker*, p. 59.

[17] See Robert Hollander, "Dante's Harmonious Homosexuals," Princeton University, June 27, 1996 (the article can be accessed via the web). See also, Hollander, *Dante, A Life in Works*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, p. 113.

[18] Hollander, *Dante, A Life in Works*, p. 109.

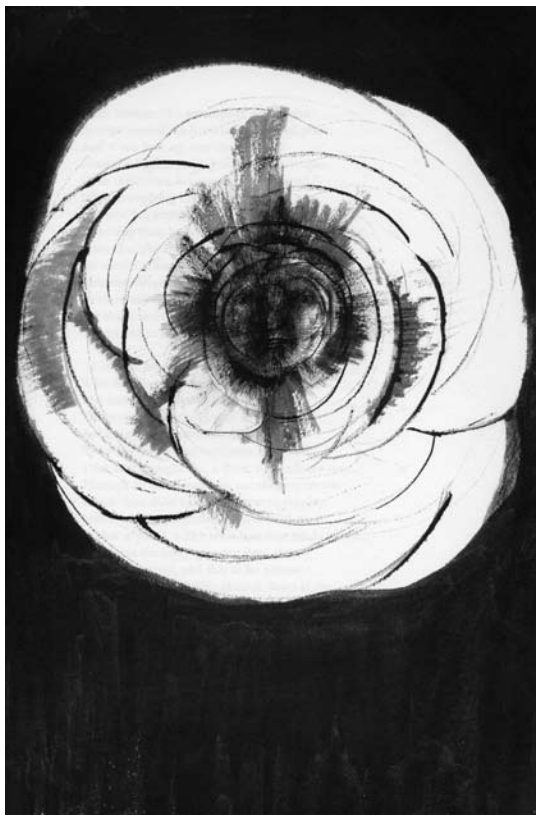
[19] Beatrice is accompanied by a vast procession of emblematic presences moving behind seven large candelabra, symbolizing the seven churches of Asia, and seven pennants representing the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Among those in the procession are the 24 Elders representing the 24 books of the Old Testament; the four animals emblematic of the four Evangelists; and seven women, representing the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues; finally there are the seven elders representing the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of St. Paul, and the four Epistles of Peter, John, James, Jude, and Revelation. See Dante, *Purgatorio, Second Book of the Divine Comedy*, A New Verse Translation with Introduction and Commentary by Allen Mandelbaum, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982, p. xxvi.

[20] Ibid., pp. xxvi-xxvii.

[21] For a more complete explanation of the Whore and the Giant see Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Purgatorio*, translated, with a commentary by Charles S. Singleton, Bollingen Series LXXX, Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 805.

[22] See Anderson, *Dante the Maker*, p. 272.

Fig. 25 Baskin, Paradiso, *"Rose of Paradise," 1969.*



CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Wynken de Worde

Illinois' third poet laureate, **Gwendolyn Brooks** ('95), had her name listed as an honorary member of the Caxton Club (the first African American to be so recognized) before her name was engraved in the outside stonework of the new home of the Illinois State Library at Springfield. Now her name is prominently inside the library in Urbana, the new home of The Gwendolyn Brooks Papers at the University of Illinois.

Ms. Brooks was the poetry consultant to the Library of Congress and the first African-American writer awarded a Pulitzer Prize. The opening of her archive was marked on April 24th with a day-long series of speeches, songs, readings, and dramatic performances in Urbana and Champaign. Also participating was former Caxtonian – and former Oak Parker – printer Amos Paul Kennedy, of the Jubilee Press. The archive consists of more than six decades of her work, scrapbooks, clippings, etc.

On the subject of openings, when one door closes, another door opens. Six months after the closing of the fabled Bookman's Alley used & rare bookshop in Evanston, another bookshop is springing up, phoenix-like from its ashes. Caxtonian **Nina Barrett** ('10) and her husband, Jeffrey Garrett, are in charge. These are career changes for journalist Barrett and recently-retired librarian Garrett, as well as a career change for the bookshop at this alley location. (Also, unlike bookseller Jean Larkin, who named her emporium as "Storeybooks," after her airliner pilot husband, Storey, Barrett is resisting such wordplay as "Bookman's Garret.")

