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Membership in the Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies is included with your FBS membership. The FABS Journal is now electronic as well as in print. Access a PDF of the Winter 2024 FABS Journal [here](#).



Russell Spera: Dante for Collectors

see p. 2



ANNUAL DUES for the 2024–2025 FBS Season are due by **December 31, 2024!**

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Florida Bibliophile Society
A community of book lovers

Minutes of the November 2024 Meeting of the Florida Bibliophile Society by Sean Donnelly, FBS Recording Secretary

Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* has been the subject of careful study for over 500 years, and yet new avenues of scholarship remain to be explored.

Since its publication in the Tuscan language in 1321 and the first printed edition of 1477, Dante's masterpiece has been translated into many languages. But one in particular – English – is of interest to FBS member Russell Spera. He took us on a personal tour of his research into *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* at the November 17th meeting, held at the University of Tampa's Macdonald-Kelce Library.

Russ is an English teacher at Dunedin High School who has made literature his avocation as well. His spare hours are devoted to collecting, studying, collating, and writing about the numerous editions of the *Divine Comedy*, partial and complete, that have been published in English. Because his focus is so specialized, he proclaims, "I Collect Book," singular, but has many examples of that one book. He began teaching high school in 2001, then returned to college in 2012 to earn his Masters in English. For his thesis, he translated the medieval romance *King Horn* from early Middle English. He took a break from that labor by translating Canto 1 of Dante's *Inferno* "for fun." That innocent pastime led to a new adventure in collecting.

Russ has been a book collector since childhood. His first passion was Tolkien, but he has long since bought everything he could afford in that field. His interest in Dante gave him a new pursuit: first editions of English translations of Dante's *Divine Comedy* or its parts (cantiche). His collection was a personal affair to begin with, but the Internet leads us to like-minded people no matter how specialized our subject. It was during the early days of COVID that he came across a blog by graphic designer Barrie Tullett about a project that incorporated

the first three lines of Canto 1 from various English translations of *Inferno*. Russ contacted Barrie and they worked together on what became a book: *Danteggiare: A Collection of Translations and Interpretations of the First Terza Rima Tercet of Dante's Inferno, 1591–2021*.

Russ's research and collecting have gained momentum, and this year, he founded a Substack – russellspera.substack.com – to share his work generously with anyone online.



His talk to FBS touched on all of this, plus he gave background on the *Divine Comedy*, an explanation of the terza rima rhyme scheme in which it's composed, and a survey of pre-1800 sustained translations of episodes from the work. He then gave an in-depth look at the "game changing" translations into English by Henry Francis Cary. Cary first

translated *Inferno*, published in two volumes in 1805–1806; his complete translation followed in 1814.

Russ's talk was illustrated with photographs of books from his collection, and he brought some physical copies for the audience to see and appreciate. One in particular, *An Essay on Epic Poetry* by William Hayley (1782), is beautifully printed and has a handsome new binding by FBS friend Dave Barry of Griffin Bookbinding. One aspect of Russ's collection warms the heart of those of us who love association copies – a number of his books are signed and/or inscribed by their authors, translators, and editors, or have an interesting provenance. It was intriguing as well to hear of his efforts to track down translations in manuscripts that have not yet been published. This is perhaps the most pioneering aspect of the work Russ has done so far. He showed us that one book can be enough to occupy a collector for a lifetime and bring him joy. Everyone at the meeting felt that joy, too.

A Few Words about the *Divine Comedy*

The *Divine Comedy* is divided into three books:

Inferno, about Dante's travels guided by the Roman poet Virgil through Hell, where the dead who committed evil deeds in life are condemned forever to punishments symbolic of their deeds;

Purgatorio, in which Dante and Virgil continue their journey through Purgatory, a place where the dead guilty of certain deeds can still work their way to Heaven;

Paradiso, the final stage of Dante and Virgil's journey that takes them into Heaven.

- The *Divine Comedy* is a rich and complex story weaving together the philosophy and Christian religion of the Middle Ages, the religious and secular politics of the Florence Dante lived in, and Dante's personal experiences.
- Each book is called a *cantica*, Italian for a collection of songs. The Italian plural of *cantica* is *cantichi*.
- Each *cantica* is divided into 33 cantos, except for *Inferno*, which has one extra – introductory – canto. So there are 100 cantos in the entire *Divine Comedy*.
- “Canto” means song in Italian. The Italian plural is *canti*. A canto roughly corresponds to a chapter in its *cantica*.

The Structure of a Canto

- Each canto is composed of a series of three-line stanzas called tercets.
- The tercets have an interlocking rhyme scheme called *terza rima*, invented by Dante. A sample is shown below in the first four tercets of *Inferno*. On the left are the original lines in Italian; in the center are lines from the 1943 English translation by Lawrence Binyon; and at the right is the rhyme scheme.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita mi ritrovai per una selva oscura, ché la diritta via era smarrita.	Midway life's journey I was made aware That I had strayed into a dark forest, And the right path appeared not anywhere.	A B A
Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte che nel pensier rinova la paura!	Ah, tongue cannot describe how it oppressed, This wood, so harsh, dismal and wild, that fear At thought of it strikes now into my breast.	B C B
Tant' è amara che poco è più morte; ma per trattar del ben ch' i' vi trovai, dirò de l'altre cose ch' i' v'ho scorte.	So bitter it is, death is scarce bitterer. But, for the good it was my hap to find, I speak of the other things that I saw there.	C D C
Io non so ben ridir com' i' v'intraï, tant' era pien di sonno a quel punto che la verace via abbandonai.	I cannot well remember in my mind How I came thither, so was I immersed In sleep, when the true way I left behind.	D E D

To Rhyme or Not to Rhyme

Because English is not as rich in rhyming words as a Romance language like Italian, many translators use blank verse, which has poetic lines but does not rhyme. Other translators write in prose to more fully express the sense of Dante's poetry without the restriction of line divisions.

Minutes, *continued*

The *Divine Comedy* Enters the World

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) was a groundbreaking writer of his time. When serious literature was written in Latin, he first defended (in Latin) using the language of the common people. And then in his *Nuova Vita* (New Life) and the *Divina Comedia* (Divine Comedy), he wrote in the Florentine dialect that he spoke.

This made his work accessible to many more people than could read Latin, and his work became so widely read that it helped standardize the Italian language.

Dante began his greatest project, the Divine Comedy, around 1308 and completed it in 1321 shortly before his death from malaria. He was living in Ravenna at the time and was buried at the Church of San Pier Maggiore (now Basilica di San Francesco). Within a few years, Cardinal Bertrand du Pouget, the pope's nephew, took exception to one of Dante's books, the *Monarchia*, which argued that the pope should not be granted absolute authority. Pouget wanted to dig up Dante's bones and burn them at the stake, but powerful allies of Pouget intervened and prevented this action.

In 1483, a beautiful tomb was built for Dante's remains, with an altar and relief portrait in marble



Dante from a 1465 painting by Domenico di Michelino. Florence, 1465. In his hand, he holds the *Divine Comedy*, turned to its first verses. In the full image, the mount of Purgatory is on the left and the city of Venice on the right. The painting was commissioned by the Venetian government to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Dante's birth.

above it. He is depicted holding a book as he would be in many representations in painting and sculpture.

The *Divine Comedy* was completed in 1321 well before the invention of the printing press. Like any other manuscript of its day, it was copied and circulated in manuscript form for 150 years.

Hundreds of manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy* have survived going back to the early 1300s. The older they are, the less likely they are to be complete or to have illustrations.

Of course, Dante's richly imaginative text provided artists with many subjects, and many beautifully illustrated copies have also survived from the pre-printing-press period and beyond. Many of these are available to view on the Internet.



This illustration is from the Yates Thompson manuscript MS 36, folio 119 (Siena, ca. 1450). The illustration accompanies *Purgatorio* Canto 29, in which Dante observes a heavenly procession. Rendered here from Dante's symbolic vision, the books of the Old Testament (24 elders) lead a procession that includes the golden chariot (the church) drawn by a griffin (Christ) accompanied and followed by various objects and figures representing other elements and characters of the Bible.

Minutes, *continued*

The *Divine Comedy* Enters the Print Era

The first mention of the printing press in Europe occurs in 1439 in a Strasbourg lawsuit. It mentions Johann Gutenberg and his associates.

