

## Dickens, Death, and Drood

The good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble Dickens – every inch of him an honest man.

– Thomas Carlyle on hearing of Dickens’s death

Michael Gorman

### The Chaise Longue

The elongated chair known as a chaise longue was an essential piece of furniture in a Victorian sitting room. One such, upholstered in plush, is displayed in the Dickens museum housed in Gad’s Hill Place, the Georgian mansion in Higham, Kent, that was the last home of Charles Dickens. The explanatory placard reads:

SEIZED WITH APOPLEXY  
CHARLES DICKENS  
PASSED AWAY  
On this Couch  
On the evening of June 9th, 1870

It could have read “Charles Dickens died on this couch, prematurely aged and with his seemingly inexhaustible energy exhausted.” He was 58 years old and the most famous man in the world, beloved by millions in many countries. In the words of Norrie Epstein, “Dickens worked himself to death, driving his body beyond its natural limitations. He died because he lived too intensely.”

### Family Values

Charles Dickens is still, to many, the apostle of Victorian family values, but neither his works nor his life make him the exemplar of that suffocating ideal. His novels tell of many broken, unhappy, and sexless marriages and of childhood miseries. Just think of the bleakness of the Dedlocks’ marriage in *Bleak House* and of David’s disillusion with Dora in *David Copperfield*. The novels contain many orphaned and abandoned children – the desolation of Jo the crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House* and of



<https://www.thoughtco.com/images-of-charles-dickens-4122915>



<https://www.alamy.com/image-details.aspx?ref=ERH2RM>

ABOVE An artist’s rendering of the study where Dickens wrote his later books. BELOW A museum claims this is the actual couch where he was laid out.

Oliver Twist in the workhouse still touch the hardest of hearts. There are episodes (often at the heart of their stories) of adultery, prostitution, assault, murder, seduction, abduction, and domestic and child abuse (think of the appalling treatment of David and his mother by the ogreish Murdstones in *David Copperfield*, not to mention the villainous and brutal schoolmaster Wackford Squeers in *Nicholas Nickleby*). All manner of deviance and sin are to be found in Dickens. The modern reader should not be quick to think smugly of him- or herself having more insight into such

matters than the allegedly naïve Victorians who read the issues of Dickens’s novels as they were published. Though the details are not spelled out, the 19th century reader of, for example, *Oliver Twist* knew full well that Oliver’s was an outcast, unmarried mother; that the murdered Nancy was a prostitute; and even exactly what Fagin got up to with his boys – the latter included one Charley Bates, referred to as “Master Bates,” in case the reader has missed the point.

As to his personal life, in the 1860s Charles

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### DICKENS'S DROOD, from page 1

Dickens was long separated and estranged from his wife Catherine (whom he had treated very badly) and was living, though not "in sin," with his sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth, his most faithful helpmeet. At the same time, he was pursuing his long-standing affair with an actress, Ellen "Nelly" Lawless Ternan, whom he had met and seduced when he was 45 and she was 18. In 1867, Dickens set up Nelly and her mother in a house with the eminently respectable name of Windsor Lodge. One wonders if the not very far away inhabitant of Windsor Castle – Queen Victoria – would have been amused. The house was in Peckham, a south London suburb, and was near Peckham Rye railway station, which afforded direct connections to both London and to Higham, the locality of Dickens's house – Gad's Hill.

In 1858, when the final breakdown of the Dickens marriage occurred, Georgina (who lived in the Dickens household) was forced to choose between her sister and the brother-in-law she adored. She unhesitatingly chose the latter. She, like Dickens, had no communication of any kind with her sister until Dickens died. The first Dickensian twist was that a year or so after his death, despite not having spoken to each other for 13 years, the sisters renewed their relationship and were on apparently good terms until Catherine's death in 1879. The second twist was that Catherine bequeathed to her sister just one thing – "my snake ring." As Lucinda Hawksley wrote in her book on one of Dickens's daughters: "Perhaps it was an item she knew Georgina admired; on the other hand, there are grounds for believing that the snake emblem was Catherine's poignant comment on how she viewed her younger sister."

### 1869-1870

In the last year or so of his life, Dickens divided this time between Gad's Hill (presided over by the devoted Georgina), in which he spent many hours writing in the Swiss chalet that he had built in the garden for that purpose; the London office of the



Gad's Hill Place, 1862, Kate and Mamie Dickens, standing, Georgina Hogarth, seated.

magazine he edited and wrote for – *All the Year Round*; the Peckham house of Nelly Ternan; and extensive travel to many parts of Britain for readings, lectures, and social events. On April 18, 1869, during one such trip, Dickens had a stroke that left him partly paralyzed; still, he continued with his engagements. Some think the stroke convinced him that he was not long for the world, since he thereafter devoted a lot of time to sorting out his business and financial affairs and, the following month, to drafting and signing a revised will. Nevertheless, the hectic schedule that would have wearied a much younger and fitter man continued virtually unchanged.

*We are sorry to note the passing of Millard Riggs on November 9 and Wanda Dole on November 16. Appreciations of their lives will appear in future issues.*

One of his friends was told by Nelly Ternan that only she in the audience had noticed how taxing his lectures and readings were, describing him “staggering” and that “his eye failed.” Dickens himself knew the toll that these public events were taking, but the great novelist was above all a trouper convinced that the show must go on. He signed up for 12 public readings in 1870, committed to writing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (see below) not to mention continuing the editorship of *All the Year Round*.

His last Christmas must have been especially poignant for the man who, above all others, was responsible for the modern holiday. There was a family gathering in Gad’s Hill of some of his children and grandchildren (with Georgina but of course not Nelly). He described it as “a time of great pain and misery” in a letter to an American friend, contrasting it with a happy Christmas spent with that friend when “at least I had use of my legs.” The Inimitable was confined to bed all Christmas Day 1869, coming downstairs with great difficulty to join the rest of the family only in the evening.

According to Claire Tomalin, Dickens’s last months were “packed with business meetings; readings, public and private; office work to do with the magazine; discussions with illustrators; improvements at Gad’s Hill.” The last included construction of a new staircase and changes to the gardens and conservatory. As Tomalin wrote, “Then there were speeches to deliver, dinners and receptions, his daughters’ amateur theatricals... social obligations to insistent friends, and even to royalty.” All that and writing his last novel subject to monthly deadlines. Dickens lived up to the public image of a man of unstoppable creative and physical energy, though his family knew his fires were dying and that Dickens was mentally and physically exhausted. It is a tribute to his strong will that he persisted with his writing and schedule right up to his final collapse, the day before he died.

The saddest public event of his last months occurred at the last of the 12 readings to which he had committed. Each reading took place at St. James’s Hall, between Piccadilly and Regent Street in London, a glittering and fashionable venue that held more than 2,000 people (it opened in 1858 and was demolished in 1905). The sold-out audiences clapped and cheered as the Inimitable appeared and the standing ovations following the readings



An early Drood in serial form, on offer at Heritage Auctions.

continued long after he had left the stage. On March 15, 1870, he gave his last public reading. His daughter Mary (“Mamey”) thought he had never looked more handsome, but, in truth, Dickens was far from the man he had been and mispronounced the names of even his most beloved characters. In tears and in a voice choked with emotion, he closed with the words “From these garish lights, I vanish now for evermore with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful, and affectionate farewell.” The tears were still flowing as he left the platform with, in the words of an observer, “the dragging steps of a mourner.” The ovations continued. Hearing the cheers in the green room, Dickens, a thespian to the last, returned to the platform to throw a kiss to the audience before exiting forever.