The new business will open in June under the banner of "Bookends & Beginnings." It will be "a general interest, independent bookstore with an emphasis trending toward the intellectual end of the spectrum and not primarily on best sellers. Barrett said she plans to sell a mix of current popular books as well as "vintage" books. Her husband, retired academic research librarian Jeffrey Garrett, will help Barrett run the store and will be in charge of finding international books. The store will not stock romance, science fiction or mystery novels, Barrett said. Probably it will more closely resemble the academic atmosphere of the Seminary Co-op Bookstores in Hyde Park, directed by **Jack Cella** ('01).

Another distinction of Bookends & Beginnings will reflect Nina's expertise as a trained chef and food reporter who has been frequently heard on WBEZ radio which was recognized with a James Beard Award for her series, "The Fear of Frying." Thus, the shop will carry a choice selection of cookbooks and culinary items. Moreover, in the tradition of boutique businesses everywhere, Nina and Jeffrey will be stocking stationery, artwork, and jewelry. Some of the jewelry will be imported from Germany, but most will be, like her cooking, "locavore," from local and regional artists. Finally, the shop expects to actively host many in-store events and activities and workshops.

Wynken wonders whether or not, before the anticipated June 5th opening, they will be installing appliances such as toilets or kitchen facilities. Inquiring minds want to know.

photographs by Susan Hanes

Caxtonians and Nicholas Basbanes visit the Columbia College Papermaker's Garden, Monday, March 31, followed by a reception and talk by Basbanes.

Debra Yates bought a kind of immortality at the auction of our Revels, when she was the top bidder to have her name used in a forthcoming novel. That book appeared in 2010: *Hunting For Hemingway*, by Diane Gilbert Madsen. Furthermore, Debra bought more immortality in Madsen's promised third book. Yates' character has a larger and essential role in the remarkable third book in Madsen's Literati Mystery series, which will debut on May 22, 2014. In *The Conan Doyle Notes: The Secret of Jack the Ripper*, the action begins in Chicago at a grand home and library inspired by Chicago bibliophile, **David Gage Joyce** ('18) d. 1937.

David Gage Joyce was the heir and grandson of dominant Midwestern lumberman, David Joyce, of Lyons, Iowa. The grandson inherited the wealth and industriousness of his father and grandfather, and like them became a lumber baron. In the early 20th century, David Gage Joyce began construction of a private family compound on the Joyce Estate at Trout Lake in Itasca County, Minnesota, which had 4500 acres of forest, 11 lakes, and 26 miles of shoreline! This Trout Lake property figures prominently in *The Conan Doyle Notes*, although, for convenience, it is switched from remote Minnesota to rural

See ***CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES,*** *page 12*

CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES, *from page 9*

Wisconsin.

David Gage Joyce collaborated with the biographer of Sherlock Holmes, **Vincent Starrett** ('42 – Honorary Member). Like Starrett, Joyce was attracted by the works of Arthur Conan Doyle. At the sale of Joyce's book collection in 1974 (at Chicago's Hanzel Auction Gallery) the original mss. of *The White Company* and *The Sign of Four* were sold. Madsen's mystery turns on the manuscript documents that were *not* sold at that auction, and were even unknown to the heirs of the estate.

This will be the first of the Literati Mysteries to initially appear in hardcover. Diane Madsen will be autographing copies of the book at the Centuries & Sleuths Bookstore in Forest Park at 2-4 pm on Sunday, June 1st. She will also be selling and signing at the Printers Row Lit Fest, the weekend of June 7-8. Perhaps Debra will be signing books with Diane. This book may end your confusion as to the true identity of Jack the Ripper.

"*The Conan Doyle Notes: The Secret of Jack the Ripper* was the best book I've read in a long, long time. I was hooked by page six and couldn't stop reading. Spellbinding, intriguing and with a beguiling wit, Ms. Madsen delighted me to no end. – Catherine Lanigan, author, *Romancing the Stone*, *The Jewel of the Nile*, and *Love Shadows*."