The printing press began a new era of information in Europe. Once set in type, many copies of a book could be quickly produced. Presses began to pop up all over Europe churning out books at a previously unimaginable rate. The books that were already popular were among the first to be published, for example, the Bible in its famous and majestic edition of 1455 by Gutenberg.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* was among these popular texts, and in April 1472, it was first printed by Johann Numeister and Evangelista Angelini at Foligno in the central Italian district Perugia. Three hundred copies were printed on a press that is now on display in Foligno. Fourteen copies are extant.

A second print edition of the *Divine Comedy* was issued in July 1472 by Federicus de Comitibus of Verona, probably in Venice. Five copies are known.

A third, dated 1472, was issued in Mantua by Georgius de Augusta and Paulus de Butzbach for Columbinus Veronensis. Seventeen copies are now known. While Numeister is believed to be first, this "third edition" may precede it.

The first illustrated edition of *La Commedia* was printed in Florence in 1481 by the German typographer Nicolaus Laurentii. It contains 20 copper engravings accompanying the first 19 Cantos of *Inferno* attributed to Baccio Baldini from designs by the great Renaissance painter Sandro Botticelli.

During the summer of 2021, a census of the copies of this edition was funded by the Polonsky Foundation. The Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL) coordinated the census, reconstructing each copy's distinctive history. They found 179 copies in libraries around the world, documenting their findings on a website, [Dante](https://www.cerl.org/en/consortium-of-european-research-libraries).



The first page of the first illustrated edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, or *La Commedia* (*Commedia in modern Italian*). This page is from the manuscript in the National Library of France. The decoration at upper left, the illuminated initial, and the color in the illustration, all added by hand, are unique to this copy.

[1481](#), and in two videos. The first video brings together the engravings and the Dante verses that inspired Botticelli's creation. The second video discovers the first readers of the *Commedia* and how they annotated their books. An interactive map connects to the detailed descriptions and images of each copy, stored in scholarly digital resources.

The *Divine Comedy* Enters the English Language: The Collection of Russ Spera

Dante's influence on English literature cannot be overestimated. The *Divine Comedy* begins to appear in English in the late 1300s and continues to the present day. On the following pages, we present a few highlights of the many examples that Russ Spera presented, many in his personal collection of over 300 English translations of the *Divine Comedy*.

Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1342–1400)

Dante first appears in English as adaptations or translations of a few lines. The earliest are in the work of Geoffrey Chaucer, best known for the *Canterbury Tales*, completed in 1387, 66 years after the publication of the *Divine Comedy* in 1321.

Chaucer was born in London and entered the civil service. Through his various roles and in military service, he had many occasions to travel to the European continent, mostly to France. But in the 1370s, he made trips to Italy where he had access to the libraries of some Italian nobles.

These trips were life-changing. Chaucer was exposed

Dante – Paradiso 33

Thou Virgin Mother, daughter of thy Son,
Humble and high beyond all other creature,
The limit fixed of the eternal counsel,

Thou art the one who such nobility
To human nature gave, that its Creator
Did not disdain to make himself its creature.

Within thy womb rekindled was the love,
By heat of which in the eternal peace
After such wise this flower has germinated.

to the work of many great Italian authors, notably Dante and Boccaccio, which would influence the rest of his writing life. For example, just as Dante had invented the terza rima rhyme scheme, Chaucer introduced the ten-syllable line, based on French and Italian models. Just as Boccaccio had collected vernacular stories for his *Decameron*, Chaucer collected such stories for the *Canterbury Tales*.

Chaucer quotes or adapts Dante at several points in the *Canterbury Tales*. For example, in the Second Nun's Tale, he adapts the Invocation to Mary from *Paradiso*, Canto 33:

Chaucer – Second Nun's Tale, Prologue

Thou Maid and Mother, daughter of thy Son,
Thou well of mercy, sinful souls' cure,
In whom God for goodness chose to dwell,

Thou humble, and high over every creature,
Thou so greatly enobled our nature,
That the Maker of humankind had no disdain

To clothe and wrap His Son in blood and flesh.
Within the blissful cloister of thy sides
The eternal love and peace took man's shape,

John Harington (ca. 1342–1400)

Harington was a colorful courtier of Elizabeth I, her "saucy Godson." Also an author and translator, he may be best known as inventor of the flush toilet.

In and out of favor, when the queen read early samples of his racy translation of the romantic epic *Orlando Furioso* (1516) by Ariosto, she banished him

Dante – Inferno Canto 1

Nel mezzo del camin di nostra vita,
Mi retrovia per una selva oscura,
Che la dritta via era smarrita.

until he completed the translation, which at 38,000+ lines, she assumed he would never do. But in 1591, he did. And admirably so. His translation of the sprawling work is still widely read. The following translation of the first tercet of *Inferno* appears in his *Orlando Furioso*, notes to Book 4.

Harington – Orlando Furioso,

While yet my life was in her middle race,
I found, I wandred in a darkesome wood,
The right way lost with mine unstedie pace.

*Minutes, continued***Henry Cary (ca. 1772–1844)**

Born at Gibraltar, Cary was sent to England for his education. At Christ Church, Oxford, he studied French and Italian literature. His command of Italian is shown in the notes to his translation of Dante in his version of *Inferno*, published in 1805.

Cary moved to London in 1808 and obtained both scholarly and clerical posts: reader at the Berkeley Chapel, lecturer at Chiswick, and curate of Savoy Chapel.



Reverend Henry Francis Cary (ca. 1772–1844), engraving from a portrait by his son Francis in *Memoir of the Rev. Henry Francis Cary, M.A.* (1847) by his son Henry.

In 1814, he published his version of the complete *Divina Commedia* in blank verse. He had to pay for the edition himself because the *Inferno* of 1805 was not a commercial success, and the printer refused to take a chance on more of the same.

Indeed, the edition had a slow start. However, Thomas Moore, an influential Irish poet of

the day, brought Cary's translation to the attention of Samuel Rogers, at that time one of England's most celebrated poets. Rogers added comments to an article on Cary's translation in the *Edinburgh Review* by Ugo Foscolo, an Italian writer, revolutionary, and poet. Foscolo wrote a series of influential articles on Dante, which were widely read and thus made Cary's translation more widely known.

Added to this was the praise given by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in a lecture at the Royal Institution. Coleridge was a founder of the Romantic movement and a member of the Lake Poets, along with William Wordsworth.

Cary's Dante took its place among the standard

works as a Dante for its time. It was published four more times during Cary's lifetime – without printer qualms.

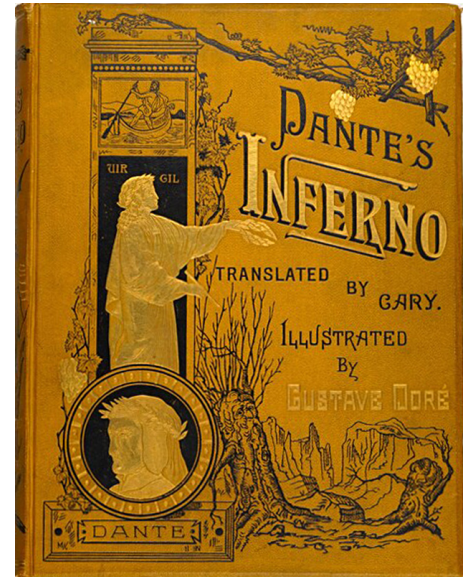
Alison Milbank, reviewing *The Vision of Dante: Cary's Translation of The Divine Comedy* by Edoard Crisafulli wrote:

H. F. Cary's translation of Dante in Miltonic blank verse was one of the most

culturally significant productions of 19th-century Britain. Writers as different as John Keats and John Ruskin carried it about their person and, illustrated by Gustave Doré, it would grace many a Victorian parlor table. Through its cunning allusiveness to a broad range of English poetry, it enables a foreign medieval Catholic poet to be assimilated to British culture to such an extent that the *Commedia* came to supplant the *Paradise Lost* as the epic by which the 19th century sought to understand itself.

As Russell himself summarizes Cary in his Substack article "[The Cary Conundrum](#)":

His translation set the standard for all future translations and is arguably the most reprinted version, surpassed maybe by Longfellow, but I am not so sure of that. Still, in the mid- to late-19th century, Cary's *Comedy* was king.