### The Death of Charles Dickens

Georgina Hogarth heard the last words ever spoken by the Inimitable. In the account she gave, on Wednesday June 8, 1870, Dickens breakfasted; spent time at his desk in the chalet writing letters; visited the nearby Falstaff Inn to cash a check for £22 with Mr. Trood (!) the landlord; came back to the main house for lunch; and spent the remainder of the afternoon again in the chalet. Georgina and Dickens took their dinner at six. Dickens felt quite unwell and told her so. Georgina urged him to lie down. “Yes,” said Dickens, “on the ground.” He collapsed and never regained consciousness, dying at 6:10 pm the next day. An alternative story, mentioned in Claire Tomalin’s biography, has Dickens, after visiting Mr. Trood in the Falstaff Inn, taking a train to Peckham Rye and a cab to Windsor Lodge to be with Nelly Ternan and where he ultimately lost consciousness.

(Even in this version, it is not alleged that Dickens’s fatal collapse came about in a manner similar to that of French President Felix Fauré in 1899.) Tomalin acknowledges that it is difficult to imagine Nelly and her servants carrying the unconscious Dickens to a hackney cab for the long journey back to Gad’s Hill, but it is not impossible. It is perfectly plausible to think that Nelly, the servants, the hackney driver, and Georgina conspired to hide the scandal of Dickens’s affair. More salient is the fact that, when the careful Georgina made a list of the contents of the dead man’s pockets, she noted £6, 6 shillings, and 3 pence as the only money on him. What had happened to the other £15, 13 shillings, and 9 pence (from the £22 cashed in the morning)? Was it not spent on the journey to visit his mistress?

The leading article in the *London Times* (then the unchallenged and trusted voice of Britain, now owned by Rupert Murdoch), after telling the world that

One whom young and old, wherever the English language is spoken, have been accustomed to regard as a personal friend is suddenly taken away from among us. Charles Dickens is no more...”

then described the circumstances of his death:

During the whole of Wednesday Mr. Dickens had manifested signs of illness, saying that he felt dull, and that the work on which he was engaged was burdensome to him. He came to the dinner table at 6 o’clock, and his sister-in-law, Miss Hogarth, observed that his eyes were full of tears. She did not like to mention this to him, but watched him anxiously, until

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alarmed by the expression of his face, she proposed sending for medical assistance. He said, "No," but said it with imperfect articulation. The next moment he complained of toothache, put his hand to the side of his head, and desired that the window might be shut. It was shut immediately, and Miss Hogarth went to him, and took his arm, intending to lead him from the room. After one or two steps he suddenly fell heavily on his left side, and remained unconscious and speechless until his death, which came at ten minutes past 6 on Thursday, just 24 hours after the attack. As soon as he fell a telegram was despatched to his old friend and constant medical attendant, Mr. F. Carr Beard, of Welbeck Street, who went to Gad's Hill immediately, but found the condition of his patient to be past hope. Mr. Steele, of Strood, was already in attendance; and Dr. Russell Reynolds went down on Thursday, Mr. Beard himself remaining until the last. The pupil of the right eye was much dilated, that of the left contracted, the breathing stertorous, the limbs flaccid until half an hour before death, when some convulsion occurred. The symptoms point conclusively to the giving way of a blood-vessel in the brain, and to consequent large hemorrhage, or, in other words, to what is called apoplexy.

The "work on which he was engaged" that he found "burdensome," according to the *Times*, were the serial parts of his novel in progress – *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

## Dickens' last novels

In August 1869, Dickens conceived of a novel – a mystery set in a fictionalized Rochester, Kent – the city in which Dickens had spent some of the happier days of his childhood. By October he had a title – *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* – and in December 1869 he signed a contract with Chapman & Hall for the novel to be issued in 12 parts, beginning in March 1870. It was to be illustrated and issued in green paper covers. The publishers paid £7,500 (about \$200,000 in today's money) for the profits on the first 25,000 copies sold, the later profits to be split evenly between Dickens and

the publisher. Harper & Brothers bought the U.S. rights for £1,000.

Dickens's last complete novel – *Our Mutual Friend* – was serialized in 1864-5 and published in book form in 1865. Though generally darker in theme and tone than its early predecessors, it is still a typically Dickensian book, crammed with interwoven plots and subplots revolving around the inheritance of a fortune.



Kate, Charles, and Mamie Dickens, Gad's Hill Place, 1865

It teems with dramatic, melodramatic, sinister, and comic elements and deals with all strata of contemporary society. Behind and interwoven with the sometimes contrived and cumbersome narrative is a serious, almost despairing, satire of social conditions and Victorian bourgeois society. Henry James called it "intensely written" and Una Pope-Hennessy described it as an attack on the worship of wealth and the "vices he [Dickens] most deplores – toadyism, flunkeyism, and all forms of snobbery and insincerity."

*Drood* is quite different, both in its linear narrative with a relatively uncomplicated plotline, and the virtual absence of social criticism. "Cloisterham" (Rochester), the ancient

cathedral city, is a place of secrets and decay; of tombs and hidden dark places; and of people driven by desires, vengeance, and addiction – "A dead and mouldering place fostering human corruption," as one critic put it. It is as if Dickens set out to write what was for him a new kind of novel – a story that explored the psychology of the individual while using the melodramatic trappings of a mystery. Many have suggested that he was influenced by the success of *The Moonstone* (1868) by Dickens's friend and sometimes collaborator Wilkie Collins. That novel, which had been serialized in *All the Year Round*, was described by T.S. Eliot as "the first, longest, and best" of English detective stories. *The Moonstone* features exotic "Eastern" elements (the Thuggees, who combined religion and robbery; a jewel with mysterious powers; and so on) that were very much in vogue. It is likely that Dickens, who wrote unfavorably of *The Moonstone* (finding the plot, *inter alia*, "very wearisome"), set out to write a mystery with some of the same elements but intending to surpass his friend's book with one that had more literary merit and was even more popular.

## The Master of the Opening Chapter

Almost all of Dickens' novels have arresting opening chapters (and first lines) that immediately draw

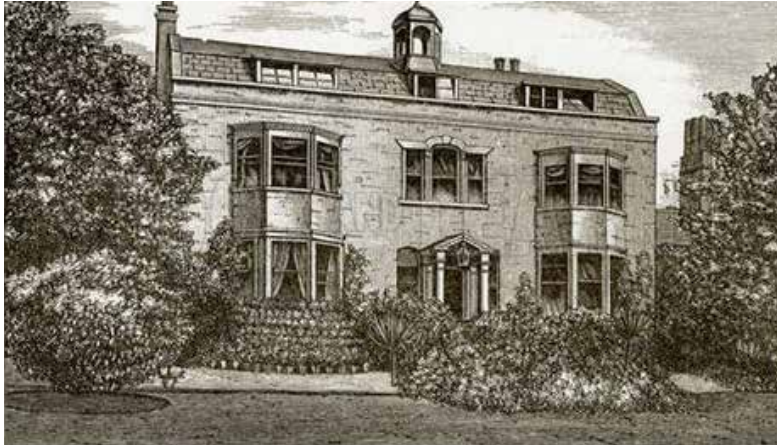
in the reader. Dickens the showman was aware of the importance of Act 1, Scene 1, and of opening speeches. If they had been written a century later, the reader could easily believe his opening chapters had been written specifically to be filmed. *Oliver Twist* begins with the birth of Oliver in the workhouse, his poor mother lying on a thin pallet that was both his birthplace and her deathbed, attended only by a pauper woman worse for drink and the "parish surgeon" (a very low class of doctor). The opening chapter of *Bleak House* evokes a dismal, deserted, muddy London with "As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to see a Mega-

losaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling up ... Holborn Hill." *Little Dorrit* opens "thirty years ago" in a dark cell in a "villainous prison" in Marseilles under a blazing sun (darkness and light are recurrent motifs in Dickens). Then there is the churchyard, "a bleak place full of nettles" on the Kent marshes that defines the opening scene of *Great Expectations*, as the desolate little boy Pip, visiting the graves of his parents and siblings, is accosted by Magwitch, the escaped convict. Though not cinematic, the opening lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*, a novel of Revolutionary France, are both striking and have resonance today: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity..." The duality of the opening lines sets the tone of a novel of doubleness that hinges on the uncanny resemblance between a disillusioned French aristocrat who has rejected his class and a dissolute upper-class English lawyer.

