

Rediscovering Émile Zola

It's about time

Bruce Hatton Boyer

Émile Zola (1840-1902) is back in fashion and it is high time. The blockbuster "Impressionism and Fashion" exhibit at the Art Institute two years ago, along with the PBS Masterpiece series *Paradise*, resurrected *The Ladies' Paradise* (*Au Bonheur des Dames*), Zola's novel about the emergence of the department store in 19th-century France. Last year saw the movie *In Secret*, based on one of his most famous novels, and New York's Roundabout Theatre is currently staging a new stage adaptation of his *Thérèse Raquin* starring Keira Knightley. On the print side, publishers are putting out new English trans-



lations of his works, including several of the lesser-known novels. I hope this attention may inspire readers to delve into Zola, a writer well worth rediscovering.

Zola remains relatively unknown in the United States, but in France he is a national hero. That status comes from the fact that in addition to writing some 30 novels, he was also a crusading journalist, a pioneer in the theater, an impassioned fighter for political justice, and, through his close friendship with Cézanne and Pissarro, one of the earliest champions of Impressionism. Hollywood did

take note of him once – Paul Muni won an Oscar for his portrayal of the writer in *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937).

That Zola should be so little known is a puzzle to me. His time period is no more foreign to us than that of Dickens, his plots are no more complicated than those of contemporary thrillers, and his characters can be as fascinating – and surely as empathic – as any in a *New York Times* best-seller. Above all, the social issues he

dealt with are eerily similar to the ones we find ourselves facing today. If ever there were a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, Zola's works represent it.

Zola, in common with many great artists, had the good fortune to live in just the right place at just the right time. He was born in Paris in 1840 but spent early years in Provence, where a childhood friend was Paul Cézanne. When Zola's father died in 1847, financial straits caused the family to return to Paris.

And Paris was certainly the place to be. Post-Napoleonic Europe was a bubbling cauldron of social upheaval. Industrialism was changing the face of wealth, cities were swelling with displaced peasants and teeming with poverty, crime, corruption, and disease. Political revolution was in the air, as the various abortive uprisings in 1848 clearly showed. These social shifts were happening atop a literary revolution pioneered by writers such as Goethe, Schiller, and Hugo, whose works



Poster from a 1911 adaptation of *Thérèse Raquin* in Milan.

of sweeping imagination and panoramic vision heralded the age of Romanticism. Together, these forces sparked the nationalistic fervor that by the 1860s and '70s had led to the *Risorgimento* in Italy and the unification of Germany under Bismarck.

It was fertile ground for any attentive social reformer, as Zola himself observed: "If you ask me what I came into this life to do, I came to live out loud." He began his career with journalism and literary and political tracts, but soon turned to drama and fiction. He first attracted attention when his semiautobiographical novel *La Confession de Claude* (1865) was condemned as immoral by the police. His publisher, Hachette, severed ties with Zola, who remained undaunted. Two years later he published *Thérèse Raquin* and his career took off. Took off is actually too mild a term, for its lurid depiction of an illicit love affair that leads to a murder, psychological deterioration. See *ÉMILE ZOLA*, page 2



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ÉMILE ZOLA, from page 1

ration, and a final double suicide shocked the establishment, just as Zola had intended.

Zola considered himself as more than just a social reformer, however. He saw himself also as the vanguard of a new literary movement that he labeled Naturalism. Its purpose, he declared, was to substitute social realism for the comfortable entertainments represented by Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* and well-made plays (*pièces bien faites*) of Eugène Scribe and Victorien Sardou. "If you shut up truth and bury it underground, it will but grow," he declared. To spread his gospel, he published an essay *Le Naturalisme au théâtre*, in which he called for stripping away artifice and sentimentality so that theater could "se marche dans sa nudité!"

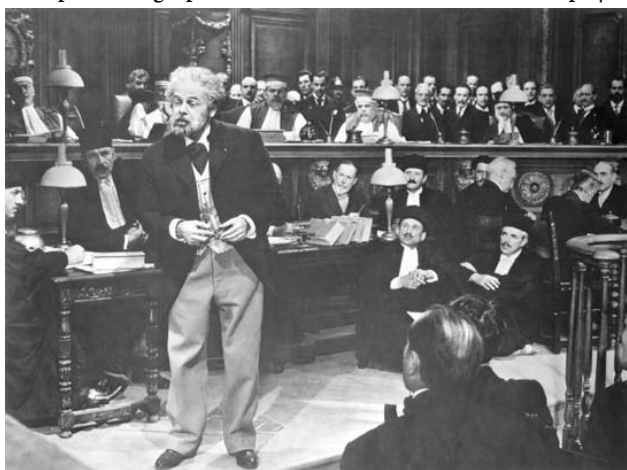
The essay became a manifesto for a generation of theater revolutionaries. In 1887, André Antoine founded the antiestablishment *Théâtre Libre*

in Paris, declared it the "home" of naturalism and opened it with a production of – what else? – Zola's stage adaptation of his own *Thérèse Raquin*. Two years later, Otto Brahm followed suit by starting the Berlin *Freie Bühne* with a production of Gerhart Hauptmann's *Before Sunrise*; Hauptmann's realistic depiction of unmarried love among Silesian coal miners that leads to a childbirth started riots in the streets. In Russia, the Moscow Art Theater emerged under Constantin Stanislavski to produce works by Tolstoy, Gorky, and, most famously, Anton Chekhov. In Ireland the Abbey Theatre was launched with a production of J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* that ignited riots in Dublin, and in England, J.T. Grein created the Independent Theatre, where G.B. Shaw produced his early works. Zola's immediate literary heirs included August Strindberg, Eugène Brieux, and above all, Henrik Ibsen, who admired Zola even as he distanced himself from the latter's sensationalism – "Zola descends to the gutter to bathe in it," he famously declared, "while I descend to the gutter to cleanse it."