Inferno by Dante Alighieri, translated by Henry Cary, illustrated by Gustave Doré, 1885. This beautifully decorated edition exemplifies the standing of Cary's translation in Victorian England.

* *Modern Language Review* 100 (2):838–839

Minutes, *continued*

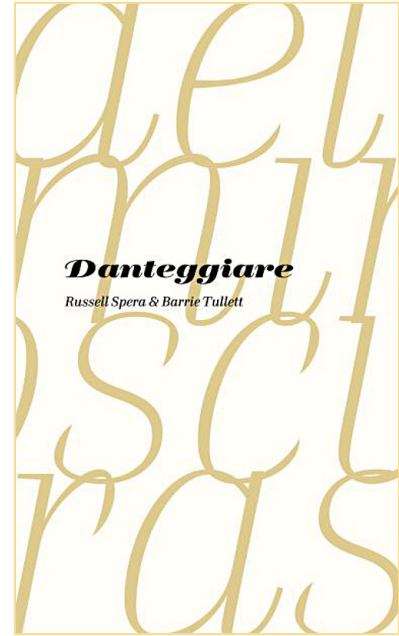
Inferno, Canto 1, Tercet 1 – A Selection from *Danteggiare* by Spera and Tullett

D*anteggiare* (Caseroom Press, 2021) is the product of Dante collector Russell Spera and book artist Barry Tullett.

They connected when Russell saw a list on the Internet of English Dante editions that Barry had collected for a project. Russell realized that the list was missing many editions that were in his collection. Russell contacted Barry, and a collaboration was born to create *Danteggiare*, which contains the first tercet from the first canto of *Inferno* from every known English edition from 1591 to 2021.

Somewhere between a conceptual artist's book and a literary study, a comparison of the many approaches to Dante makes fascinating reading. We provide a sample here spanning the last 200 years, including some famous names.

It's interesting to compare the wide range of approaches, and it's a useful guide to translations you might want to explore.



— Elizabeth Barrett Browning • 1819 —

In the mid journey of our road of life
From beaten way I turned an erring foot
And found a darksome forest, blackening round!

— Elizabeth Barrett Browning • 1845 —

All in the middle of the road of life
I stood bewildered in a dusky wood
The path being lost that once showed straight
and rife.

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow • 1867 —

MIDWAY upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.

— Maria Francesca Rossetti • 1871 —

In A.D.1300, the year of the Jubilee; at dawn on the 25th of March, the Feast of the Annunciation, then reckoned as New Year's Day, and happening that year to also be Maundy Thursday; Dante, then nearly thirty-five, and approaching the time of his election to the Priorato, perceived himself to have wandered while half asleep from the right path, and to be actually entangled in the mazes of a dark wood.

— William Warren Vernon • 1894 —

In the middle of the pathway of our life (i.e. when I was 35 years old), I awoke to the consciousness that I was in a dark forest (i.e. walking in the paths of sin) for that the straight way was lost.

— George Arthur Greene • 1903 —

The forest-depths grow dark and dim around: The Valley of Shadows lies beneath my feet, And neither can my failing steps retreat, Nor may I wend my way to higher ground;

— John Pyne • 1914 —

Midway the pilgrimage of life completing,
Come to myself, I saw a wood obscuring,
Which rendered vague, advancing or retreating.

— Laurence Binyon • 1933 —

Midway the journey of this life I was 'ware
That I had strayed into a dark forest,
And the right path appeared not anywhere.

Minutes, concluded

— **John Ciardi • 1954** —

Midway in our life's journey, I went astray
from the straight road and woke to find myself
alone in a dark wood.

— **Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle • 1976** —

I THOUGHT ABOUT BEING DEAD.
I could remember every silly detail of that silly last
performance. I was dead at the end of it. But how
could I think about being dead if I had died?

— **Allen Mandelbaum • 1980** —

When I had journeyed half of our life's way,
I found myself within a shadowed forest,
for I have lost the path that does not stray.

— **Robert Sikoryak • 1989** —

HELP! I'M LOST IN THIS DARK WOOD!
DON'T WORRY JOE! I'LL LEAD YOU TO
SAFETY! GREAT! WHERE ARE WE GOING?
TO HELL!

— **Seamus Heaney • 1993** —

In the middle of the journey of our life
I found myself astray in a dark wood
where the straight road had been lost sight of.

— **Marcus Sanders & Sandow Birk • 2004** —

About halfway through the course of my pathetic life,
I woke up and found myself in a stupor in some dark
place, I'm not sure how I ended up there; I guess I
had taken a few wrong turns.

— **Seymour Chwast • 2010** —

IN THE MIDDLE OF MY
LIFE I AWAKE TO FIND
MYSELF ALONE IN A
DARK VALLEY.

— **Pier Paolo Pasolini • 2014** —

Around my forties I realized I was in a very dark
moment in my life. No matter what I did in the
'Forest' of reality of 1963 (the year I had reached,
absurdly unaware of that exclusion from the life of
others that is the repetition of one's own), there was a
sense of darkness.

— **Richard Fox • 2020** —

mid way through the wood
the brain mush-room
edible poison
bewitching
cursed

— **Chris McCabe • 2020** —

Halfway through the [...]
I developed amnesia [...]
For the [...] had been lost.

— **Barrie Tullett & Russell Spera • 2020** —

When the Midpoint of my morning was crossed,
Tangled among curriculum as writ, I found that the
timetabled way was lost.

— **Alexander Selenitch • 2021** —

m i d -
l i f e

d a r k
w o o d

p a t h
l o s t

— **Russell Spera • 2021** —

Reaching the midpoint of our life's journey,
I found myself in a wood, dark and tall,
The straightway path no longer could I see.

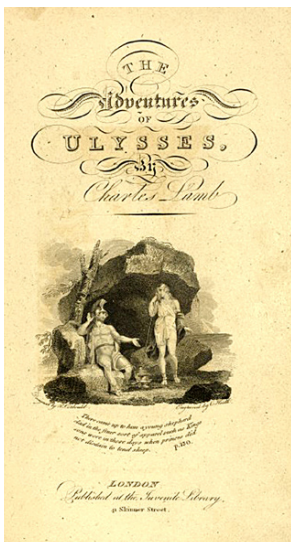
[Danteggiare \(2021\)](#) is available on the Internet Archive.

Purchase your own copy of Danteggiare at [lulu.com](https://www.lulu.com).



Burning *Ulysses*

It took James Joyce seven years to write his magnum opus, *Ulysses*. It also took a significant toll on its creator. Joyce suffered from cataracts and iritis, a painful condition in itself that led to near-blindness and multiple surgeries. His impaired vision prevented him from reading his normal handwriting, and he was forced to write in red crayon on large sheets of paper. The complexity of the novel was a strain both intellectually and psychologically. Some of his medication induced hallucinations. At the end of this struggle, Joyce had produced a groundbreaking work of art, widely considered one of the greatest works of literature.



Title page of Charles Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808). Lamb and his sister Mary were responsible for many adaptations that were read by generations, including their most famous, *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807). (image: New York Public Library)

The book had its seeds in the story of Homer's hero Ulysses in an adaptation by Charles Lamb, *Adventures of Ulysses* (1808).

Joyce stated that Ulysses was the only "all-around character in literature." In 1906, Joyce wrote his brother about the possibility of adding a story to the short story collection *Dubliners* about an advertising agent named Bloom. The story was never written, but by 1907, he reconceived the story as a novella, expanding the work as the conception of it expanded in his mind. The novella was never written, but the conception continued to grow, and in 1914, Joyce commenced work on a full-scale novel that would reach over 700 pages by the time of its first

edition in 1922.