In case you were asking whether or not the recent re-make by Martin Scorcese and Leonardo Di Caprio of *The Great Gatsby* had any effect on the market for this classic, I cannot claim to know the answer, but a recent event suggests not. The film was not universally acclaimed; but, an outstanding copy of the book, in a remarkable dust jacket, was one of only 49 lots in the April 1st Sotheby's sale of The Gordon Waldorf Collection of modern first editions. The Gatsby fetched a final sale price of $377,000.

By contrast, Fitzgerald's own, retained, corrected copy, in dust jacket, of *Taps at Reveille*, 1935, failed to meet its reserve of $40,000. The total of the sale reached a none-too-shabby $1,809,625, despite a sizeable proportion of the 49 listings which failed to meet their reserves.

On the subject of auctions, **Mary Williams Kohnke** ('09), head of the Book Department at **Leslie Hindman** ('84) Auctioneers, has had her duties doubled. Mary has been given charge of the Art Department, too, using her college degree in art history from Notre Dame University. Meanwhile, her boss has a new place to shelve her poetry collection, having recently purchased and remodeled one of the very few remaining private homes on Lake Shore Drive; however, unlike the Joyce Estate on Trout Lake, Leslie's property is no longer entitled to any shoreline – and that's a beach!

If that's you, give her a call.

Books belonging to the late **Donn Sanford** ('92), collector and maker of miniature books, are on sale through Oak Knoll.
http://www.oakknoll.com/catalogues.php

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Caxton Club Endowment Created

Jeffrey Jahns

At its regular meeting on March 19, 2014, the Caxton Club Council, in a series of related actions, created the Caxton Club Endowment, funded it with close to $200,000, and approved management and investment policies for the endowment. The principal source of funding came from the Club's Second Century Fund, all of which has been transferred to the endowment, as well as certain excess Caxton Club reserves.

Among the many motivations for creating the Caxton Club Endowment, the principal purpose was to provide a permanent and hopefully growing fund, a portion of which would be available each year for special projects.

The mechanics of the endowment are such that each year, after the June 30 (fiscal year-end) investment account statements are available, and before the Club's ensuing fiscal year's budget is approved, usually in September, 4% of the net asset value of the cash and investments held by the endowment would be transferred from the endowment to the Club's general operating account for the specific and limited purpose of "funding the costs of a special lecture, exhibition, publication or other special project or projects to be determined by the Council from time to time." The 4% figure chosen is within the range of disbursements used by other endowments and organizations and conservatively approximates the fund's anticipated annual earnings after accounting for inflation. Once the 4% annual allocation is transferred to the Club's general account and placed in the Club's annual budget, the Council will approve one or more special projects for the year. The predictability of this source of funds will permit for both multi-year projects and advance planning for future projects. It is the Council's belief that having such an annual allocation will be a spur to increased special project development by the members, the Council and its committees.

Copies of the Council minutes relating to the endowment are available from the Club's Secretary, as usual. Immediately after the March 19 Council meeting, the Club's Finance Committee, which was charged with oversight of endowment investment, met to begin implementing the approved investment policy.

Another purpose of creating the endowment is to foster contributions because donors will be legally guaranteed that their contributions to the endowment will remain in the endowment in perpetuity and be subject to the purposes and management set forth in the various resolutions, as outlined above. The endowment is divided, for accounting purposes, into a Fund A and a Fund B. Fund A consists of those funds contributed by the Council such as set forth above or in the future. Those funds contributed directly by members or third parties form Fund B. Individuals, foundations or others who would like to make contributions to the endowment should indicate on their check or correspondence that the contribution is solely for the Caxton Club Endowment or similar language.