Censors certainly agreed with the gutter image. In all of the above cities, they worked overtime to stamp out then-taboo depictions of sex, incest, pregnancy, prostitution, and abortion. The presence of such themes was no accident, of course.

They were intended to shock. Taking their cue from Darwin, those writers coupled sexual liberation with revolution to intensify their attacks on a repressive social order. Indeed, sex became their principal metaphor and syphilis their great metonym, representing as it did both sexual excess and relentless evolution. Brieux' *Les Avariés* (*Damaged Goods*) depicts syphilis in graphic detail, Ibsen's *Ghosts* centers on it, and Zola's *Nana* dies of it.

Zola's influence was long lasting. Hauptmann followed up *Before Sunrise* with his epic play *Die Weber* (*The Weavers*), a play whose structure closely



Paul Muni won an Oscar nomination in 1937 for his portrayal of the writer in *The Life of Emile Zola*.

echoes Zola's *Germinal* and that eventually won its author the Nobel Prize. Upton Sinclair's Zolaesque *The Jungle* of 1906 exposed the horrendous conditions in Chicago slaughterhouses and led to the establishment of the FDA. Perhaps Zola's most direct American descendant would be

John Steinbeck, whose *The Grapes of Wrath* is a Zola look-alike if ever there was. It is easy to forget today, when *Grapes* is standard fare in high school English classes, that 70 years ago it was banned in half the nation's libraries for its "un-American preaching." Steinbeck, following Hauptmann, went on to win a Nobel Prize himself.

Famous – or infamous – after *Thérèse Raquin*, Zola conceived the plan for *Les Rougon-Macquart*, his epic series of 20 novels dealing with the themes of genetic pathology, social dysfunction, and political oppression. The overarching theme of the cycle is pure Darwinism: society was a seething biological organism pulsating with deadly struggles for survival. The publication of *L'Assommoir* (*The Dram Shop*) in 1877 made Zola wealthy enough to embolden his political tirades against the Second Empire and the corrupt Napoleon III.

What ultimately secured Zola's reputation in France was his impassioned defense of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. The Dreyfus affair, with its twisted complications and reversals, is as difficult for us to follow today as future generations will surely find Watergate, but it was at heart an anti-Semitic witch hunt. Dreyfus, a Jewish captain in the French army, became a scapegoat for a government eager to gloss over its colossal defeat in

the Franco-Prussian War. Accused of treason, Dreyfus was railroaded into a life sentence at Devil's Island. Outraged, Zola published "J'Accuse...!", a screed that directly attacked the government, the military and the church. An outraged establishment fought back, Zola was convicted of libel and fled to England in exile, just as Victor Hugo had done almost 50 years earlier. Fortunately, his exile lasted less than a year; the government fell and Zola returned to France in triumph. Today he is one of only three writers to be interred at the Pantheon, France's highest national honor.

Given all of the above, it seems strange that Zola is not better known this side of the Atlantic. The reason, I believe, lies in the fact that comparisons between Zola and his literary contemporaries usually end badly for Zola.

The chief complaint of literary types is that Zola is melodramatic and that he created few memorable characters. Dickens, after all, covered similar turf while managing to invent dozens of memorable people – *David Copperfield* alone gives us Murdstone, Steerforth, Mister Dick, Macawber, and Uriah Heep. George Eliot, another astute social observer, gives us characters in *Middlemarch* who beg for our empathy – Dorothea Brooke, the heiress who throws her life away by marrying a tyrannical pedant, and Tertius Lydgate, the crusading doctor thwarted by provincial small-mindedness. And certainly Zola pales besides Flaubert, whose *Madame Bovary* is one of the greatest psychological portraits ever written. The implication of such critical judgments is that Zola is somehow a "lesser" writer.

That judgment surely misses the point. True, Zola was not an especially gifted stylist, certainly not in the same league with Flaubert or Thomas Hardy. His novels are indeed over-written at times, the descriptions sometimes overwrought, the prose often ponderous with details, the imagery from time to time heavy-handed. We should not be surprised, however – Zola came to his work as a journalist, not as a poet, and his prose reflects that fact.

There is, however, an even deeper reason that comparisons with Dickens or Flaubert are misplaced, and that has to do with purpose. A writer chooses his form to fit his goal. Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy wanted to depict social injustice while Zola wanted to trigger outrage and start revolutions. Psychological quirks interested him far less than social pathology, and for that task only melo-

drama will do.

Yes, melodrama, that oft-maligned and so little understood literary genre.

This BBC series was an adaptation of Émile Zola's novel Au Bonheur des Dames that relocates the story to northeast England. It played on the BBC, PBS, and BBC America.



Zola did not hesitate to become involved in politics.

The term originated in the 19th century to describe a stage play that was accompanied by music to heighten emotions. The ultimate form of stage melodrama of course is opera, which my opera teacher in graduate school deftly defined as "a dramatic situation exploited musically." Music does indeed heighten emotion and its role in drama is hardly diminished – virtually every movie made today includes a musical soundtrack for just that purpose.