It's well known that the odds were against that edition. In 1918, the American periodical *The Little Review* – a champion of modernist writing – began publishing a serialized form of the novel. By the time that the magazine published Episode 13, "Nausicäa," in December 1920, the authorities were

THE LITTLE REVIEW

THE MAGAZINE THAT IS READ BY THOSE
WHO WRITE THE OTHERS

MARCH, 1918

Ulysses, 1.	James Joyce
Imaginary Letters, VIII.	Wyndham Lewis
Matinee	Jessie Dismorr
The Classics "Escape"	Ezra Pound
Cantico del Sole	
Women and Men, II.	Ford Madox Hueffer
Bertha	Arthur Symons
A List of Books	Ezra Pound
Wyndham Lewis's "Tarr"	
Raymonde Collignon	
The Reader Critic	

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MARGARET ANDERSON, Editor
EZRA POUND, Foreign Editor

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25 cents a copy

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Published monthly by Margaret Anderson

Contents page from the March 1918 issue of *The Little Review*, which gave the world its first reading from *Ulysses* as well as work from other notable poets.

looking for an opportunity to pounce.

Ulysses was not the only material being selected by editor Jane Heap and publisher Margaret Anderson. The inaugural issue of *The Little Review* had included Anderson's essay supporting anarchist Emma Goldman's proposal to eliminate private property and religion. It was nothing short of blasphemy, and several of the magazine's backers withdrew funding. Other issues featured articles about subversive politics or challenges to morality.

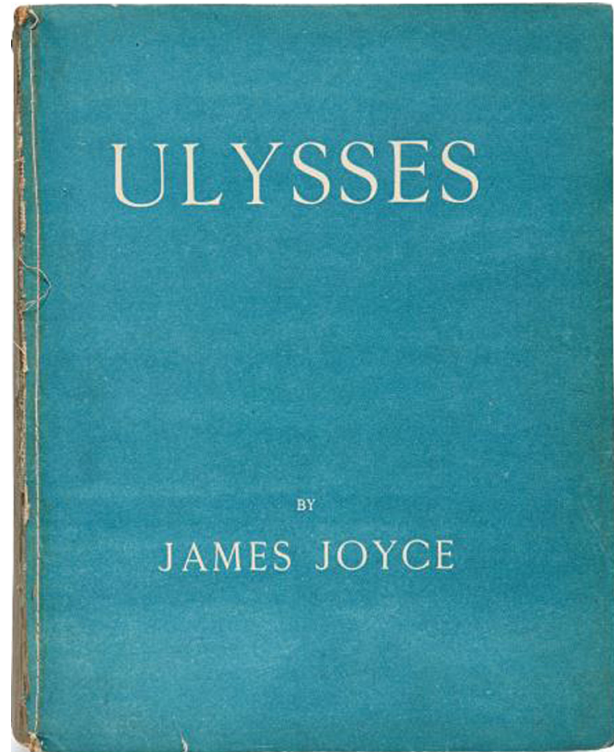
The March 1918 issue contained the first episode of *Ulysses* as well as the poetry of avant garde artist and poet Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven,

Burning *Ulysses*, continued

then living in New York. She was considered one of the “most controversial and radical women artists” of her day. Her poetry often contained sexual references and was often published alongside *Ulysses* episodes in *The Little Review*. Her “delirious verse” flabbergasted contemporaries and was not substantially collected until the 2011 publication of *Body Sweats: The Uncensored Writings of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven* (Gammell and Zelaso; MIT Press).

In April 1920, the issue boiled over with the *Ulysses* episode “Nausicäa,” named for one of Odysseus’s love interests in the *Odyssey* (*Ulysses* is the Latin name for the Greek hero Odysseus). In this episode, *Ulysses*’s main character, Leopold Bloom, after a long and exhausting day, muses about women in general and his wife in specific – and even more specifically about her fidelity. In the midst of this, he encounters a woman who famously “leans back,” gradually exposing herself and leading to his sexual gratification. While it has been argued that most readers might miss this because the passage is couched in metaphorical language, that was it for the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. The Society was fed up with the *Little Review*.

The Society had been founded in 1873 by antivice activist Anthony Comstock, who opposed obscene literature, abortion, contraception, masturbation, gambling, prostitution, and patent medicine. His views on obscenity were so broad that they included



The first edition of Ulysses (1922), published by Sylvia Beach of Shakespeare and Co., Paris. This is number 51 of a limited edition of 100 numbered copies signed by James Joyce. Offered by Sotheby's in 2022 with an expected value of 70,000 to 90,000 dollars.

certain medical texts and anatomy books. His action in 1873 influenced the U.S. Congress to pass the obscenity laws often referred to by his name: the Comstock Act. Comstock would eventually claim that he “destroyed 15 tons of books, 284,000 pounds of plates for printing ‘objectionable’ books, and nearly 4,000,000 pictures.” He boasted that “he was responsible for 4,000 arrests, and claimed he drove 15 persons to suicide.”

In 1920, the editor and publisher of *The Little Review*, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, were arrested and tried for violating the Comstock Act. As mentioned earlier, although *Ulysses* was the issue at trial, it may have been Freytag-Loringhoven’s poetry that was the more direct affront. In the end, *Ulysses* was declared obscene and effectively banned in the U.S. Serialization of the novel was stopped, and Anderson and Heap were prohibited from publishing similar materials.



Sylvia Beach and James Joyce (note patch) meet after the publication of Ulysses. Posters behind them advertise events featuring the new work.

Burning *Ulysses*, continued

Perhaps it is understandable that conviction of Anderson and Heap made it even more difficult for Joyce to find a publisher for *Ulysses*. But it had also drawn attention to the book, and it quickly gained critical praise. Following this lead, in 1922, Sylvia Beach, owner of the famous Parisian bookstore Shakespeare and Company, agreed to publish the novel. However, Beach had difficulty finding a printer who would agree to print the book. Eventually, she found Maurice Darantière. His shop of over 25 printers included only one English speaker. *Ulysses* was full of intentional errors and challenging to proof. Beach worked diligently on corrections even as the English-speaking printer corrected intentional errors and Joyce continued to write, adding more than 100,000 words to the manuscript while it was being typeset and proofed (it has recently been shown that the standard edition of *Ulysses* has an average of seven errors per page when compared to a critical compilation of Joyce's manuscripts).

Nevertheless, *Ulysses* was published in Paris on February 2, 1922, Joyce's 40th birthday.

The "effective ban" on *Ulysses* continued in the U.S. It was effective because anyone selling the books would have been in violation of the obscenity laws, and any books shipped through the U.S. Postal Service would have been similarly in violation. It would be another decade before a U.S. publisher, Random House, successfully challenged the ban.

In the intervening decade, the U.S. Postal Service regularly confiscated copies of *Ulysses* and burned them. The Post Office had already been burning issues of *The Little Review* that they found objectionable.

Ulysses became part of a tradition of burning objectionable mailings. As one example in the U.S., in 1835, abolitionists planned to flood the southern states with mailed literature, but by the time the ship carrying the tracts arrived in Charleston harbor, news of the plan had preceded it. A pro-slavery crowd, a local "vigilance society," entered

the Charleston post office and seized the bags that were full of newspapers and journals published by the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) in New York. The bags were taken to the parade ground next to the Citadel, Charleston's military academy, and burned along with effigies of abolitionists.

A more recent example comes from 2022 when a Tennessee pastor live-streamed the burning of Harry Potter books, claiming that they promoted witchcraft. While symbolic, it seems like too little too late. There are now over 600 million copies of the seven books in Harry Potter's main series in print, and it has been translated into 84 languages. Then there are the films, video games, and an amazing variety of merchandise.

The Free Speech Project documented a case of book burning from 2019 on the campus of Georgia Southern University. In October, author Jennine Capó Crucet visited the campus to discuss her novel *Make Your Home among Strangers*. The book received a few accolades: *New York Times Book Review* Editor's Choice, winner of the International Latino Book Award for Best Latino-themed Fiction 2016, longlisted for the 2015 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize, and named a best book of the season by *Cosmopolitan*, *Vanity Fair*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Redbook*, *Bustle*, *NBC Latino*, and *Men's Journal*.

The book tells the story of Lizet, the American daughter of Cuban immigrants in Miami who is accepted for admittance to Rawlings College. Amidst family turmoil, Lizet must negotiate the environment of the college, which is less accepting. An incident back in Miami puts Lizet's family in the spotlight of an immigration issue. The story turns on diversity and inclusion issues. Described as "urgent and funny," some GSU students did not find it so. Following Crucet's presentation, these students gathered outside Crucet's hotel to burn copies of her book – with the obligatory videos circulated on social media.