## The Mystery of Edwin Drood

The opening of *Drood* also has a double nature. At first it appears to be a vision of the cathedral town of Cloisterham. "An ancient English Cathedral tower? How can the ancient English Cathedral tower be here? The well known massive grey square tower of its old Cathedral?" Then the mirage of Cloisterham dissolves into an incongruous Eastern fantasy of scimitars, sultans, nautch girls, and elephants. It becomes apparent that we are in the disordered consciousness of a man having a drug-fueled dream. The "opium eater" is John Jasper and he is lying in a squalid room in London with two stupefied customers (a "Chinaman" and a "Lascar" – a sailing man from the Indian subcontinent) attended by a "haggard woman" who is keeping the opium pipe alight. The scene switches abruptly to Cloisterham – a sinister version of Rochester as different as can be from the sunny description of the town visited by the Pickwickians in Dickens' first novel. The clergy – likened to the rooks that wheel in the sky over the cathedral and come to roost on it – appear in the shape of the Dean and a minor canon – Septimus Crisparkle – discussing the health of John Jasper, who is "poorly," suffering from the aftereffects of opium, as we know and they did not. Jasper, "a dark man of some six and

twenty with thick lustrous hair" who looks older than his years, is the cathedral's precentor (choirmaster). It is startling to hear him confess that he hates his work and thinks the music "devilish," one of the many incongruities about the man. Jasper shares his lodgings with his nephew Edwin Drood, a student-engineer quite close to him in age. One striking thing to the modern reader is the effusive, verging on amorous, terms in which Jasper expresses his ardent love for Drood. But we cannot, post-Freud, read as a Victorian would have read,



*Gad's Hill Place in a contemporary postcard*

and hence are prone to see sex in expressions that Victorians found merely fond.

Drood is engaged to Rosa Bud, a pupil in a school run by a Miss Twinkleton, but mainly, it transpires, because their late fathers wished them to marry. Rosa is a typical Dickens young woman – a pretty and flighty "miss" whose vacuity is redeemed partly by the insights she has into her relationship with Edwin Drood. It is obvious that Jasper – a dark, brooding, secretive person – is violently in love with Rosa, despite his fondness for her fiancé. Other characters are introduced – among them Thomas Sapsea, an auctioneer and prime Dickensian humbug, and Durdles, a drunken stonemason – "Chiefly in the gravestone, tomb, and monument way, and wholly of their colour from head to foot" – who knows all the secrets of the cathedral, including a quicklime pit that was probably meant to be integral to the plot of the novel. Then another Dickensian humbug, a "philanthropist" called Luke Honeythunder, whose "philanthropy was of that gunpowderous sort that the difference between it and animosity was hard to determine," comes from London with his twin wards – Neville and Helena Landless. Neville is to stay with and learn from Mr. Crisparkle, Helena to join Rosa at Miss Twinkleton's. They are orphans from

Ceylon, both very dark and described as "slender and supple," she "almost of the gypsy type," and "with something untamed about them." After Jasper has explored the cathedral and its tombs, first with Durdles' help and, after the stonemason has become insensible with drink, on his own and for unnamed but dark purposes, the stage is set for the mystery to unfold.

Almost instantly, there springs up an antagonism between Edwin Drood and Neville Landless. The latter has fallen for the pretty Rosa. Drood's tepid affection for Rosa is as nothing compared with the intense ardor she arouses in the two passionate, dark men – Jasper and Landless. Events come to a head on Christmas Eve (as far from a Dickensian Christmas as one could imagine). Rosa and Edwin break off their engagement, Edwin and Neville Landless have a violent quarrel, and Edwin disappears. Neville, who has left on a walking journey (an odd thing to do on Christmas Day) is suspected and detained.

Though a shirt pin and watch belonging to Edwin are found in a weir on the river, no body is recovered. Edwin had gained possession of a ring with rubies and diamonds from Rosa, but neither has this been found. Neville Landless is released since there is no proof of a crime. One last character appears in the final chapters ascribed to Dickens – a mysterious person calling himself "Dick Datchery" and of an odd appearance strongly suggesting disguise. Though he says he is "an idle dog," he is clearly investigating the mystery of Edwin Drood's disappearance. Datchery has a strange encounter with the "haggard woman" of the opium den who has followed Jasper to Cloisterham after one of his drug-taking visits. This could be important since she has heard Jasper speaking while deep in his opium dreams. The meeting, like the many other threads of the story, is tantalizing but incomplete. The rest is silence.

Dickens produced six of the twelve parts (23 chapters) of *Drood* – approximately half of the work he had contracted to deliver to Chapman & Hall. The incomplete novel was published later in 1870 by Chapman & Hall, 193 Piccadilly, London, with 12 illustrations by S.L. Fildes and a frontispiece portrait of the author engraved by J.H. Baker from a photo-

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graph taken in 1868 by Mason & Company. The book was bound in dark yellowy-green bead grain cloth stamped in black.

We know from his own words that the writing of *Drood* was a heavy burden for Dickens. The text has none of the spontaneous flow and bursting genius of Dickens in his prime. The manuscript, full of cross-outs, insertions, and amendments, is a mute tribute to the author's professionalism as well as to the intense labor involved in its creation. (The manuscript of *Drood* is held in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London – MSL/1876/Forster/167.) The reader can see the strain of composition in the fading of Dickens' marvellous facility for names. There is little of the genius who named, among many others, Bumble the beadle, Mrs. Gamp, Uriah Heep, Ebenezer Scrooge, and Wilkins Micawber. "Crisparkle," "Honeythunder," "Miss Twin-kleton," and the excruciating "Rosa Bud" are sub-Dickensian at best. G.B. Shaw wrote that the novel was "a gesture by a man who was three-quarters dead," and Wilkie Collins said it was the "melancholy product of a worn-out brain" (perhaps stung by Dickensian comments on *The Moonstone*?). These are harsh judgements and, in Shaw's case, an example of his fatal smart-aleckry, but there is no denying that *Drood* is a lesser Dickens work and would probably have remained so even if it were completed. Since the worst of Dickens is better than the best of most novelists, to say *Drood* is a lesser Dickens is far from a condemnation.

### The Afterlife of *Edwin Drood*

In the last months of his life, the ailing Dickens had been summoned to meet Queen Victoria for the first and only time. Etiquette demanded that he remain standing for the two hours they spent together, something that was very painful for someone so ill. It is said that Dickens offered to reveal the answer to the mystery of *Drood*, but that his sovereign refused the opportunity. How did Dickens intend to complete it? This is a question innumerable readers have asked, and many writers have tried to answer. The motivations and back-stories of the principal characters are not clear (how, for example, are Jasper and the Landless twins linked? – does the answer to that question lie in past events in Ceylon?) and the very identity of 'Datchery' is unknown (could it be Edwin Drood returned in disguise and bent on revenge, as some have speculated?).

However, there are some indications in the

text and at least two testimonies that could illuminate the central mystery. The illustrator, Luke Fildes, wrote that he was told a black scarf that Jasper wore was intended to be the means for killing Drood. It is significant that strangulation was a method of killing associated with exotic assassins; opium addict, choirmaster, and violently passionate John Jasper is nothing if not exotic. John Forster, Dickens's first biographer, wrote that the ring that Drood obtained from Rosa (and which very few in the novel knew he had) was to be the clue to the murderer's identity when the murdered Drood was found (presumably in the quicklime pit in the cathedral). Though there are many fanciful answers to the riddle, the most straightforward solution is that Drood was murdered by Jasper and that the motivation was unbridled jealousy and a desire to possess Rosa.