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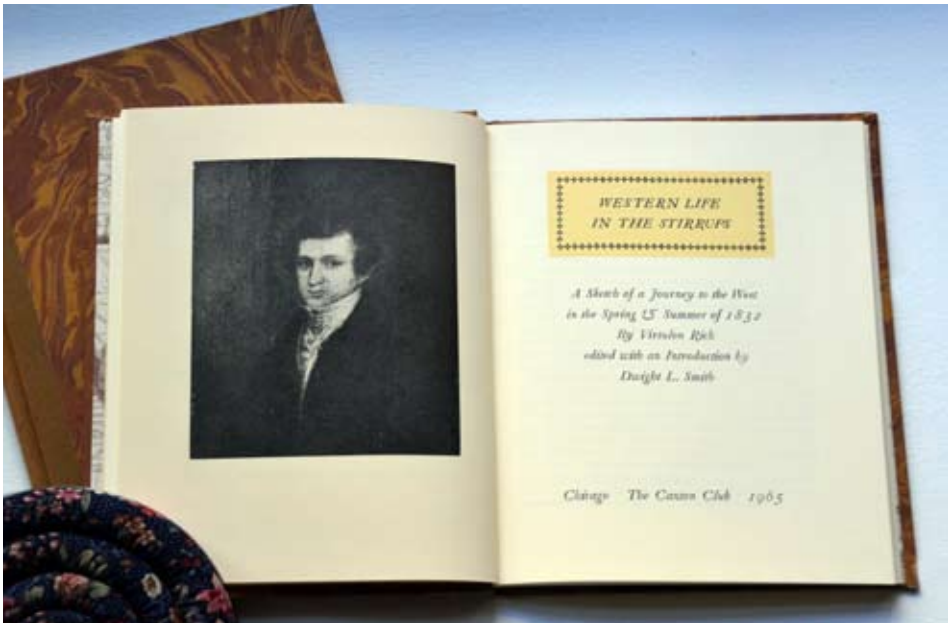
Virtulon Rich: a "Western" travelogue from 1832

Taking a look at the backlist of Caxton Club publications still available for purchase

Dan Crawford

Virtulon Rich, *Western Life in the Stirrups*, The Caxton Club, 1965, $25 (Member's price, $10)



photographs by Robert McCamant

Caxtonian and Newberry Library staffer Colton Storm found this manuscript for sale in Los Angeles in 1963. It is the work of one Virtulon Rich, who had flourished, if that's what you want to call it, a hundred years earlier, and deals with a western journey of 1832. Too short for a Lakeside Classic, it became instead the basis of this handsome little book designed by Greer Allen and printed at the University of Chicago in an edition of 800 copies for the Caxton Club.

What DID people do before email, twitter and Facebook? They wrote books like this. The narrative, written at some unspecified time after the event, is basically a very long blog (or Christmas newsletter, for those of a pre-tech generation) telling what he saw and did. Long before Horace Greeley suggested it, this was a young man who headed west. He was thinking of getting married and wondered if prospects might be brighter on the frontier. He took a roundabout route from his home in Vermont and got as far west as Carmi, Illinois, which was pretty far west at the time. He was not, perhaps, the ideal pioneer, though he may have been typical: the less a place looked like Vermont, the less he liked it.

His first stop was New York City, because he wanted to see it, and his second was Washington, D.C., where he was a delegate at the Young Men's National Republican Convention. While there, he saw Henry Clay (his hero), Andrew Jackson (the archenemy), John Quincy Adams, and John C. Calhoun. He made another trip down to Mount Vernon, on a tour boat that passed the grave of George Washington.

This is what he was thinking on the boat, just to give you the flavor of his narrative (maybe everyone who writes up his vacation notes at age 23 writes this way):

> "Our Company was of the best:--3.00 Young hearts on their way to visit the ashes of the Illustrious,--the immortal Washington!—Eager to catch the inspiration of Patriotism fresh from the tomb of America's dearest,--that it should come unalloyed,--and bring upon us an impression of its intrinsic worth,--(p. 28)

The punctuation is all his own, even that business of putting a decimal point into the number for three hundred. His spelling's a bit personal, too: in Indiana, he writes of the "Hooshers" and attends a "barbique."

He makes his way through Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and, as noted, just a bit of Illinois, observing streets, bridges, soil condition, water supply: all things vital to a young man planning to settle. He is a complete novice, never having ridden a horse more than a few miles, and if he suffers difficulties on the way, his horse had a rougher trip.