Readers are invited to submit other examples.

Burning *Ulysses*, continued**Gas from a Burner****James Joyce**

When James Joyce returned to Dublin briefly in 1912, he continued a years-long fight with publisher George Roberts over the publication of *Dubliners*. The effort was fruitless. The publisher, fearing legal action over libel and obscenity, destroyed the edition. Joyce never returned to Dublin despite his father's pleas and invitations from William Butler Yeats.

Joyce wrote "Gas from a Burner" as invective against Roberts. The poem's narrator is a printer-publisher who describes changing attitudes to Joyce's short stories. First neutral, he becomes patriotic, then self-righteous, then afraid for his soul. He burns the edition and, as a penance, anoints his buttocks with books' ashes.

Ladies and gents, you are here assembled
 To hear why earth and heaven trembled
 Because of the black and sinister arts
 Of an Irish writer in foreign parts.
 He sent me a book ten years ago
 I read it a hundred times or so,
 Backwards and forwards, down and up,
 Through both the ends of a telescope.
 I printed it all to the very last word
 But by the mercy of the Lord
 The darkness of my mind was rent
 And I saw the writer's foul intent.
 But I owe a duty to Ireland:
 I held her honour in my hand,
 This lovely land that always sent
 Her writers and artists to banishment
 And in a spirit of Irish fun
 Betrayed her own leaders, one by one.
 'Twas Irish humour, wet and dry,
 Flung quicklime into Parnell's* eye;
 'Tis Irish brains that save from doom
 The leaky barge of the Bishop of Rome
 For everyone knows the Pope can't belch
 Without the consent of Billy Walsh.*
 O Ireland my first and only love
 Where Christ and Caesar are hand and glove!

O lovely land where the shamrock grows!
 (Allow me, ladies, to blow my nose)
 To show you for strictures I don't care a button
 I printed the poems of Mountainy Mutton*
 And a play he wrote (you've read it I'm sure)
 Where they talk of bastard, bugger and whore
 And a play on the Word and Holy Paul
 And some woman's legs that I can't recall
 Written by Moore,* a genuine gent
 That lives on his property's ten per cent:
 I printed mystical books in dozens:
 I printed the table-book of Cousins*
 Though (asking your pardon) as for the verse
 'Twould give you a heartburn on your arse:
 I printed folklore from North and South
 By Gregory of the Golden Mouth*:
 I printed poets, sad, silly and solemn:
 I printed Patrick What-do-you-Colm*:
 I printed the great John Milicent Synge*
 Who soars above on an angel's wing
 In the playboy shift that he pinched as swag
 From Maunsel's manager's travelling-bag.
 But I draw the line at that bloody fellow
 That was over here dressed in Austrian yellow,
 Spouting Italian by the hour
 To O'Leary Curtis* and John Wyse Power*

Burning *Ulysses*, concluded

Shite and onions! Do you think I'll print
 The name of the Wellington Monument,
 Sydney Parade and Sandymount tram,
 Downes's cakeshop and Williams's jam?
 I'm damned if I do--I'm damned to blazes!
 Talk about Irish Names of Places!
 It's a wonder to me, upon my soul,
 He forgot to mention Curly's Hole.*
 No, ladies, my press shall have no share in
 So gross a libel on Stepmother Erin.
 I pity the poor – that's why I took
 A red-headed Scotchman to keep my book.
 Poor sister Scotland! Her doom is fell;
 She cannot find any more Stuarts to sell.
 My conscience is fine as Chinese silk:
 My heart is as soft as buttermilk.
 Colm can tell you I made a rebate
 Of one hundred pounds on the estimate
 I gave him for his Irish Review.
 I love my country – by herrings I do!
 I wish you could see what tears I weep
 When I think of the emigrant train and ship.

That's why I publish far and wide
 My quite illegible railway guide,
 In the porch of my printing institute
 The poor and deserving prostitute
 Plays every night at catch-as-catch-can
 With her tight-breeched British artilleryman
 And the foreigner learns the gift of the gab
 From the drunken draggletail Dublin drab.
 Who was it said: Resist not evil?
 I'll burn that book, so help me devil.
 I'll sing a psalm as I watch it burn
 And the ashes I'll keep in a one-handed urn.
 I'll penance do with farts and groans
 Kneeling upon my marrowbones.
 This very next lent I will unbare
 My penitent buttocks to the air
 And sobbing beside my printing press
 My awful sin I will confess.
 My Irish foreman from Bannockburn
 Shall dip his right hand in the urn
 And sign crisscross with reverent thumb
Memento homo upon my bum.

Parnell's eye – Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–1891), an Irish nationalist politician.

The consent of Billy Walsh – William J. Walsh (1841–1921), Archbishop of Dublin.

Mountainy Mutton – Mocking reference to a book published by Maunsel, *The Mountainy Singer* by Joseph Campbell (1879–1944; aka Seosamh Mac Cathmhaoil).

Written by Moore – George Moore (1852–1933), Irish novelist and short story writer.

The table-book of Cousins – Refers to the play *The Bell-Branch* by James H. Cousins (1873–1956). The play was not admired by Joyce or Yeats.

Gregory of the Golden Mouth – Lady Augusta Gregory (1852–1932), a cofounder of the Irish Literary Theatre and the Abbey Theatre. A subject of poetry by Yeats.

Patrick What-do-you-Colm: Padraic Colum (1881–1972), Irish author not favored by Joyce but who was a steadfast supporter of Joyce's work, especially in America.

John Milicent Synge – John Millington Synge (1871–1909), important Irish dramatist and a leader in the Irish Literary Revival.

O'Leary Curtis – William O'Leary Curtis (1868–1923), Irish journalist.

John Wyse Power (1859–1926), Irish nationalist and a founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association, a sports organization with a long history of promoting Irish culture.

Curly's Hole – A whirlpool with a rude name between Dublin and its barrier island, Bull Island.



The Newest Oldest Alphabet

Archaeologists have recently reported the discovery of what may be the earliest known alphabetic script. Four finger-size clay cylinders engraved with the symbols found over 20 years ago are now thought to bear alphabetic characters.

The cylinders were discovered at a site called Tell Umm el-Marra. “Tell” simply means hill or mound, and many archeological sites are referred to as tells because as new settlements are built over old ones, a distinctive type of hill develops. Umm el-Marra is a village about 35 miles east of the modern city of Aleppo in northern Syria. Ruins of an ancient city near Umm el-Marra were discovered in 1970s by the Belgian archaeological team of Roland Telnin. Excavation was conducted there into the 1980s.

The site was found to be a city dating back to the Bronze Age, over 4,000 years ago. The area of the site is about 60 acres (25 hectares) and comprises a city wall with three gates, a defensive ditch, and numerous structures. We do not know the name of this ancient city, but possibly it is Tuba, which is mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions as well as in writings from the early Syrian civilizations of Ebla and Mari and Turkey’s Alalakh.

In 1994, a team of archaeologists from Johns Hopkins University and the University of



Aerial view of the Umm el-Marra archaeological site.

Amsterdam began a new series of excavations at the site. Among the structures found were 10 tombs. In 2000, the team, co-directed by Glenn Schwartz and Hans Curvers, discovered that Tomb 4 was a rare intact royal tomb dating to about 2300 BCE. Several individuals were found in the tomb. Their coffins were lined with fine fabrics, and Schwartz and coworkers reported grave goods that indicated burial of highly placed individuals, including gold or silver toggle pins, ivory or bone combs, silver or gold headbands with frontlets, silver bracelets, silver or bronze torques, silver vessels, beads of stone, shell, and metal, and shell disks. These goods have parallels in other ancient Near East burials. Unusual among the grave goods were the bones of kunga, a cross between a domestic donkey and a wild ass – one of the earliest examples of the burial of an equid, i.e., a member of the horse family. Other tombs also contained some of these items.

In 2004, another discovery was made among the many ceramics in Tomb 4. While excavating in the tomb, Elaine Sullivan (now an Egyptologist at UC Santa Cruz) found four finger-size clay cylinders engraved with symbols. These were particularly intriguing to the team of archaeologists. They were dated to around 2400 BCE. While the symbols were intriguing, the archaeologists were very cautious in making any identification.