One of the first "solutions" came in a two-volume work published in Brattleboro, Vermont, in 1873. It bore the title *The Mystery of Edwin Drood, complete*, and the ascription read, "by the spirit-pen of Charles Dickens through a medium." That medium was the printer/publisher of the books – T.P. (Thomas Power) James, who worked for the local newspaper, the *Brattleboro Reformer*. The 1870s Victorians had different credulities from those of our age – among them was a widespread belief in spiritualism. This meant that some took the book seriously (Arthur Conan Doyle, a devotee of spiritualism, reviewed it, but not favorably.) Still less did a reviewer in the *New York Times* care for the work: "We cannot help being struck by... the miserable incapacity of the spiritual Dickens.... It is now rendered quite clear that men's talents are not always improved when men die. It is grievous to think that Charles Dickens, who was once so justly famous, can now write nothing better than the concluding chapters of this saddening book."

### A "Trial"

An entry in the British Museum Department of Printed Books catalogue:

– Trial of John Jasper, Lay Precentor of Cloisterham Cathedral in the county of Kent, for the murder of Edwin Drood, Engineer. Heard by Mr. Justice Gilbert Keith Chesterton sitting with a Special Jury, in the King's Hall, Covent Garden, W.C., on Wednesday, the 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1914. Verbatim report of the proceedings from the short-hand notes of J.W.T. Ley. [Report of a mock trial of the character in Charles Dickens' "The Mystery of Edwin

Drood."] pp.79. Chapman & Hall: London, 1914. 8°.

George Bernard Shaw was the foreman of the Special Jury. Actors playing the various characters of the novel gave testimony and were questioned and crossquestioned by the counsels for the prosecution and defense. The jury convicted Jasper of manslaughter.

Both before and since the "trial" in 1914, Droodians (Chesterton's term) have advanced many more theories purporting to have "solved" the mystery in hundreds of articles and books. The once famous British character actor Felix Aylmer composed a "completed" Drood as well as articles on the topic, as did writers Andrew Lang and M.R. James. The pages of *The Dickensian* (the journal of the Dickens Fellowship, founded in 1905) contain decades' worth of Droodian articles, letters, and notes. The high point of Droodianism coincided with the "golden age" of the detective novel (roughly from the late 19th century to World War II) and was animated by the same forces. At that time, Drood was treated as a mystery novel rather than a work of literature and many "completions" evoked the name of Sherlock Holmes. Later Droodians, including the eminent literary critic Edmund Wilson, were less interested in solving the mystery and more in assessing Dickens's literary purposes. Droodiana continues to appear – see, for example, Deanna Madden's *Helena Landless* (2015) – the story completed and retold from Helena's point of view. Don Richard Cox's *Charles Dickens's The Mystery of Edwin Drood: an Annotated Bibliography* (New York: AMS Press, 1998) runs to nearly 700 pages, and who knows how much might have been added in the 20 years since?

### The Insoluble Mystery?

The theories of the Droodians depend on the hundreds of questions posed by the text, such as the many enigmatic statements made by Jasper. Also, considering what we know about Dickens's private life: – the significance or otherwise of the name of Helena Landless as an evocation of the name of Ellen Lawless Ternan; – and the older Jasper's love of young Rosa.

Norrie Epstein wrote: "After reading a fraction of the hundreds of Droodian theories, revisions, interpretations, spin-offs, and 'authentic' conclusions, one feels as if Drood is a novel of forking paths in which almost every sentence – and sometimes every word – leads into another story." She adds that, in 1951, the

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# Book Arts at the University of Florida

## The Coffey-Caxton Connection

Susan R. Hanes

On a brilliant November weekend, I ventured back to Gainesville for the purpose of introducing my grandson to my alma mater, the University of Florida. As he prepares to enter high school next year, I hoped to get him fired up to dig into his studies by showing him the impressive College of Engineering where his late grandfather graduated. We would further his enthusiasm by attending a Gators football game at The Swamp and strolling around UF's 2,000-acre Gothic Revival campus, lush with Spanish-moss-laden oak trees.

Spending time at the library had not been on my itinerary when I was planning our visit. That was before I learned that Hannah Batsel, a Caxton Club grant winner, had been selected for the Marjorie S. Coffey residency in the book arts at the George A. Smathers Libraries for the fall of 2017. Artists' books? I had no idea that such a program existed there. I was intrigued.

Upon further investigation, I learned that Marjorie Coffey was an artist and writer who over the span of her life created a collection of work in a variety of media – including artists' books. Upon her death, an endowment was established in her name based on her interest in miniature books and artists' books. Since 2009, the Coffey endowment has supported numerous initiatives at the university, including an artist's book competition, letterpress and papermaking workshops, acquisitions of contemporary artists' books, and in 2015, the establishment of the Coffey residency, a yearly internship that would produce an editioned artist's book using the special and area collections of the Smathers Libraries and the book arts studio in the school of art and art history.

But it was not until our visit that I learned of the connection between the Coffey endowment and the Caxton Club. Not only were two of the four residency awardees also winners of Caxton Club grants, but the endowment has enabled the library to obtain the works of several Caxton grant winners, including Radha Pandey (2013) and Anne Covell (2014).

The residency is currently administered by Ellen Knudson, herself a book artist and designer who collaborates with each artist. Knudson told me of her pleasure in being a part of the artists' story-telling experience at the University of Florida. She is an Associate in the Book Arts there and holds an MFA in Book Arts from the University of Alabama.

At our appointed time, Knudson greeted me at the library and guided me upstairs to a small exhibit entitled "Catalyst: How Rare Collections Spark New Creations," that introduced the Coffey residency. Displayed were books and other materials from Special Collections that had inspired the book artists in creating their projects. Inside the library's Judaica Suite, Knudson had set out the "work in progress" of previous winners along with a selection of artists' books and rare materials from the library's Baldwin Children's Book Collection. She explained that the residency was established as a way to "actively and creatively serve the intent of the Coffey Endowment." It is one of a very few of its kind in the United States, and is particularly rare since it was established within a university library. During a single semester, Knudson collaborates with the awardee to make an editioned handmade artist's book. As she told me, "It is an intense but ful-



Ellen Knudson with her own *Made Up*, a vibrantly illustrated "non-scientific science book" about the imaginary cellular composition of the human body.

filling experience to create a finished edition in such a limited time!"

The first Coffey endowment residency was awarded to Emily Martin of the University of Iowa. Her Naughty Dog Press has produced more than 45 limited edition books using a variety of techniques. During her residency at UF, she created *All Sorts*, an artist's book inspired by the vibrant colors and patterns of the labels in the library's Jerry Chicone, Jr. Citrus Crate Label Collection. Her book is a 9"x 9" square, the same size as a typical fruit crate label. Martin was intrigued by the general

See *FLORIDA CONNECTION*, page 11



Batsel's *Ephemerus*, in its final form.

# 2018-'19 Caxton Club Grant Recipients Announced

Winners from the School of the Art Institute, University of Iowa, Columbia College, and University of Indianapolis

Eileen Madden

The Caxton Club has selected its grant recipients for 2018-2019. This year's applicants came from the School of the Art Institute (SAIC), the University of Iowa, and Columbia College. We had applications for the first time from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and the University of Indianapolis in Indiana. The committee was pleased to see applications from these new schools, and excited by the variety of projects we were able to support.