Nonetheless, merely mentioning the term "melodrama" today conjures up images of hissing villains, young damsels tied to railroad tracks, and overblown, unbelievable, and cliched stories. We dismiss melodrama for relying on "tricks" – convoluted plots, wild coincidences, two-dimensional stock characters, and simplified emotions. The implication is of course that melodrama is somehow "less" than tragedy.

Allow me to clear the air. The difference between melodrama and tragedy is a deliberate one. In tragedy, the characters drive the plot while in melodrama, the plot drives the characters. In tragedy we are most drawn to the *internal* conflicts of a character, e.g. *Hamlet*; in melodrama, we are drawn to the conflict *between* characters, e.g. *Julius Caesar*. In tragedy, we believe that a character's sad end is the result of flaws within his or her personality, e.g. *Le Rouge et le Noir*; in melodrama, we believe that a character's sad end is the result of terrible circumstances, e.g. *Of Mice and Men*.

Our post-Freudian prejudice against melodrama runs deep. Whenever I have asked my creative writing students if they would more effectively expose corruption by writing a tragedy or a melodrama, the knee-jerk response is always, oh, a tragedy, of course! I then correct them. If you want to leave your readers boiling with indignation, you don't want nuance, complexity, or conflicted characters. You certainly don't want moral relativism, either. You want clear-cut struggles between good and evil, odious villains, pitiable victims, and heroic protagonists. You want sudden reversals and horrific plot situations. You want, in short, to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and start a Civil War.

Zola knew what he wanted – vivid depictions of reality that would incite people to act – and he knew that depicting reality in all of its perversity would yield that result:

The miner must be shown crushed, starving, a victim of ignorance, suffering with his children

See *ÉMILE ZOLA*, page 4

ÉMILE ZOLA, from page 3

in a hell on earth – but not persecuted, for the bosses are not deliberately vindictive; he is simply overwhelmed by the social situation as it exists.... The worker is the victim of the facts of existence – capital, competition, industrial crises.

To achieve his ends, Zola relies on his skills as a journalist; the depth and breadth of his research is astonishing. To write *Germinal*, he spent four months living among coal miners in northern France. The first 11 chapters of the book – nearly a third of its length – are devoted to minute, detailed depictions of coal mining and the wretched lives of miners. The images are horrific – the horses who are born and die in the deep mines without ever once seeing sunlight, the unscrupulous storekeeper Maigret trading sacks of flour for sex from the town's wives and daughters, the impoverished Maheu family fighting over scraps of bread before descending to the mines and, above all, a climax so horrifying that even today it is almost unbearable to read. His depictions of battle in *Le Débâcle*, his fictionalized account of the Franco-Prussian War, match those of the military historian John Keegan.

In *The Ladies' Paradise*, he shows a complete understanding of the hows, whys and methods of commerce, and his portrayal of the merchant prince Mouret could well be a portrait of Marshall Field or John Wannamaker; Zola even has Mouret saying "I am in the business of seducing women," a clear forerunner of Field's immortal "Give the lady what she wants!"

He saw even domestic situations as the result of crushing social forces. The heroine of *Thérèse Raquin* is a poor adopted girl forced to marry her adopted anemic stepbrother by her overbearing mother-in-law – kinky enough right there to cause an outcry even today. Starved for sex, Thérèse starts a torrid affair with Laurent, a narcissistic friend of the family. Driven to frenzy by their illicit affair, they murder the husband and eventually marry, only to discover that their collective guilt has turned their lust to hatred. They both go slowly mad and, in the end, commit suicide together while the mother-in-law, totally paralyzed by a stroke, is forced to watch in enraged helplessness. It is a *roman noir* worthy of shelf space right alongside James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

Of course, when literary devices served his purposes, Zola delivered them with zest; in *The Ladies' Paradise*, he depicts the department store over and over as an inexorable,

devouring machine:

All the stories her uncle had told came back to her, enlarging Mouret, surrounding him with a legend, establishing him as the master of the terrible machine which, since the morning, had been holding her in the iron teeth of its gear-wheels.

The great afternoon rush-hour had arrived, when the overheated machine led the dance of customers, extracting money from their very flesh.

For a long time she had the sensation of being nothing, hardly a grain of millet under the millstones crushing everyone beneath them.

Nana, Zola's story of a prostitute who rises to the top of French society only to succumb to syphilis, is replete with scenes of sexual decadence worthy of D.H. Lawrence:

She felt a perpetual sense of surprise, as if her sexual parts had been deranged; so they still made babies, even when you don't want them to, and you used them for other purposes. Nature infuriated her, with this intervention of solemn motherhood in her career of pleasure – this gift of life in the midst of all the deaths she was spreading around her.

This was the cry of his weakness, the cry of that sin which, though certain of being damned, he felt powerless to resist. When Nana returned, she found him hidden under the bedclothes; his face was haggard, his nails were digging into his chest, and his eyes were staring upward as if in search of heaven.

In *Germinal*, the horrors of the coal mine are described in the starkest of language, as when rescuers recover the body of a young boy killed in an accident:

The pathetic little body came into view, as thin as an insect's, soiled with black dust and yellow earth and mottled with bloody stains. It was impossible to see anything; he had been washed as well. The sponging seemed to make him thinner than ever, his flesh was so pallid and transparent that the bones showed

through. It was pitiful to see this last decadent specimen of a race of starving toilers, this mere wisp of suffering, half-crushed by the rocks.