He imagines what the places must have been like when the Indians lived there, when the land was still primitive (and admires a flock of wild parakeets a paragraph later.) He expresses very definite views of our pioneer forefathers: most of them are lazy and far too easy to please, to judge by the crude cabins and easygoing lives. The ones in slave states are worse, because what little work they do want done they tell somebody else to do. He did finally settle in Ohio, which he found rather Vermonty, but "plagued by misfortune and mediocrity," according to our editor, moved on to Michigan.

Virtulon Rich was a very ordinary young man, a bit full of himself and his daring venture. Still, he is not trying to prove any points nor to make a great western hero of himself. The book tells just what the young lawyer saw, exactly as your cousin might write in a long email. It's a delightful glimpse at what the frontier looked like to a skeptic in the days when sensible people stopped at the Mississippi River and paid three "fips" for a bed and a meal in a cabin by the way.

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6"x 7-5/8". The book is printed letterpress on a smooth cream-colored sheet without watermark. Photograph of the author as frontispiece; period map as endpapers; modern map of route in text. One ornament, presumably drawn by the author. The copy pictured is on top of another copy, showing the marbled cover.

To order, send payment to Caxton Club, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610-3305.

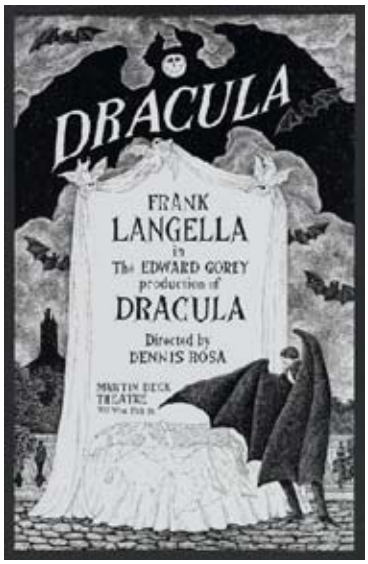
Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

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.)

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **"Exotic Orchids: Orchestrated in Print,"** through May 11. "**Moku-Hanga: The Art of Japanese Woodblock Printing"** (Japanese design books from the collection of Caxton member Lisa Pevtzow), May 16 to August 10.

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.

Columbia College Center for Book and Paper Arts, 1104 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago, 312-269-6630: "**MFA Thesis Exhibitions"** (final thesis projects and performances by graduating students in the Interdisciplinary Arts Department. Projects include artists' books and works in handmade paper), May 2 to May 24.



Loyola U Museum: Edward Gorey
COLLECTION OF THOMAS MICHALAK

Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago: **"Mecca Flat Blues"** (photos of what was a hotel during the 1893 World's Fair, then home to middle-class black residents, and demolished in 1951), through May 25.

Chicago Botanic Garden: Moku-Hanga
CHIGUSA BY KAMISAKA SEKKA; COLLECTION OF LISA PEVTZOW

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: "**Vivian Maier: Out of the Shadows"** (silver gelatin prints of images selected from the book *Vivian Maier: Out of the Shadows* by Richard Cahan and Michael Williams) special Collection Exhibition Hall, Ninth Floor, through September 28. "**Ideas and Inventions from the Covers of Popular Science,"** Congress Corridor, Ground Floor, through August 31.

Loyola University Museum of Art, 820 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-915-7600: **"Elegant Enigmas: the Art of Edward Gorey"** and "**G is for Gorey - C is for Chicago: The Collection of Thomas Michalak"** (two exhibitions of Gorey's legacy through hundreds of original drawings, works, and illustrations, and ephemera of popular culture), through June 15.

Northwestern U Block Gallery: Red Decade
HARRY GOTTLIEB, THE STRIKE IS WON, 1937

Northwestern University Block Museum of Art, 40 Arts Circle, Evanston, 847-491-4000: "**The Left Front: Radical Art in the "Red Decade," 1929–1940"** (revisits a moment in U.S. cultural history when visual artists joined forces to form a "left front" to make socially conscious art), through June 22.