Tomb 4 at Umm el-Marra. Numerous grave goods were found at the site, especially clay pots. Four cylinders were found in this tomb in 2004 that were inscribed with symbols now believed to represent the earliest known alphabetic writing.

The Newest Oldest Alphabet, *continued*



The four clay cylinders found in Tomb 4 at Tell el-Marra. Each one was inscribed with marks as shown in the drawings at the right. The cylinders were drilled (shown in the small circular drawing, extreme right), indicating that they could be strung, perhaps to identify an object or individual. Eleven symbols were identified by comparison with other ancient and modern languages of the area. Image from Schwartz et al. (2006). *A Third Millennium B.C. Elite Mortuary Complex at Umm el-Marra, Syria: 2002 and 2004 Excavations*. *American Journal of Archeology* 110: 603–611.

More recent work has identified the symbols as alphabetic, meaning that each symbol represents one sound. Today, many languages, including English, are written with such a set of symbols – an alphabet – but at the time, alphabets were uncommon. Most languages were written in pictorial signs that (1) represented individual objects or (2) combined these signs to represent other concepts or (3) used the names of the object pictured to represent similar sounding words (rebus principle). Ancient Egyptian, written in hieroglyphs, is an example of such a language.

Alphabets are extremely efficient at representing language and typically require only two to three dozen symbols at most to do this. But pictorial systems, like Ancient Egyptian or modern Chinese, require hundreds to thousands of symbols. With so many symbols, Egyptian would be very difficult to learn to read and write, much less master. This would limit reading and writing to relatively few people. The simplicity of the alphabet made it flexible for representing languages and simpler for many more people to learn.

Before the discovery at Umm el-Marra, the earliest alphabetic script was believed to be one discovered on the Sinai Peninsula. Referred to as Proto-Sinaitic, the inscriptions written in this script have been dated to 1900 BCE. Thus, the Umm el-Marra symbols push the development of alphabetic writing back another 500 years.

The discovery of the Umm el-Marra symbols raises important questions about when and where alphabets developed and how they spread. It has been described by some experts as a game-changer.

The Umm el-Marra Alphabet

In an examination of the clay cylinders discovered at Umm el-Marra, one of the excavation's leaders, Glenn Schwartz, determined that there were 11 symbols in total and eight unique symbols. Two of the cylinders seem to have the same sequence, ending with the same symbol. Schwartz explained that the longer the sequence of symbols, the more likely it is to represent writing rather than nonlinguistic symbols.

The Newest Oldest Alphabet, *concluded*

At this point, the language of the symbols is not known, but through comparison with other ancient and modern West Semitic languages in the area, including Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, Schwartz has tentatively identified the eight unique symbols as corresponding to a, i, k, l, n, s and y. Using this interpretation, one of the cylinders seems to bear the word “silanu,” which may be a name or a label for an item. The holes drilled through the cylinders would make it possible to run a string through them to attach to one of the many clay pots or as identification of one of the individuals. In either

case, the symbols and the cylinders are unique for burials of this age in this area.

Interpretation of the symbols has gone through many careful examinations and review by a number of specialists, and some archeologists are waiting for more evidence. They will now be on the lookout for objects with similar symbols to help extend and confirm the Umm el-Marra finds. Nevertheless, it appears likely that the Umm el-Marra cylinders have opened an exciting new chapter in the history of the alphabet.



This table shows the evolution of the modern Latin script from the earliest known alphabets – previously Proto-Sinaitic as shown in the main table and now possibly going back to the Umm el-Marra symbols, separated by a blue line because the correspondence between Proto-Sinaitic and the Umm el-Marra symbols could not be located. Over the 4,000 years leading up to today’s alphabet, letters have been added and taken away, transformations described by Matt Baker of UsefulCharts.com in a [YouTube video](#) on Matt’s fascinating channel. The main table is available in poster form from [UsefulCharts.com](#). This version of the chart shows how the ancient letters became modern Latin letters, but a similar chart could show how the same ancient symbols became the alphabets of Arabic, Hebrew, and many other languages.



Sean's Selections from His Seasonal Collection

by Sean Donnelly



The Largo Public Library has a gallery space which is used most of the year for exhibits by local artists. The space includes four lit display cases. Usually, all four are being used, but this December one of them was not needed. I asked if I could use the free one for a holiday display and, happily, I was given permission.

As a book collector, I've been drawn in numerous directions over the years, usually spurred on by a chance acquisition. I'm not looking for new things to collect, but they find me! I was browsing at the Florida Antiquarian Book Fair in St. Petersburg years ago and came across a table with various books spread out on it. One in particular caught my eye – an illustrated edition of “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (aka “The Night Before Christmas”) by Clement Clarke Moore. The book, from 1862, was in such nice condition that I thought it might be a reproduction, but it wasn't. And the drawings by F. O. C. Darley, one of the most popular artists of the period, were irresistible. That began my affair with collecting “The Night Before Christmas.” I

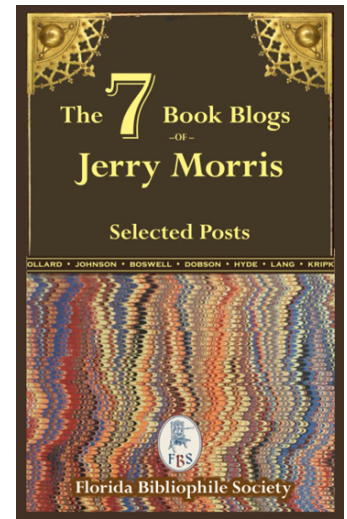
now have dozens of different editions, mostly from the 1850s to 1960s but I pick up appealing modern editions too. But why stop with that book? Unlike Russ Spera, I collect books, not book. I sought out Christmas books of all kinds, mostly children's books of a secular nature. What I buy usually has a strong visual appeal. Of course, one can't stop with books, so I've picked up advertising pieces, post cards, trade cards, and other ephemera with a Christmas theme. I chose three dozen items from my collection for the display that show how varied the books and ephemera are. I hope that whoever stops to look at the display will feel a little extra Christmas cheer and get a sense of the pleasure I've taken in making the collection.

FBS Publications

The 7 Book Blogs of Jerry Morris

FBS. May 2023. 312 pp. \$50.00 (hbk), \$30.00 (pbk). Color illus.

The *7 Book Blogs of Jerry Morris* collects 29 out of the more than 300 blog posts that Jerry published over a 20-year period. Selected by Jerry’s devoted readers, these posts display the range of Jerry’s bibliophilic interests and his many contributions to the history of books and bibliophiles such as Mary and Donald Hyde, J. O. Halliwell-Phillips, Adrian H. Joline, and Madeline Kripke. Larry McMurtry and his famous bookshop, Booked Up, in Archer City, Texas, and John R. Lindmark and his ill-fated shop in Poughkeepsie, New York, are also included. And of course, Jerry’s personal passions: Samuel Johnson, James Boswell, Charles Lamb, and William Strunk, author of *The Elements of Style*. Jerry’s meticulous research throughout the world of bibliophiles allows him to illuminate many fascinating individuals and publications. Available on Amazon: [hardback](#) & [paperback](#).



“I Contain Multitudes....”



Selections from the
Ed S. Centeno Walt Whitman Collection



“I Contain Multitudes ...”: Selections from the Ed S. Centeno Walt Whitman Collection

FBS. April 2022. 58 pp. \$20.00 (pbk). Color illus.

In April 2022, the Florida Bibliophile Society hosted a special exhibition of items from the Ed S. Centeno Walt Whitman Collection at the Largo Public Library. This book contains photographs, descriptions, and history of 100 items in Ed’s collection, including editions of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman ephemera, period collectibles, and commissioned works of art. This is an excellent introduction to Whitman, with information on his creative process and output and his

outsized impact on American and world poetry. Order from the Florida Bibliophile Society by sending a check for \$20.00 to Florida Bibliophile Society, P.O. Box 530682, St. Petersburg, FL 33747. You may also request a copy via email at floridabibliophiles@gmail.com and use the same address to pay through PayPal.