Or this description of the miners' village

It was Poverty & Co. everywhere. Nobody had had a square meal for weeks, and even the smell of onions had gone, the pungent smell that usually heralded the village from far

across the countryside. Now the smell was that of old cellars and dank holes where nothing can live. The last sounds were dying away, stifled sobs and muffled oaths, and in the gradually deepening silence you could hear the approach of famished sleep and the thud of people's bodies falling on their beds in nightmare agonies of hunger.

Poster for a production of *Thérèse Raquin* at the Dallas Opera.



Yet even when he is preaching and horrifying, Zola also never fails to entertain; the best of his novels are as hard to put down as any modern mystery.

If this all-too-brief essay has whetted appetites for Zola, let me suggest readers start with *Thérèse Raquin* – it is fast-paced, gripping, and short enough to finish in two evenings. After that, move on to *La Bête Humaine* and *Nana*, saving for last his greatest work, *Germinal*, a book André Gide proclaimed one of the ten greatest novels in the French language. I must, however, inject a word of caution. Most of the readily-available translations of Zola today have been done by English, not American, writers. As a result, there are moments when they translate Zola's street French into British, not American, colloquialisms, making references to "ha-pennies" and "pubs" a bit jarring to the American reader.

These are minor quibbles, of course, because a writer as great and as imaginative as Zola will always come through. As he wrote of himself, "I am little concerned for perfection. I don't care for the great centuries. All I care about is life, struggle, intensity."

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Club Visits the MacLean Collection

An 'On the Move' event
held September 28



Our September 28 "Caxton on the Move" visit to the MacLean Collection was a feast for the eyes and intellect. Surrounded by maps of every size, location, and age, wonderful globes, manuscripts, posters, books, and even rare powder horns, Caxtonians and their guests enjoyed a rich sample of this collection's treasures. Our generous MacLean hosts were Tom Hall, MacLean curator of maps; Allison McDonald, MacLean cataloging and research administrator; and Slava Vovkovsky, conservator. They eagerly shared their knowledge, answered our many questions, and were especially willing to display any items in which their guests indicated an interest. After our introduction to the collection, Caxtonians shared a dinner buffet with our hosts and thanked them with copies of our publication *Other People's Books*. The MacLean Collection staff invited the Caxtonians to return – an invitation some are already planning to accept.

Extraordinary Women in Science & Medicine

Wendy Cowles Husser reviews the book that grew out of a New Jersey member's collection

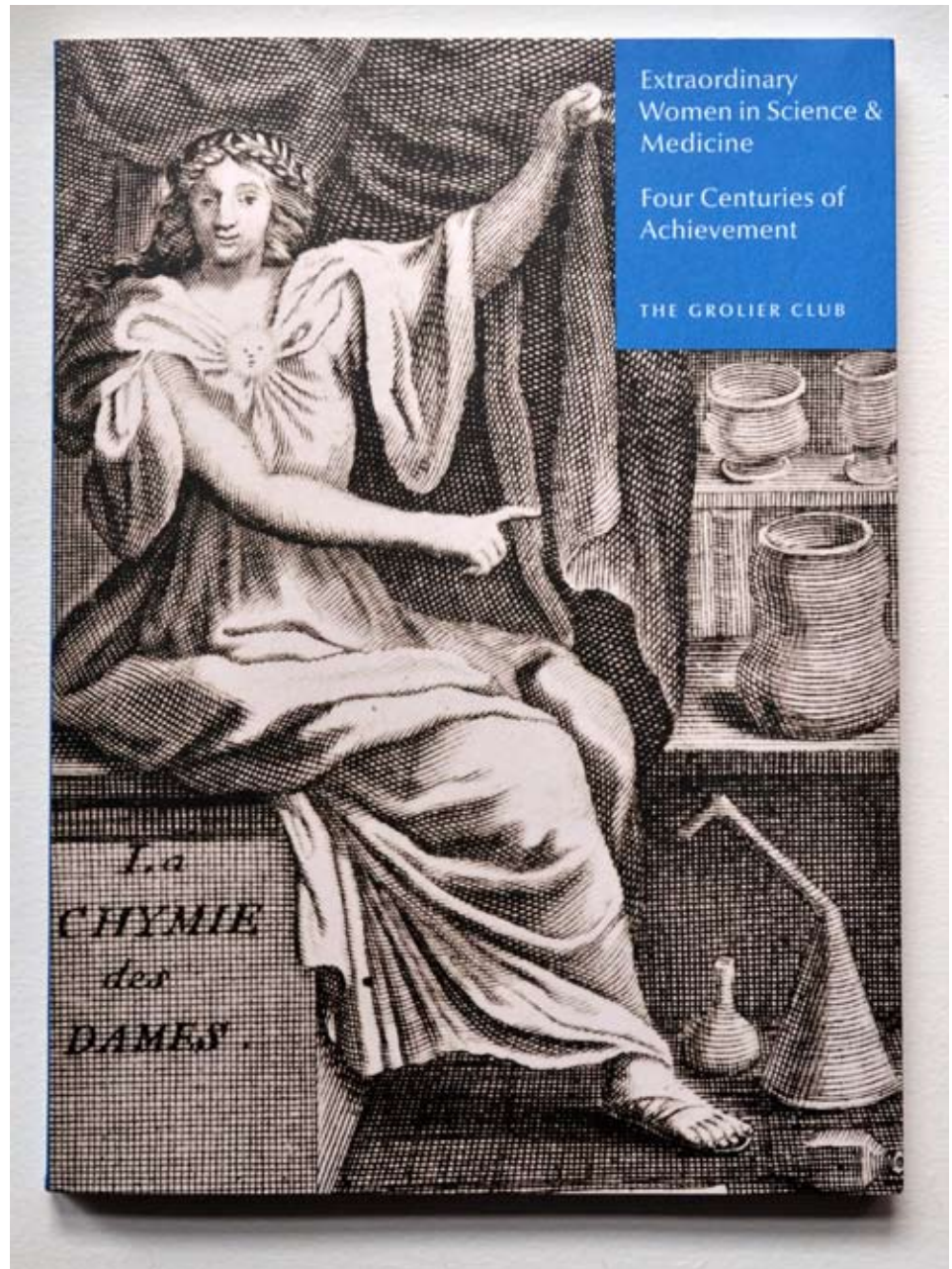
EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN IN SCIENCE & MEDICINE, Four Centuries of Achievements: an extended exhibition catalog, edited by R.K. Smeltzer (†), R.J. Ruben, and P. Rose. New York: Grolier Club, 2013.