Northwestern University Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: **"Ancient Monuments of Rome: Reconstructions by the Students of the Académie Française From the Revolution to the 1880's"** (best and most interesting reconstructions published by the French government), through June 14. "**Best of Bologna: Edgiest Artists of the 2008 International Children's Book Fair"** (illustrations featured at the Bologna Book Fair, the world's largest annual children's book event), on-going.

Pritzker Military Museum and Library, 104 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 312-374-9333: **"SEAL The Unspoken Sacrifice"** (features photographs from Stephanie Freid-Perenchio's and Jennifer Walton's 2009 book and artifacts on loan from the Navy SEAL Museum), opens May 15.

Smart Museum, 5550 S. Greenwood Ave. Chicago, 773-702-0200: **"Performing Images: Opera in Chinese Visual Culture"** (showcases how operatic characters and stories were represented in a wide array of media including ceramics, illustrated books, painted fans, prints, photographs, scroll paintings, and textiles), through June 15.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **"Imaging/Imagining the Body as Text"** (explores the intersections and contrasts between imaginative artistic depictions of the human body and the more literal imaging of the body or parts of the body created in anatomy and medicine), through June 20.

Send your listings to lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net

Caxtonians Collect: Samuel Feinstein

interviewed by Robert McCamant

Samuel Feinstein was studying classics at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 2007. He really enjoyed it, and was looking forward to a life of closely examining texts. But fate intervened: he was struck by a van. He had a concussion, and he broke his right wrist. The wrist mostly healed, but his head was irrevocably harmed: he has had chronic intractable headaches since. He has not had a pain-free moment since the injury.

After the accident, he tried to go back to his studies, but found that he could no longer focus his thoughts on the words tightly enough. He dropped out of school. It was a low point: "I'm the sort of person who needs to be doing something," he says. "I go crazy when I have nothing to plan for or look forward to."

Sam, right, with Adam Larssen at a recent dinner. BELOW, *a pair of Feinstein bindings.*

Photograph by Susan Hanes

Somehow, he started thinking about bookbinding as a possible life's work. He tried a workshop, and though he was conscious that he was only a beginner, he got a sense that the binder's work has enough instinct and muscle memory to it that he could probably get along despite his impaired focus. Soon after, he discovered Boston's North Bennet Street School, which has apprentice programs in a variety of fields (violin making to jewelry making to locksmithing), most importantly including bookbinding.

He applied immediately, and (fortunately, he says) was turned down. As a result, Feinstein took the next year to explore the field. After that initial workshop, he began to teach himself from bookbinding manuals, and, importantly, started visiting the Newberry Library on a regular basis. He systematically went through items in the online catalog there that were marked as "bookbinding specimens." "I wanted to learn from handling books from the masters, both in terms of structure and to see what had been done with regard to design and decoration," he says. He came away with the knowledge of what he wanted to focus on: fine leather bindings and gold tooling.

A year went by, he applied again to North Bennet, and this time he got in. "It's a one-of-a-kind school, based on an apprenticeship-type program," he says. "Other places, you take a series of intensive workshops, but you never get the time to develop and hone your skills. And I took advantage of it! You get two years of time at your bench, under instruction, and the freedom to work on what you're interested in on your own time, with advice from masters.

I spent all of my nights and weekends in the bindery, so that when the program was over I would have a skillset strong enough to set up shop. A friend of mine in the Violin Making program, Corey Swan, decided to make an upright bass on top of his required seven instruments. As a student worker, he had keys, and I was fortunate enough to be allowed to work on my bindings when he was working on his bass after hours. The school is filled with people who are inspired and devoted to making their dream a reality."

While he is competent in doing all sorts of binding work, what really excites him is work in gold: specifically edge gilding and gold tooling on leather. Many of his hours are spent working on fine bindings, designing and creating a binding for a new book, which satisfies his desire for creativity and imagination. Some is doing the gold work on others' bindings. He also very much enjoys the rebinding of antiquarian books in need. For these he'll do period-appropriate bindings, and "antique" them so they sit in harmony on a shelf of old books. "For each project, I want the binding to be sympathetic with the integrity of the object."