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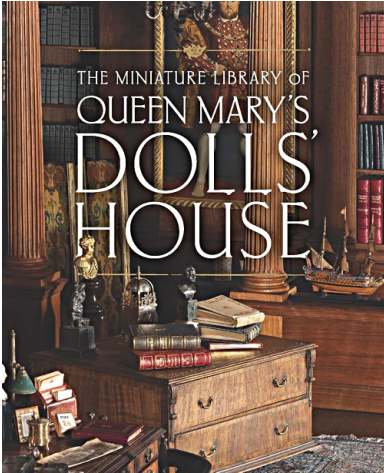
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Books in Brief

The Miniature Library of Queen Mary's Dolls' House

E. Ashby, K. Jones, S. Kelly, E. Stuart, K. Heard, and Her Majesty Queen Camilla
Royal Collection Trust
160 pp., April 2024



A dollhouse fit for a queen! Created between 1921 and 1924, the Queen Mary's Dolls' House is one of the most beautiful and famous dollhouses in the world.

The house's design by revered British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens was brought to life by over

a thousand artists. Meticulously furnished, the house represents a truly royal residence of its day, featuring electricity, running water, and working elevators. But perhaps most impressive of all is the house's exquisite Edwardian library, with its more than three hundred miniature books. Princess Marie Louise (granddaughter of Queen Victoria) and the essayist and humorist E. V. Lucas contacted hundreds of renowned authors to solicit original works for the library. Those who responded form a who's who of British literature, including J. M. Barrie, G. K. Chesterton, Joseph Conrad, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John Galsworthy, Robert Graves, Thomas Hardy, Aldous Huxley, Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham, A. A. Milne, and Vita Sackville-West.

The Miniature Library of Queen Mary's Dolls' House is a guided tour to one of the most beautiful and important miniature libraries anywhere. The crowning touch to this premiere guidebook is a foreword by Her Majesty Queen Camilla.

Elizabeth Ashby is a curator of books and manuscripts at the Royal Collection Trust. She has contributed to other Royal Collection titles including *Charles II: Art and Power*.



Source: Royal Collection Trust

Digital Victorians: From Nineteenth-Century Media to Digital Humanities

Paul Fyfe
Stanford University Press
294 pp., October 2024

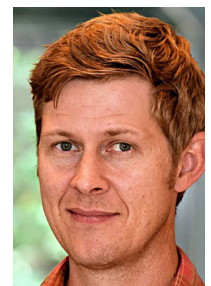
The Victorian era faced a crisis of information as books, periodicals, and newspapers poured from the nation's presses.

If this sounds familiar, it is because the 19th century information crisis has much in common with the situation in the 21st's. John Stuart Mill summarized the situation in his remark,

"The first of the leading peculiarities of the present age is, that it is an age of transition." In *Digital Victorians*, Paul Fyfe explores this situation and the confrontation between the daily information deluge and the slower – but often more meaningful – forms of communication in the humanities. Fyfe engages with writers such as Thomas De Quincey, George Eliot, Henry James, and Robert Louis Stevenson who confronted the new media of their day. We have inherited Victorian anxieties about quantitative and machine-driven reading, professional obsolescence in the face of new technology, and more. They, as we, contended with telecommunication networks, privacy intrusions, quantitative reading methods, remediation, and their effects on literary professionals. Fyfe demonstrates that well before computers the Victorians were already "digital."

Paul Fyfe is Associate Professor in the Department of English, North Carolina State University. He is the author of *By Accident or Design: Writing the Victorian Metropolis*.

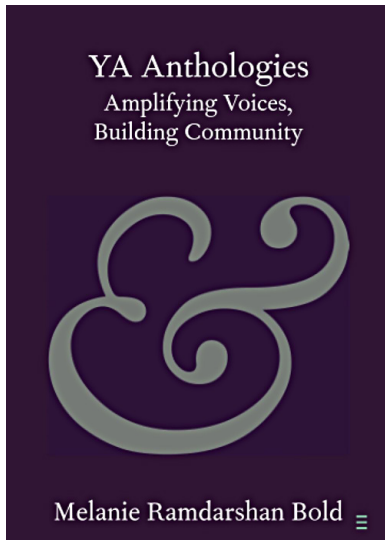
Source: Stanford University Press



Books in Brief, *continued*

YA Anthologies: Amplifying Voices, Building Community

Melanie Ramdarshan Bold
Cambridge University Press
75 pp., June 2024



Despite their long publishing history, anthologies have received little scholarly attention. However, they play an important role in collecting, and reflecting upon, voices and identities that have all too often been on the fringes of publishing.

This entry in the Element series explores the sociocultural functions of anthologies in relation to discussions around exclusion/inclusion in the publishing industry. Focusing on YA anthologies, using a case study of *A Change Is Gonna Come* anthology (2017), this Element argues that the form and function of anthologies allows them to respond to and represent changing ideas of socially marginalized identities.

Anthologies like *A Change Is Gonna Come* also afford Black and Brown authors a platform and community for introspection and the development of both individual and collective identities – a conversation that might not occur in other media. Beyond merely introducing writings by socially marginalized groups, this Element contends that YA anthologies embody a form of literary activism, fostering community-building and offering a means to circumvent obstacles prevalent in publishing.



Melanie Ramdarshan Bold is a Professor of Youth Literature and Culture in the School of Education, University of Glasgow, focusing on YA literature and book culture.

Source: Cambridge University Press

Printing and Misprinting: A Companion to Mistakes and In-House Corrections in Renaissance Europe (1450-1650)

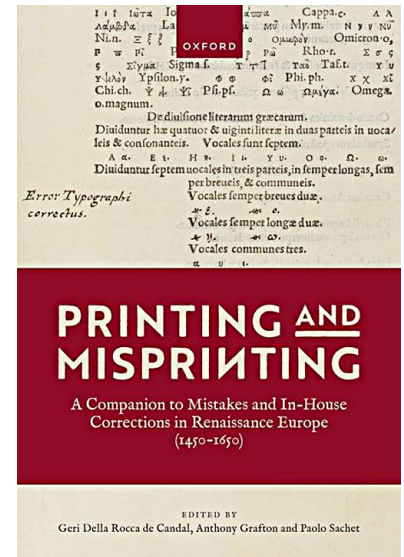
G. D. R. de Candal, A. Grafton, P. Sachet, eds.
Oxford University Press, 608 pp., July 2023

“To err is human.” As a material and mechanical process, early printing made no exception to this general rule.

Against the conventional wisdom of a technological triumph spreading freedom and knowledge, the history of the book is largely a story of errors and adjustments.

Various mistakes normally crept in while texts were transferred from manuscript to printing forms and different correction strategies were adopted when errors were spotted. In this regard, the ‘Gutenberg galaxy’ provides an unrivaled example of how scholars, publishers, authors, and readers reacted to failure: they increasingly aimed at impeccability in both style and content, developed time and money-efficient ways to cope with mistakes, and ultimately came to link formal accuracy with authoritative and reliable information. Most of these features shaped the publishing industry until the present day, in spite of mounting issues related to false news and approximation in the digital age.

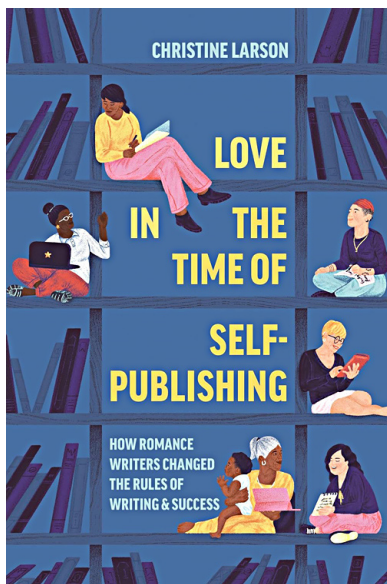
Geri Della Rocca de Candal (left), President, Society for the Preservation of Rare Books; **Anthony Grafton** (center), Henry Putnam University Professor of History, Princeton University; **Paolo Sachet**, Ambizione Postdoctoral Fellow, Institut d’histoire de la Réformation, UNIGE (right).