This exhibition catalog should be mandatory reading for all young women, certainly, and also for many adults. It is interesting that it was a male PhD who chose to highlight the incredible careers of 32 women from the 17th century to the early 21st century. He and his associates create a fascinating read based on items in the Grolier exhibit. This 182 page information-packed catalog is difficult put down; each essay is more amazing than the next.

The Grolier exhibition focused on extraordinary women in the physical sciences (23 entries) and medical sciences (9). Very few women were able, either by educational opportunities or through family environments, to pursue science, or any kind of formal education; these were reserved mostly for the privileged, and women were not included or allowed to take part in the educational processes.

The introduction to the brief biographies and the incredible accomplishments ultimately revealed provide a statement that sums up and highlights the paucity of opportunities for women in any field. The Duchess of Newcastle (1623-1763) believed that “women breeding up women, one fool breeding up another – as long as that custom lasts – there is no hope of amendment, and ancient customs being a second nature makes folly hereditary in that sex [gender].”

Whom to choose? The 23 women highlighted for physical sciences includes successful women in physics, chemistry, astronomy, mathematics, and computing. Nine outstanding women in the medical sciences represent obstetrics, women's health, cardiology, genetics, and cell biology and biochemistry. A wide variety of their work includes monographs, proceedings, lectures, and serial publications. (It was unusual for any publication from a woman, most of whom, even with education, were disallowed from entering an academic job.) The material on view for the Grolier exhibition (18 September-23 November, 2013) was lent from institutions and private lenders. Among the institutional lenders were: Bryn



Mawr College, Columbia University, The Huntington Library, University of Chicago Library, Oregon State University, the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and many others.

It was difficult to choose representative examples from the engaging entries, but space allows us three.

Louise (Bourgeois) Boursier (1563-1636) was born near Paris, and was educated in needlepoint and writing. In 1584 she married a military barber surgeon, who, quite coincidentally, worked with one of the most famous sur-

geons of the age, Ambroise Paré, first surgeon to the French King. Voila! – Louise had a window to the world she would otherwise never have seen.

So while her husband was away on duty, she made a living for herself and three children with small needlework income, but added to this with service as a midwife. And in 1598 she passed a difficult license exam given by a physician, two surgeons, and two midwives. From this point on she became midwife to the Queen, Marie de Medici. When delivering the Queen's son, in 1601, Louise correctly identified a suckling difficulty that was then

cured surgically.

Louise earned a great income after this event and published, in 1609, in French, her book on women's obstetrical issues. This book became the essential reference for more than 100 years. She was able to describe how to deliver a child under many difficult situations. But more to the point, Boursier's most significant and lasting contribution was tin using what we now call evidence-based medicine, observational methods. At that time, biblical teaching held that women endured pain during childbirth as atonement for Eve's sin. Boursier brought truth about pain and mortality, and helped to rid low self-esteem and guilt from women's experience of maternity.

The second example is Barbara McClintock (1902-1992), who earned a PhD in 1927 but had no permanent research job until 1942. Working on the nature of the gene led to her Nobel Prize; her work forwarded understanding of genetics and disease.