**Jude Agboada**, an MFA candidate at the School of the Art Institute, will use his grant to complete his work *It's Not Just One Story*. Agboada will use one narrative, but frame how it can be viewed differently by different viewers. Agboada is originally from Ghana, and plans to incorporate patterns from traditional Ghanaian fabrics and

*Chicago History: Self-Guided Tours*. Wood's work offers a multilevel exploration of what it means "to create a walking tour following a walking tour that is now obsolete, tracing a once-visible history that is now obscured or lost. It is intended to be a usable resource for the reader, encouraging him or her to follow a route and to find clues to the city of the past. The project will encourage the viewer to look closely at what can be revealed, even though the use of the spaces has changed. By transforming an artist book into a utilitarian object, this project makes the audience aware of the materiality and preciousness of the book in this age where so many handheld 'devices' are ephemeral and screen-based or disposable."



Kitt Gallagher DISCUSSED PAGE 10



Caroline Wood

cultural symbols to explore how a viewer's culture and experiences can shape a narrative. Agboada wants "this book to help the reader or audience . . . take a step back and look through the eyes of the subject matter of the narrative to be able to appreciate and understand how they themselves view life and the world around them."

University of Iowa MFA candidate **Caroline Wood** is creating *Neither Here nor There: A Walking Tour of Women's History in Chicago*. The completed project will be an edition of 20 books created using a combination of letterpress, inkjet, and historic print processes; it was inspired by the 1981 book *Walking with Women Through*

history in her project *Echoes in the Dust*. Her focus is on experiences of immigrants who built the I & M Canal. She is working with the Will County Historical Museum Heritage Village in Lockport, Illinois. Ursulesku is incorporating historical photographs into a series of four handmade, case-bound artist books. She writes: "Time Robber docu-

ments my observations and thoughts on the environment surrounding the Canal, connecting these observations to the past through archival information and original and historical photography. *Beneath the Trampled Stage* juxtaposes images of the Dresden Cemetery (where settlers were buried), with images from other nearby cemeteries (where the wealthy were buried), contrasting mausoleums of the affluent with the deteriorating gravestones of the settlers who built the I & M Canal. *Echoes in the Dust Volume I* explores my relationship to the spaces surrounding the I & M Canal, my sense of identity as an immigrant, and my place in the purported American Dream. *Echoes in the Dust Volume II* explores the notion of immigrants as expendable through the examination of

Columbia College MFA candidate **Marijana Ursulesku** is also exploring layers of

Krista Narciso





their forgotten work and crumbling structures near the Canal.” Ursulesku’s completed work will be on display at the Will County Museum in Lockport.

University of Iowa MFA candidate **Krista Narciso** will use her Caxton Club grant to complete *On Past the Farthest Point of Your Vision* – a book inspired by the landscapes she’s seen in her travels across the country, from Connecticut to Iowa. Narciso’s book will be incorporate her own drawings and text created “through an erasure of John Frederick Lazell’s 1909 book, *Some Summer Days in Iowa*. Lazell describes the beauty and importance of the Iowa landscape and expresses his fears about the development of the land. My intention in creating an erasure of Lazell’s text is to mirror the erasure of the natural landscape. I am interested in how my own interaction with Iowa’s landscape is differ-

thirty bound secret text books; there will be some blank pages included in the binding. All texts will be printed with photopolymer plates. The texts will include the following

categories: diary, doodling, short but full story, music score, speech/draft copy, cheat sheet, proverb, extract from bibles, type case diagram, to-do list. Each category will have three different pages plus two blank pages so there will be fifty pages in total in the binding. The viewer can choose from the printed texts or write down their own words on a blank page, tear it out, then put it in one of the shirt pockets and consider it part of the finished shirt-book piece. Thus the pockets in the shirt can be locations to house their personalized texts. The viewer could even put their own paper-like

belongings in the pockets too.” Nakamura plans to create a variable edition of ten.

**Kalia Daily**, an MFA candidate at the University of Indianapolis, is the student project leader on “The Peat Project” – a collaborative venture with Miami University in Ohio.

Dave Peat has a vast collection of 19th century type that he has accumulated over decades. There are two phases to this project. The first is to “research, print, and document the massive



Shoko Nakamura

19th century metal type collection. This documentation is a continuation of his original 38-page version, printed 1960-1971, and involves the students visiting Mr. Peat at his print shop, learning from his experiences and ‘fonting up’ his type collection. ‘Fonting up’ type refers to taking metal type and placing it, in alphabetical order, in small five-by-eight-inch boxes with sheets of special paper to help protect the type from any water damage or corrosion that could occur. Peat uses this method to store the 4,000 fonts of type, printing equipment, and ephemera that comprise his collection. These boxes are taken to U Indy to type-set 21 line specimens which are grouped into five-to-eight phrases per page. Throughout this process students, with David, work to identify missing typographic information. Information relating to the type (typeface, point size, founder, source, etc.) is entered into a searchable database for tracking and documentation purposes. Finally, three pages are printed together on one parent sheet. After printing, the type is cleaned and the phrases are placed back into their appropriate boxes to then be labeled and

See GRANT RECIPIENTS, page 10



Kalia Daily

ent from Lazell’s, 109 years earlier. The title of the book, *On Past the Farthest Point of Your Vision*, comes directly from a line in the erasure and speaks to my initial fascination with the Midwest landscape.” There will be an edition of 25 bound in paper-case sewn tapes binding, printed in a combination of hand-set type and polymer plates.

**Shoko Nakamura** is challenging the definition of the “book as a container for information” with her “Shirt Books” project. Nakamura says she will use handmade paper to create books in the “shape of a button-down collared shirt garnished with secret texts. There will be five pockets to hold the secret texts in the shirt; these will be placed in the cuffs, right and left collar, the left chest pocket, and left side seam inside of the shirt. These texts are interchangeable; the viewer wearer can decide which secret texts to put in each pocket.” She continues, “I will letterpress print



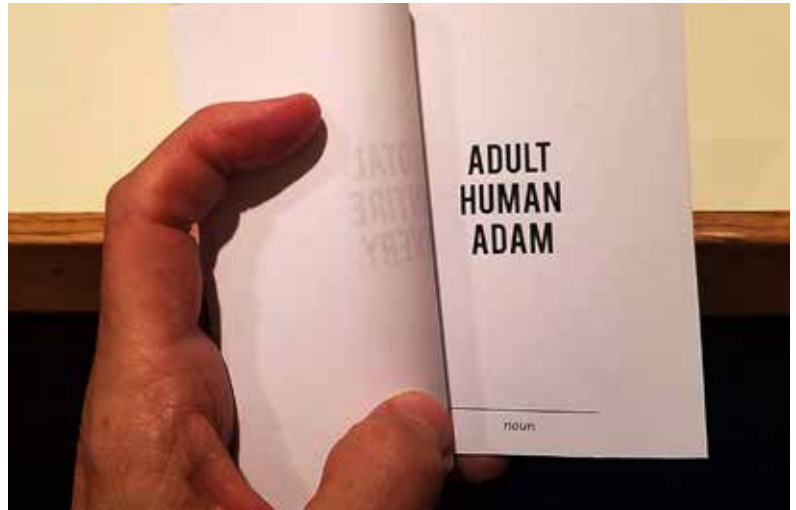
Marijana Ursulesku

GRANT RECIPIENTS, from page 9

returned to Mr. Peat.” In the second phase they will compile the documentation of the collection into a type specimen book, adding in Peat’s 60 years as letterpress printer, mentor to the print community, and collector.

The recipient of the Colleen Dionne Memorial Grant for SAIC this year is **Kitt Gallagher**. Her project, *Kitt’s Cabinet of Curiosities*, features the collections of her much younger self. Gallagher plans to contain the ephemera of a life lived “across four houses in three different states.” The collection ranges from “handmade bowties, cactuses pulled from neighbors’ yards in Tucson and transplanted to Chicago, an animal skull, and objects I inherited from my grandmother.” There will be an edition of six of this interactive book “to share with the world.”