He also teaches when the chance arises. He's given workshops for Wellesley College, the Society of Gilders, and the Western New York Book Arts Center in Buffalo. He's scheduled to do one at Paper and Book Intensive at OxBow this summer. He is very modest about his skills: "I do 'consistently decent' work, but I'm not yet a 'master.' In the old days, an apprenticeship took six or more seven years, and that was just to be a journeyman. I aspire to be a 'master,' but that is going to take more time."

His girlfriend, Terra Huber, has also dedicated her life to the craft of books, although in a different discipline. She is in her third year at the Buffalo State College Art Conservation graduate program as a Mellon Fellow in Library and Archives Conservation. She is currently an advanced intern in the Newberry Library conservation lab, where she will be until she graduates this September. Right now she's in the process of interviewing for conservation jobs and fellowships around the country, which gives Sam, a Chicagoan at heart, misgivings about whether they will be staying in Chicago. "She needs to go wherever a conservation position is available," he explains, "and I can do my work just about anywhere, since most of my work is done by post. So I'm free to move wherever we end up." That's what nonresident memberships are for.

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon: Friday May 9, 2014
Tom Staley
Remarkable Stories: Furthering the Collection at the Harry Ransom Center, Austin, Texas

Though it was already recognized, under the 23-year directorship of Staley, the Harry Ransom Center became a behemoth in academic library circles, leading Frank M. Turner, director of Yale's Beinecke Library to recently say that "the Harry Ransom Center...has become one of the most distinguished institutions for scholarship...in the world." Under Staley the endowment rose from $1 million to $30 million. Current contents include: 42 million manuscript pages, 1 million rare books, 5 million photographs, countless works of art, and major holdings in film and performing arts. Some of Staley's stories pertain to the acquisition of 100 author archives, including those of Nobel laureates J.M.Coetzee and Doris Lessing; authors Dilillo, Malamud, Mamet, Mailer, Stoppard, and Osborne; more of Joyce; not to mention the acquisition of the Watergate tapes. Come and join Staley, a renowned raconteur, as he tells about the unique people he has met, the attics he has crawled through, and the negotiations he has engaged in. Staley will also introduce his friend Malcolm O'Hagan, a retired Irish/American businessman who will speak briefly about his dream becoming reality: an American Writers Museum scheduled to open in Chicago in 2016.

May luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (scheduled for the Crystal Room) opens at 11:30 am; program 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is $30. ***Mandatory: for this month, email caxtonclub@newberry.org to reserve by noon Wednesday.***

Dinner: Wednesday, May 21, 2014, Union League Club
Paul Needham
"The Gutenberg Bible that Did Not Come to Chicago"

What did Eugene Field, the "Wynken Blinken and Nod" man, have to do with Gutenberg? Come hear that story and much more when Paul Needham reveals why two famous Gutenberg copies owned by Chicagoans did not stay in Chicago. James Ellsworth, The Caxton Club's first president, brought Chicago its first Gutenberg Bible in 1891. George Poole bought a Gutenberg New Testament from Caxtonian David Randall. Needham will disclose the ties that did not bind these remarkable volumes to Chicago and led to their eventual homes at Princeton's Scheide Library and Indiana's Lilly Library, respectively. Needham will also discuss Gutenberg texts which remain in Chicago.

May dinner: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Timing: spirits at 5:00, program at 6:00, dinner at 7:00. Dinner is $48, drinks are $5 to $9. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org. ***Please reserve by noon Friday for Wednesday dinner.***

Beyond May...

JUNE LUNCHEON

Caxtonian Martha Chiplis and Cathie Ruggie Saunders (both teachers at the School of the Art Institute), will speak about their recent (October 2013) book: *For the Love of Letterpress*: a fascinating guide book, that has been called brilliant, inspirational, an excellent resource, and a visual treat.

JUNE DINNER

John Neal Hoover, Director of the St Louis Mercantile Library, will speak on June 18, with topic to be announced.