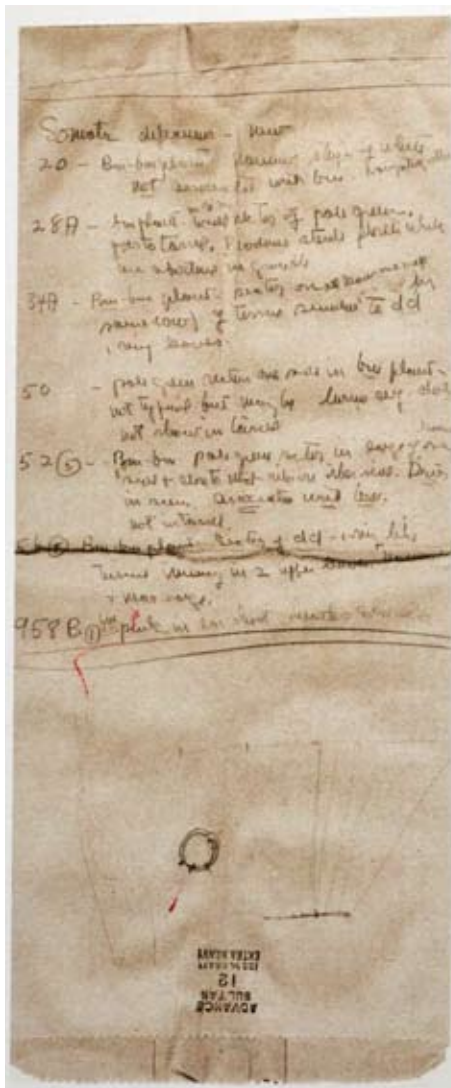
McClintock was born in Hartford, Connecticut, but lived often with relatives in Massachusetts. When her family moved to Brooklyn, she got an ordinary job after high school graduation. Her mother was against any more education for her, but her father, a physician, urged Barbara to go to school, which she did, at Cornell. She began to study the cytogenetics of the corn (maize) plant. Her graduate degree was from the Department of Agriculture in 1927, and she became an instructor at Cornell in the botany department since the Department of Agriculture refused to hire a woman. She wrote down her thoughts one day on a paper bag she was using for corn tassel fertilizing, which led to publications that eventually resulted in her Nobel Prize for Physiology in 1983.

McClintock got a permanent job in 1942 in the genetics department at the Carnegie Institute of Washington's Cold Spring Harbor labs. By 1944 she was elected to the National Academy of Sciences, and in 1980 received one of the first of the MacArthur "genius" awards. In

the medical world her work was a forerunner in the development of molecular diagnoses of diseases. Gregor Mendel thought of genes as fixed but McClintock proved they were dynamic.

Our third amazing woman in science is a name everyone knows, but perhaps not for what really made her famous. Marie Skłodowska left Poland when she was 24. Her mother had died when she was 10, but even with this loss, she became a superior Russian language pupil (Russia was trying to ease Polish out). After completing school she worked for a while as a governess, then later in a chemistry lab, teaching at an underground university in Warsaw.

Barbara McClintock's paper bag caught the thoughts which led to her Nobel Prize.



Title page of Louise Boursier's 1609 obstetrical reference book.



Marie moved to Paris and entered the Sorbonne in 1891; by 1894 she had passed exams for mathematics and physics. It was during these years that she met a scientist whom she eventually married. In 1897 Marie, now wife of Pierre Curie, began her work in radioactivity. She discovered that detecting radioactivity could be a way of identifying unknown elements. Pierre joined his wife's research at this point. The Curies isolated a new element, polonium, in 1898, and then radium. By 1903 Marie, now Madame Curie, submitted the thesis for her doctorate.

Henri Becquerel shared the 1903 Nobel Prize in Physics, with the Curies. Pierre died three years later, and Marie

induced nuclear reactions with photographic plates. She left Vienna before the German takeover in 1938 and emigrated to the U.S. in 1944 and thence to Brookhaven National Laboratory with the Atomic Energy Commission.

Or perhaps Mary Putnam Jacobi, Mayflower descendant of the publishing Putnams, and a home-schooled woman. In 1860 attending clinics of Elizabeth Blackwell inspired her; she graduated in 1863 from the New York College of Pharmacy as its first woman ever (her thesis was on dialysis). Studying later at Ecole de Médecine, but not matriculated, she had to enter the class by a separate door and sit alone. For a woman to practice medicine in France was "contrary to our customs and social conditions." At her death it was Sir William Osler who delivered her eulogy.

What a pleasure, and how humbling to meet these amazing women!

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became his successor as professor at the Sorbonne, the first time a woman held such a title at that school. In 1911 the Swedish Academy of Science awarded Marie a second Nobel for the discovery of polonium and radium.

Marie Skłodowska Curie's significant achievements included the two Nobel Prizes and publication of about 72 articles; in 1954 the Polish Academy of Sciences published an edition of her collected works. She was the first woman to receive international acclaim in science in the 20th century.

And on and on this wonderful read goes. One woman's story leads to another yet more engaging. This small offering explodes. As you read each biography the excitement builds. There is Marietta Blau, PhD, in 1918 the first person to observe cosmic ray-



Caxtonians Open Words/Matter Book Arts Show





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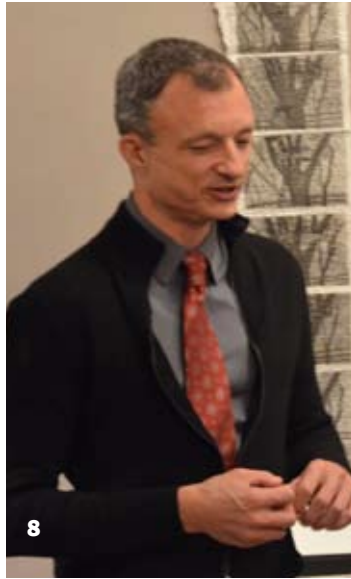