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Jude Agboada DISCUSSED PAGE 8

## Celebrating Our Scholarship Winners

Before the talk by Michèlle V. Cloonan at the dinner on November 28



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**1** Club president Arthur Frank with award recipients Kitt Gallagher, Caroline Wood, Krista Narciso, Shoko Nakamura, Marijana Ursulesku, Kaila Daily, Jude Agboada. **2** Speaker Michèlle V. Cloonan with her husband, Sid Berger, and Linda Chan. **3** Caroline Wood, Katherine Fries, Jackie Vossler, Erin Beckloff.

FLORIDA CONNECTION, from page 7

concept of labeling and in response created a system of words used to “label” people.

In 2016, the residency was awarded to Molly Kempson, a printmaker and arts educator from Gainesville. A graduate of the UF in Art Education, Kempson created *The Woodpeckers of Florida*, printed from linoleum reduction blocks that were derived from the library’s distinctive collection of rare ornithology books.

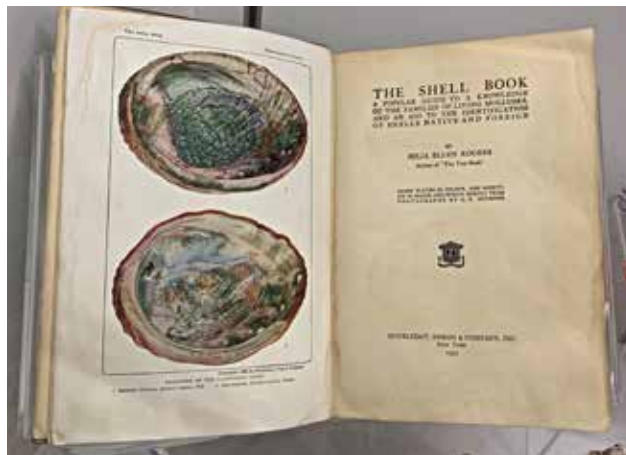
Chicago’s own Hannah Batsel completed her 15-week Coffey residency in the fall of 2017. A 2016 graduate of Columbia College with an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts, Batsel was awarded Caxton Club grants twice, in 2014 and again in 2015. *Ephemerus*, her project at UF, was inspired by her study

tion for my career.”

Amy Richard, a native of Miami, was the 2018 Coffey Resident. A 2016 Caxton Club grant winner and now a Caxtonian herself, she completed her semester-long project in early December. As a visual artist and sculptor, Amy has a connection with the natural environment that began when she explored south Florida’s coastal waters and man-grove swamps as a child. Her project, *The Mollusk*, is a limited edition book made entirely of hand-made paper by the artist. Research using Florida malacology texts from the Hanson rare book collection further inspired her project. The cover or “shell” was produced using a paper lamination technique with abaca paper and hand-processed kozo bark lace. A sculpture as much as an artist’s book, *The Mollusk* showcases Amy’s fascination with paper that was cultivated at the University of Iowa’s Center for the Book where she earned her



Kempson’s prints derive from the library’s collection of rare ornithology books.



The Shell Book (1939) from UF Special Collections provided inspiration for Amy Richard’s project.

of 15th-17th century occult and magical texts from special collections. She set her story at the Devil’s Millhopper, an eerie bowl-shaped natural cavity northwest of the university that has attracted curious visitors since the 19th century. Creating linoleum reduction block prints – some with movable tabs – and printing her own carved letters, Batsel told a dark tale of a magician and his dying apprentice, revealing the limitations of power and the reality of human frailty. Batsel said that Knudson, as director of the program, has created an environment of artistic freedom and support, which enabled her to write, illustrate, print, and bind an edition of 45 books in such a short time. She concluded, “The Coffey Book Arts Residency was an ideal opportunity for me and a natural progression for my work after the Caxton Club grants helped to lay the founda-

MFA under the direction of master paper specialist Tim Barrett. With a grant from the Caxton Club, Amy was able to continue her studies with paper artist Melissa Jay Craig, and from there expand her experience with an exhibition at the Morgan Conservatory in Cleveland. This, in turn, led to her residency at UF. She credits the Caxton Club in providing her both the encouragement and the ability to follow her chosen career path.

As Knudson showed me other artists’ books that Special Collections had acquired with the support of the Coffey endowment, I sensed her satisfaction at being such a vital part of the program. I was deeply impressed by this initiative at the University of Florida and am proud of the role that the Caxton Club continues to play in encouraging and enabling young book artists to secure their future in the book and paper arts.

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*Mollusk* book by Amy Richards.



# James Russell Donnelley (1935-2018)

Susan M. Levy

If anyone deserves the accolade “born with printer’s ink in his veins” it was Jim. He spent his entire business career at R.R. Donnelley & Sons, the printing company founded in 1864 by his great-grandfather, Richard Robert Donnelley.

Jim was also a fourth-generation Caxtonian and at the time of his death on Tuesday, September 26, 2018, the third-longest-tenured member of the club, having joined in 1962, the same year he received his graduate degree and entered the family business. At the Caxton Club’s Centennial Celebration in 1995, Jim represented the only family with continuous membership since R.R. Donnelley, who, although not a charter member, joined in its founding year. Jim’s brother Thomas E. Donnelley II (Tom) and cousin Shawn Donnelley are also Caxtonians. From 1972 to

2007, Jim was also a member of the Grolier Club of New York City.

Jim was born and raised in Lake Forest, Illinois, one of the four sons of Elliott and Ann Donnelley. Upon graduating from Dartmouth College (1957) he joined the U.S. Navy where he served as a lieutenant, earning his dolphins (insignia of qualification) in the submarine service. Personally, I always had a hard time imagining a man as bursting with energy as Jim confined in a submarine.

After completing his military service, Jim returned to Chicago to attend the University of Chicago Business School, living at International House. He remained in Hyde Park until, according to one of Jim’s favorite stories, he failed to get his children into the Lab School even though his uncle, Gaylord, was chairman of the board at the University

of Financial Services. He had become a director of the company in 1976. Jim retired in 2000 as Vice Chairman and from the board of directors five years later.

But lest he grow bored, he accepted the position of acting chairman of Sierra Pacific Resources, on whose board he had served for years. Jim was also a director and chair-

man of PMP Limited, making quick round-trip journeys to Australia multiple times per year.

Retirement also gave Jim more time for leisure. He wasn’t a fan of sports, either spectator or participant. Nor was he an international traveler. But he did enjoy trips, especially with grandchildren, on the family’s private railcar. Among other favorite activities were lunch dates with friends, from which I benefited. As his eyesight deteriorated, Jim switched, ironically, from printed to audible books.

Jim was also a member of two family partnerships, named, of course, by printing terms: Stet & Query and Ampersand, Reset & South Eastern. He was highly amused by the acronym of the latter company, formed by his father.

Jim’s business career, while substantial, only tells part of the story of his life and character. He was equally devoted to his family and his community. He and his wife, Nina (Herrmann) Donnelley resided on the Chicago’s north side and on a farm in Wisconsin. His son, Niel, is the fifth gen-



of Chicago. This precipitated a move to the near north side where Jim resided for the rest of his life. Jim would laughingly point out that he had raised a lot of money for the Latin School instead.

Following the family tradition, Jim learned the business from the ground up. He spent his first ten years in various positions in sales and management and then focused on the Financial and Legal Division. In 1985, when I joined the company and first met him, Jim was Group President

eration Donnelley to work at the company. His daughter, Nicole Power, recently left a long-time teaching position at the Laboratory Schools. Jim had five grandsons and one granddaughter.

It is hard to know where to begin describing Jim's commitment to his community. But I'll start with what I know best, his role in shaping the company's social commitments. When I joined the company Jim was a member of R.R. Donnelley's contributions committee, then chaired by his cousin Charles (Charlie) C. Haffner III, also a Caxtonian. Later Jim became chairman of the R.R. Donnelley Foundation and my direct boss – the best years of my career. He advocated for grants to the small communities where the company had plants and where the employees lived and worked. He helped to develop grant-making guidelines in support of the written word and children and youth.