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Arts on Elston was the setting for the October 6 presentation of the just-opened Words/Matter show for Caxton members. **FACING PAGE**
1 Locked-up type used to print a Jennifer Farrell print **2** A wall of Melissa Jay Craig mushrooms **3** Marnie Galloway **THIS PAGE** **4** Spread of Radha Pandy's Anatomica Botanica **5** Cover of same **6** Trisha Hammer's binding of Mark Twain's Innocents Abroad **7** Jennifer Farrell **8** Shawn Sheehey **9** Melissa Jay Craig **10** Pamela Olson **11** Shawn Sheehey pop-up **12** Michael Thompson consults with Bill Hesterberg **13** Show organizer Eileen Madden introduces the panel presentation



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13

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: **"The Power of Place"** (visionary Chinese artists who explored new ways of representing the world, 1570-1700), Gallery 134 through December 20. **"Alfred Stieglitz and the 19th Century"** (how 19th-century photographs influenced pictorialism), Galleries 1-2 through March 27, 2016.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **"Ampelography: I Heard It Through the Grapevine,"** through November 8. [see also facing page]

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: **"Railroaders: Jack Delano's Homefront Photography"** (the federal Office of War Information assigned photographer Jack Delano to take pictures of the nation's railways during World War II), through January 31, 2016. **"Chicago Authored"** (works by contemporary Chicago authors and the literary giants of past generations), ongoing.

Columbia College Center for Book and Paper Arts, 1104 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, 312-269-6630: **"Leslie Dill: Faith and the Devil"** (large-scale installation investigates evil and underlying faith in the world through words stenciled on fabric), through December 23.

DePaul Art Museum, 935 W. Fullerton, Chicago, 773-325-7506: **"The Andy Archetype: Works from the Permanent Collection"** (Warhol objects from the permanent collection), through December 20.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: **"Called to the Challenge: The Legacy of Harold Washington"** (an overview of Washington's life and projects as mayor), Harold Washington Exhibit Hall, ninth floor, ongoing.

Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Avenue., Chicago, 312-280-2660: **"The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now"** (links the vibrant legacy of the 1960s African American avant-garde to current art and culture), through November 22.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: **"Stagestruck City: Chicago's Theater Tradition and the Birth of the Goodman"** (traces evolution of Chicago's theater tradition through



Art Institute / Alfred Stieglitz
ALFRED STIEGLITZ. THE HAND OF MAN, 1902. ALFRED STIEGLITZ COLLECTION.

posters, programs, scripts, letters, and photographs), through December 31. **Pritzker Military Museum and Library**, 104 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-374-9333: **"SEAL The Unspoken Sacrifice"** (features photographs from Stephanie Freid-Perenchio and Jennifer Walton's 2009 book and artifacts on loan from the Navy SEAL Museum), ongoing.

Smart Museum, University of Chicago, 5550 S. Greenwood Avenue, Chicago, 773-702-0200: **"To See in Black and White: German and Central European Photography, 1920s-1950s"** (selection of German and Central European photography by Walter Peterhans, Hannah Höch, František Drtikol, Jaromír Funke, and others), through January 10.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **"Poetic Associations: The Nineteenth-Century English Poetry Collection of Dr. Gerald N. Wachs"** (nearly 900 titles, many of them presented by the author to other writers, friends, or family members, illuminate the life and works of English poets), through December 31.

Send your listings to lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net



Smart Museum / To See in Black and White
WALTER PETERHANS, DEAD HARE (TOTER HASE), 1929



Newberry Library /
Stagestruck City
KENNETH SAWYER GOODMAN COWROTE
THE WONDER HAT WITH BEN HECHT. IT
WAS PUBLISHED ALONG WITH OTHER ONE-
ACT PLAYS IN 1925.

Caxtonians Collect: Leora Siegel

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Back in 2002, Leora Siegel was sent off to the annual meeting of the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries by her then-boss, Caxtonian Edward J. Valauskas, with an interesting assignment. The then-president of the Chicago Botanic Garden (Glencoe), Barbara Carr, felt that building an important botanical library in the midwest would be a way of increasing the usefulness and importance of the garden, which was then a relative newcomer among the country's major gardens, not having been founded until 1972 (by trustees of the Chicago Horticultural Society and other civic leaders).

Valauskas knew how long it would take to build a major collection one book at a time. Carr asked, "What if we bought a whole library?" So it came to pass that Siegel was instructed to keep her ears to the ground during the meeting, to see if there might be a complete book collection out there looking for a home. She went, she listened, and came back with the news that the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in Boston might be interested in deaccessioning its rare books.

Many months of negotiation, due diligence, and fund-raising followed. The contents of the Massachusetts collection were examined in detail to be sure it supplied what was wanted. The garden was in the midst of a capital campaign, and the acquisition fit nicely into the plan. So the deal was done. The library was moved into its present space in 2006 (with added compact shelving, exhibit space, and a rare book room) and the books, periodicals, and monographs from Massachusetts joined the ones the Chicago Horticultural Society had assembled.

The incoming volumes – including some 4,000 rare ones – required cataloging. The monographs are finished, the processing of the periodicals is still going on. A volunteer (a retired periodical librarian himself) comes in once a week to work on them. "The project will be finished," Siegel insists.

And Siegel does have many other respon-

sibilities, heading the Library of the Chicago Botanic Garden for the past 11 years. (Valauskas became the part-time Curator of Rare Books in 2004) There are inquiries to be answered, groups to be entertained, and quar-



terly shows to be mounted. Not to mention, grants to be applied for.

Forty-five of the rarest books have been conserved and digitized with grant funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and another set of Americana titles was conserved with Save America's Treasures funding, but there are plans to do much more.

The job is a perfect fit for Siegel. Her BA, from SUNY Binghamton, was in history, with a certificate in medieval studies. Though she studied upstate, her childhood was very much a New York City one; she loved Barnes and Noble from an early age and supplemented her undergraduate studies with visits to the Morgan Library.

From there, looking for an adventure, she

worked as an avocado grower for five years; she met her husband on the farm. (They have two children, now in college.) After that they both opted for continued studies, and found that the University of Illinois was a good fit for both of them: she studied library science and he studied engineering. Appropriately enough, she found a job at the Agriculture Library at Urbana-Champaign while he finished his studies. They then moved to the Chicago area, where she first worked in the DePaul University Library, then found the job where we met her, as technical services librarian and cataloger at the Lenhardt Library.

While working at Lenhardt, she decided that she would benefit from more schooling in natural resources and environmental science, and earned a second MS from the University of Illinois. By that time, U. of I. had programs that, for the most part, could be completed remotely, so she was able to earn her degree while keeping her job.

She had been hearing about the Caxton Club for many years, but the Club visit to her library last year increased her interest. She was nominated by Jill Postma and seconded by Christine Giannoni. She very much enjoyed the recent luncheon about book thievery, which is on the mind of anyone charged with the care of rare books.

But encouraging use of the books under her care remains her highest priority. "We have an ongoing program with local libraries where I arrange a field trip for library patrons to see our library and enjoy our gardens. It has grown to the point that 16 libraries are scheduled for summer of 2016. It's always enjoyable to introduce ourselves to new people and give them hands-on time with rare books." Altogether 50 groups from undergrads to the Caxton Club visited the library in 2014.

With new educational facilities under construction at the Botanic Garden, the Lenhardt Library has a renewed focus on its children's collection. Siegel created a summer reading program for kids and feels it's important to encourage the joy of reading and promote literacy skills at a young age.

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photograph by Robert McCamant



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Bookmarks...

Luncheon: Friday, November 13, Union League Club
Ellen McCallister Clark on
“Early American Imprints & the Art of War”

Imagine you're George Washington leading a fledgling army in a war against a country with a long military tradition, professional officers, and well-established practices for equipping, moving, and feeding an army. How do you and your officers learn what to do?

It's going to take much more than just *Common Sense*, so the printing presses have to churn out books and pamphlets that will help you educate your army in the art of war. What those documents were, why they were printed on abominable materials, and how Washington and the revolutionary army used them will be the subject of an enthralling and generously illustrated talk by Ellen McCallister Clark, library director at the Society of the Cincinnati. The society was founded in 1783 by officers of the Continental Army, who sought to preserve the memory of all that had been done and sacrificed. It remains the country's oldest private patriotic organization. Clark previously served as librarian at Mount Vernon. Come and see the revolutionary role that printing played!

November luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (main dining room on six) opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, to be announced) 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$32. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org. **Reservations suggested by noon Wednesday for Friday lunch.**

Beyond November...

DECEMBER LUNCHEON
Roosevelt Redux! It's the eagerly awaited sequel to Joseph Ornig's talk about Teddy Roosevelt, our most prolific presidential penman. Join us December 11 for an illustrated journey with Roosevelt the explorer to experience his exciting and harrowing river journey through Brazil.

DECEMBER DINNER
Dinner with wine for \$48! It's our annual Revels, including fund-raising auction, which will take place at the Newberry Library on Wednesday, December 16. Get your auction items to Dan Crawford at the Newberry!

Dinner: Wednesday, November 18, Union League Club
Mark Dimunation on “Life in the Stacks”

Mark Dimunation has been Chief of the Rare Book and Manuscript Collections Division of the Library of Congress since 1998. He oversees the management and development of the Library's rare book collection, the largest in North America. Mr. Dimunation's responsibilities include not only antiquarian materials such as the effort to reconstruct Jefferson's library but also the selection of fine press and artists' books. Educated at St. Olaf College, Christ Church College Oxford, and the University of California at Berkeley, Mr. Dimunation pursued a career in rare books at Berkeley, Stanford and Cornell before joining the Library. He teaches a popular course on book history at Rare Book School and is past chair of the Rare Books & Manuscripts Section of the American College and Research Libraries. His presentation will discuss the seminal moments of this rich career. This evening will also feature the award presentation of the 2015 Caxton Club grants and welcome back past grant recipients.

November Dinner: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. The evening will follow this order: Social gathering: 5:00 - 6:00 pm. Club announcements and program: 6:00 - 6:15 pm. Presentation: 6:15 pm. Dinner immediately to follow. Program only: Free, but please reserve so we can prepare appropriate seating. Dinner: \$60; **reservations are required** and must be received or canceled no later than noon on November 16. Drinks, \$5 - \$9. Discounted parking available at Union League garage after 4 pm for \$10.

JANUARY LUNCHEON
The bard is in the yard! Caxtonian Jill Gage will clue us in to how the Newberry Library is curating its 2016 exhibition, "Creating Shakespeare" from early printed materials, seldom seen artifacts, and features about the Shakespearean influence on Chicago's cultural life. January 8 at the Union League Club.

JANUARY DINNER
January 20, 2016 at the Union League, Richard Bales, noted for his work on the Chicago Fire, will keep the focus on Chicago with a discussion of his research for his upcoming book *The Other Literature of Nelson Algren*.