Jim always had the personal touch. We were once asked by a mutual friend to cover a commitment to a Newberry Library fellowship that had somehow fallen through. I pointed out that it wasn't in our usual guidelines and Jim said, "Let's do it. That's what friends are for." Another time the foundation made a grant in Krakow, Poland in recognition of the tenth anniversary of the plant there. Jim was planning to attend the festivities and asked if I would be going too. I responded with surprise that I didn't see how I could justify the expense. Jim said, "Come on, Susan. It will be fun." Since he signed off on my expenses, I went and it was! My husband came along (at his own expense) and gave scientific lectures in Warsaw and Krakow that Jim delightedly mentioned in introductions. For a United Way Day of Caring, he led an employee team that painted the swimming pool at Chicago Youth Centers. When we ran out of paint, he sent someone out with his credit card to buy more. And, while waiting for the paint to arrive, Jim stood on South Michigan Avenue smoking a cigar and handing additional ones out to passersby.

The company's heritage was important to Jim also. In the early 1990s when headquarters was planning a move from the historic 22nd Street plant to the Loop, Jim called me up to his office. "Susan," he said, "I've

been asked to move the library to the new space. How would you like to help?" Thus began a whole new role for me as curator of the library and archive. It was under his direction that important artifacts were rescued and eventually installed in the University of Chicago Library. Jim also oversaw the transition of the Lakeside Classics series into its second century.

Jim's philanthropic commitments were so extensive that it is impossible to mention them all. And he was truly involved in each activity, not just a name on a board but often that board's chairman. His primary interests were education and children and youth. Jim was instrumental in securing grants for many Chicago organizations through his service on the boards of grant-making foundations: the Donnelley Foundation (the philanthropic arm of Jim and his brothers), the Barker Welfare Foundation, the John C. Griswald Foundation, the National Recreation Foundation, and R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company Foundation. He was chairman of the board of the Chicago Public Library Foundation, National Merit Scholarship Corporation, and the Chicago Youth Centers (co-founded by his father, Elliott). At various times Jim also served on the boards of the Associated Colleges of Illinois, Lake Forest College, United Way International, Children's Memorial Hospital, and Chicago Public Television Foundation.

The Caxton Club benefited from Jim's interest and generosity also. His final gift to the Club was a donation in support of Chicago by the Book. Jim could always be counted on to give an important book for fundraising events. One year, when Jim personally dropped off his contribution, Dan Crawford asked if he realized how valuable the book was. "That's OK," Jim said. "I've read it." Jim, his exuberance, his generosity, and his wit will be sorely missed.

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*Courtesy of John Reilly Photography  
and Special Collections Research Center,  
University of Chicago Library*

Dickensian George Ford wrote: "The number of books and articles provoked by that tantalizing fragment is breathtaking. One collection of Droodiana, assembled over a period of fifty years, is said to have filled every shelf on all four sides of a large exhibition hall at the Grolier Club in New York."

I have often wondered if the true solution to the mystery is that there is no solution. I think of the prematurely old, ailing Dickens driven by deadlines and obsessively writing, amending, and rewriting in his chalet and find it credible that he focused on inventing the characters and devising their interactions without having a complete idea of where they would end up. Many authors have testified that their characters, once created, take on a life of their own. He would certainly be neither the first nor last novelist to have dreamed up a story and its characters and to set them in motion without knowing how the tale would end. I believe it perfectly possible that Dickens, as he wrote the last lines he would ever write, had many possibilities in mind, or, perhaps, no more idea of what happened to Edwin Drood than we, his readers.

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## Book- and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

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

**American Writers Museum**, 180 N. Michigan Avenue, second floor, Chicago, 312-374-8790: **“Bob Dylan: Electric”** (Dylan’s influence on American music, literature, and culture), continuing. **“Frederick Douglass, Agitator”** (exploring the writer and “self-made man”), continuing.

**Art Institute of Chicago**, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: **“Conserving Photographs”** (a look at the museum’s collection through a conservator’s eyes), Gallery 10, through April 28. **“I’ll Show You! Posters and Promos from Chicago’s Famous Artists,”** Ryerson and Burnham Libraries (weekdays only, through January 7).

**Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library**, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **“Laura Ingalls Wilder and Her Prairie”** (illustrations of prairie wildflowers and art by naturalist Helen Sharp), through January 13.

**Chicago Cultural Center**, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 312-744-6630: **“Cecil McDonald, Jr.: In the Company of Black”** (photographs by the artist and educator of people he describes as “extraordinarily ordinary”), Chicago Rooms, second floor north, opens January 19.

**Chicago History Museum**, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: **“Modern by Design”** (Chicago streamlines America), continuing.

**Chicago Printmakers Collaborative**, 4912 N. Western Avenue, Chicago, 773-293-2070: **“Small Print Exhibition & Holiday Sale”** (affordable prints for gift giving), extended through January 31.

**Intuit Museum of Outsider Art**, 756 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Chicago, 312-243-9088: **“Chicago Calling: Art Against the Flow”** (themes embodied in the works of ten Chicago artists), extended through February 10.

**Museum of Contemporary Art**, 220 E. Chicago Avenue, Chicago, 312-280-2660: **“West by Midwest”** (tracing intersecting lives of artists who have migrated from the midwest to the west coast), through January 27.

**Newberry Library**, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: **“Melville: Finding America at Sea”** (Melville’s interests in democracy, spirituality, morality, sexuality, etc.), January 18 through April 6.

**Northwestern University Transportation Library**, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: **“On Board with Design”** (the story of passenger transportation in the mid-20th century) e-mail transportationlibrary@northwestern.edu to schedule an appointment.

**Pritzker Military Museum and Library**, 104 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-374-9333: **“Lest We Forget: Sailors, Sammies, and Doughboys Over There in World War I”** (explores the experiences of those who served in the war), through March 31.

**Spudnik Press Cooperative**, 1821 W. Hubbard Street, suite 302, Chicago, 312-563-0302: **“Non-Constants: Ashley Freeby & Jesse Meredith”** (work by the two artists around and through each

other’s experiences), January 11 through March 16. **Stony Island Arts Bank**, 6760 S. Stony Island Avenue, Chicago, 312-857-5561: **“Tricontinental ‘66 and Other Acts of Liberation”** (a multidisciplinary “instigation”), through January 6.

**University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library**, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **“Pro Svobodu a Samostatnost”** (the struggle for Czechoslovak independence, 1914-1918), second floor, through January 7.

Contact Bob McCamant (bmccamant@earthlink.net) if you’d like to take over the preparation of our listings.



Pritzker/*Lest We Forget*  
LITHOGRAPH, BRITISH-FRANCO-AMERICAN ARMY - AUGUST 1918

MCA/*West By Midwest*  
ED RUSCHA AND BILLY AL BENGSTON,  
BUSINESS CARDS, 1968.



✓  
*Watch for details of an On-the-Move event at the Art Institute on Thursday, February 7, celebrating Chicago By the Book and related items in the Art Institute.*

# Caxtonians Collect: Suzanne Karr Schmidt

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Suzanne Karr Schmidt's enthusiasm for very old books and what we can learn from them is extraordinary and infectious.

She "has" books in three senses: In the sense of "has written," she has two substantial books as well as a number of other publications. In the sense of "has responsibility for," she has the many, many books at the Newberry that are not specifically supervised by another specialist, for she is the George Amos Poole III curator of rare books and manuscripts there, appointed effective March 2017. In the sense of "has in her personal collection," she has many quirky items made from long ago up through today.

Her *Interactive and Sculptural Printmaking in the Renaissance* is the current standard treatise on books from roughly 1300 to 1600 made unusual by interactive features. These are the books and prints with flaps or volvelles (concentric paper or parchment circles used to calculate the positions of the sun and the phases of the moon), sea creatures crawling onto dry land when you move their tails, fleets of ships threading their way into a harbor, or fortune-telling aids intended to be cut out and used. The tome goes for big bucks. (The book has reprints of examples that can be cut out and attached to other pages to simulate the effect of the original being discussed. In the manuscript, Karr instructed readers to do this, but the publisher – leery of scaring some purchasers, perhaps libraries – changed the instruction to a "could be.") Notably, the Newberry includes it as "interactive" in its catalog. *Prints in Translation, 1450-1750 Image, Materiality, Space*, an anthology edited with Edward Wouk of the University of Manchester, is a less expensive volume that appeared earlier.

Among her notable smaller publications is *Altered and Adorned, Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life*, which she produced (with Kimberly Nichols) when she was the Andrew W. Mellon curatorial fellow in prints and drawings at the Art Institute of Chicago. (The Art Institute was where she was working as an assistant curator when she joined the Caxton Club in 2014, and when she led a 2015 Club "On the Move" event to the Art Institute to look at an exhibit comparing ancient sculpture and early prints.)

Though her professional work is largely centered on very old books, she is also an aficionado of current publishing that uses unusual book structures and attachments. Back in late October she was a keynote speaker at the APHA conference in Iowa City (subject of Tad Boehmer in last month's *Caxtonian*). Though her topic was "Printing the Renais-



sance Pop-up Book," she did manage to collect a few current book arts creations while there, one of which already hangs in her office at the Newberry.

She was born and grew up in Washington, D.C. "It spoiled me," she says. "Having the Library of Congress as your local library sets the bar pretty high. Not to mention all the free museums!" She moved up to Rhode Island to earn a BA in the history of art and architecture and visual art from Brown, and then a teensy bit west and south to get MPhil and PhD degrees in the history of art from Yale. *Interactive and Sculptural Printmaking* is an outgrowth of her PhD thesis.

Like special collections curators everywhere, Karr Schmidt's duties include outreach. She enjoys hosting collection presentations for classes of students who come to look at materials on a particular topic. And she is excited by the additional space now available for highlighting items from the collections in the new

exhibit space on the ground floor.

Another generally pleasurable activity is reading fellowship applications. (The Newberry has a number of funded long and short term fellowships, which allow a scholar to study intensively on a particular topic.) "An awful lot of them have really interesting ideas. Our main duty in evaluating them is picking ones who will be well served by the items in our collection. We especially want the ones who couldn't do their research anyplace else."

She has already started working on preparations for the next major exhibition that will be her responsibility (in tandem with Lia Markey, director of the Center for Renaissance Studies): in spring 2020 the library will highlight Giovanni Stradano's *Nova Reperta* (c. 1588), a renowned print series of twenty engravings, representing 19 post-classical inventions, as varied as eyeglasses, a cure for syphilis, and the New World. She has given herself the goal of having the exhibit highlight a contemporary take on what makes the depictions important. There will be a related symposium beforehand (May 2019) and a concurrently-published catalog. A detail from one of the *Nova Reperta* plates, on the invention of book printing, is already displayed significantly larger than life in the Rosenberg Bookshop.

She is very fond of the new ground-floor gallery space at the Newberry, which will allow staff to display interesting items that don't merit a whole exhibit of their own. The next thing she'll be putting up is "Glorious tribute to the muses on the wedding of Marchese Ippolito Malaspina to Lady Luigia Gonzaga" (Verona: Giovanni Battista Merlo, 1670). Its largest foldout print has three cupids and five soldiers with flaming swords who stand guard to protect the lovers from the flames of a massive fireworks display.

Karr Schmidt started her life as a Karr, and is now married to a Schmidt. They have two sons, currently 5 and 8. "Both of them are readers," she says. Her husband is a software engineer, and presumably reads as well. Her mother, the late Kathleen Karr, was a prolific author of historical fiction, with some 30 books overall, most of which were for young adult audiences.

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## Bookmarks...

**Luncheon: Friday, January 11, Union League Club  
D. Bradford Hunt on Planning Chicago**

Think of this one as The Chicago Plan meets The Chicago Way. We're going to jump forward from Burnham's vision to the reality of Chicago as it actually gets built, torn down, and built again. Our guide for this excursion into the room where it happens will be Brad Hunt, vice president for research and academic programs at the Newberry Library and co-author of *Planning Chicago*. The armchair tour will step off in the late 50s, when the elder Daley was in da Mare's office and the race was on to further downtown development while still protecting the lakefront. Neighborhoods were also in on the action – though some more than others. Brad Hunt will draw on his own, the Newberry's, and the Chicago Collections Consortium's superb resources to tell a crackling tale of how Chicago came to look the way it does today, even as the battles continue to rage. A fan of purple cows and Ephs, Brad Hunt has a PhD from Cal – but his time in coastal states hasn't diminished his Chicago cred a bit. Come and see for yourself; you'll never look at your city the same way again.

*January luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Buffet opens at 11:30 am; program 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$35. Program free but please let us know you're coming. Reservations or cancellations for lunch by noon Wednesday the week of the luncheon. Reserve at [caxtonclub.org](http://caxtonclub.org), call 312-255-3710, or e-mail [caxtonclub@newberry.org](mailto:caxtonclub@newberry.org).*

### Beyond January...

#### FEBRUARY LUNCHEON

The 200 candles on the cake probably scared the monster, but we'll be celebrating a historic publication with "Frankenstein and the Famous Circle" – a tale of the classic novel, its celebrated author, and the remarkable group she was a part of. Our speaker, Mark Canuel from UIC, will be electrifying! February 8.

#### FEBRUARY DINNER

February 20, Newberry Library (*note location!*). Will Hansen, Newberry Library Curator of Americana, on "Melville: Celebrating America at Sea." A behind-the-scenes tour of the Newberry's upcoming Melville exhibit, a special presentation, and a three-course dinner.

**Dinner: Wednesday, January 16, Union League Club  
Monique Lallier on Her Bookbinding**

Monique Lallier, internationally recognized bookbinder, will give a lavishly-illustrated presentation featuring highlights of a recent retrospective of her work. After studies in Montreal, Paris, Ascona, and Switzerland, Monique has had a long career applying creative techniques for beautiful bindings held by leading libraries and private collections in the United States, Canada, Europe and Asia. Examples of her work are at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Newberry Library, and her binding of Willa Cather's *My Antonia* won a Best Binding award in an international exhibition at the Chicago Public Library. Monique continues to practice her craft from her studio in Summerfield, North Carolina where she also teaches. Copies of the catalogue *Monique Lallier: A Retrospective* will be available for sale and signing for \$21.

*January dinner: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson. The evening will follow this order: Social gathering 5-6 pm; program at 6 pm; dinner immediately to follow. Program is free and open to the public. Beverages available for \$6-\$12. Three-course dinner: \$63.00. Reservations are required for either the program only or the dinner/program combination. Reservations must be received no later than NOON, Monday, January 14. Payment will be required for dinner reservations cancelled after that time and for no-shows. To reserve go to the website at [Caxtonclub.org](http://Caxtonclub.org); call-255-3710 or e-mail [caxtonclub@newberry.org](mailto:caxtonclub@newberry.org).*

#### MARCH LUNCHEON

What could be better than Paris in the early spring? So come and hear Paris Schutz, reporter, producer, interviewer on WTTW – where you regularly see him on *Chicago Tonight*. He'll be talking about the books that inform Chicago politics Friday March 8 at Union League.

#### MARCH DINNER

March 20, 2019, Union League Club, John Crichton on "Anton Roman: The Pioneering Book Seller and Publisher of the American West" will explore the history of the book trade in California and the American West. John is the proprietor of San Francisco's Brick Row Book Shop and twice past president of the Book Club of California.