Source: Oxford University Press

Books in Brief, *concluded***Love in the Time of Self-Publishing: How Romance Writers Changed the Rules of Writing and Success**

Christine M. Larson
Princeton University Press
288 pp., June 2024



As writers, musicians, online content creators, and other independent workers fight for better labor terms, romance authors offer an example and cautionary tale about self-organization and mutual aid in the digital economy. Larson traces the 40 years of Romancelandia, a sprawling network of romance authors, readers,

editors, and others who formed a unique community based on openness and collective support. Through solidarity, American romance writers – once literary outcasts – became digital publishing’s most innovative and successful authors. A surge of social media activism highlighted Romancelandia’s historic exclusion of authors of color and LGBTQ+ writers, forcing a long-overdue cultural reckoning.

Using the largest-known survey of any literary genre, interviews, and archival research, Larson shows how romance writers became the only authors in America to make money from the rise of ebooks – increasing median income by 73% compared to 40% for other authors. This success, Larson argues, demonstrates the power of alternative forms of organizing

influenced by gendered working patterns. It also shows how networks of relationships can amplify or mute certain voices.

Christine Larson is Assistant Professor of Journalism at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her writing has often appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.



Source: Princeton University Press

[Bookish fiction]

A Merry Little Murder Plot

Jenn McKinlay
Berkley
320 pp., October 2024

Christmas books and murder – recipe for a perfect holiday, wouldn’t you say?

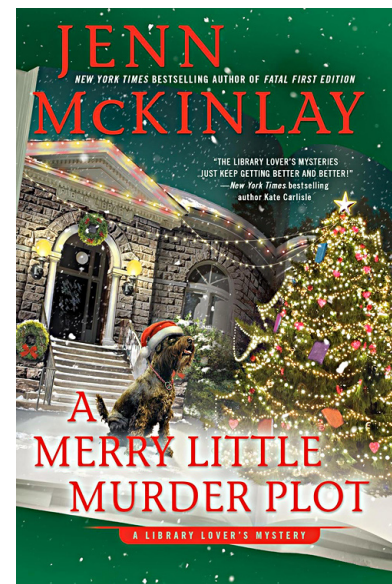
It’s the most wonderful time of the year, but famous author Helen Monroe arrives in Briar Creek to be the writer in residence with a “bah humbug” attitude that leaves her out of holiday celebrations the town residents enjoy. To spread some holiday cheer, library director Lindsey Norris invites Helen to join her “crafternoon” club. Helen’s polite refusal and subsequent altercation with another patron causes Lindsey to suspect the author of keeping to herself for a reason.

Jackie, another newby, reveals she’s in Briar Creek to be near Helen because they are destined to meet. Lindsey fears that Jackie may be a stalker and tells Helen about her.

When Jackie’s body is later discovered in the town park beneath the holiday-light display with a copy of Helen’s latest manuscript in her hand, the reclusive novelist becomes the prime suspect in the murder of her self-proclaimed mega-fan. Helen’s frosty demeanor melts when Lindsey offers her help, and now the librarian and her crafternoon pals must prove the author innocent before “The End” becomes Helen’s final sentence.

Jenn McKinlay is the award-winning *New York Times*, *USA Today*, and *Publishers Weekly* bestselling author of several mystery and romance series.

Source: Berkley



In the early 1800s, a new French version of Dante's *Divine Comedy* motivated French Neoclassical painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) to paint two lovers from *Inferno*, Paolo Malatesta and Francesca da Rimini. They were a frequent subject of artists; Ingres painted them seven times between 1814 and 1850. The one shown here, from 1846, is the one Ingres kept for himself. Dante placed the pair in Hell – Paolo is Francesca's brother-in-law – but the Romantics of Ingres's time saw the pair as moved by the heart's truth that rises above convention. Paolo and Francesca were as famous as Romeo and Juliet, who they precede by 200 years. Paolo's strained pose expresses his awkward and desperate yearning as well as the danger of breaking God's law. At right is Paolo's brother, Francesca's husband, Giancotto Malatesta. He carries the sword which, in Dante's telling, will dispatch them to Hell. Francesca drops her book, the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, whose love also violated convention. The book is the "absolute key to the tragedy." Francesca explains (*Inferno*, Canto 5, John Ciardi, translator): "that high old story drew our eyes together while we blushed and paled . . . when we read how her fond smile was kissed by such a lover, he who is one with me alive and dead breathed on my lips the tremor of his kiss . . . that day we read no further."



This Month's Writers and Contributors

Many thanks to those who contributed words, pictures, and ideas to this month's newsletter!

Wesley Brown
Sean Donnelly
David Hall
Maureen E. Mulvihill
Carl Mario Nudi
Irene Pavese
Gary Simons
Ben Wiley

Have an idea for an article for *The Florida Bibliophile*? Contact Charles Brown, cbrown@atlantic.net, to submit or for assistance in preparing your article.

Join FBS!

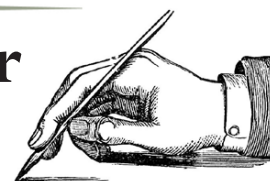
Love books? Take your interest to the next level by joining a group of dedicated book lovers (i.e., bibliophiles). You will meet serious collectors, dealers, scholars, and readers, and you will discover a lively, fun group.



It's easy to join – just send an email with your name, mailing address, and phone number to Floridabibliophiles@gmail.com. Annual dues are \$50 for membership or \$125 for membership plus print subscription. Use Paypal to send your payment to the gmail address, or mail a check to Florida Bibliophile Society, P.O. Box 530682, St. Petersburg, FL 33747.

Joining FBS also makes you a member of our national organization, FABS, the Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies.

Write for Your Newsletter!



Your input and content are needed. FBS is about participation, about discoveries, about passionate interests, and sometimes the deliciously obscure. Why not write about it!?



Upcoming Events

December 2024



Maria Christensen/Etsy

FBS Holiday Party

December 15, 2024, 12:30 p.m.

The FBS Holiday Party will once again be hosted by Ben and Joyce Wiley at their home in Largo.

FBS members are requested to bring an appetizer, side dish, wine, or dessert. Please RSVP to Ben Wiley (bwiley@tampabay.rr.com) by Sunday, December 8, if you are coming, and let us know what you will be bringing.

FBS members are also requested to bring a wrapped book. Our book exchange last year was so much fun that we want to do it again!

Hope to see you there!



January 2025



Field Trip to Olde Mill House Print Museum in Homasassa, Florida – Owner Jim Anderson

Old Mill House Gallery & Printing Museum

10466 West Yulee Drive

Old Homosassa, Florida, 34448

January 19, 2025, 1:30 p.m.

(also available on Zoom)

Jim Anderson opened the Old Mill House Gallery & Printing Museum in 1995 as a place to showcase his collection of vintage printing tools and share the history of the printed word. This is more than a display, Jim maintains all the machines, and they are in working order. If you don't know what a Linotype or a Heidelberg is, you will. If you do know, here's your chance to see them in operation. Jim has a deep connection to the Homosassa area: he is descended from workers in the local sugar mills and preserves some of the area's local history. Much to see and learn! Lunch to follow at a nearby cafe.



Book Events and Podcasts

Know of any events of interest to book lovers? Send corrections and additions to Charles Brown, cmbrown@atlantic.net.

Florida Book Events

For the numerous library book sales in Florida, visit www.booksalefinder.com/FL.html.

— December 4–8 —

INK Miami: Modern and Contemporary Works on Paper (www.inkartfair.com)

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

— January 7–February 2 —

Zora 2025: Tribute to the Legends
Eatonville, FL (www.zorafestival.org)

— January 9–12 —

Annual Key West Literary Seminar: “Singing America: A Celebration of Black Literature”
Key West, FL (www.kwls.org/)

— January 17 —

Ringling Literati Book Club, Sarasota, FL
Featured book: *Last Light: How Six Great Artists Made Old Age a Time of Triumph*
(www.ringling.org/event/literati-book-club/)

— January 18–25 —

Writers in Paradise
(Eckerd College Writers Conference)
St. Petersburg, FL (www.writersinparadise.com)

— January 23–26 —

Florida Storytelling Festival
(sponsored by The Florida Story Association)
Mount Dora, FL (flstory.com/festival/)

— January 31–February 1 —

Sunshine State Book Festival
Gainesville, FL
(www.sunshinestatebookfestival.com/)

— February 6–9 —

Savannah Book Festival
Savannah, GA (www.savannahbookfestival.org/)

— February 14 —

Ringling Literati Book Club, Sarasota, FL
Book of the month: *Hidden in the Shadow of the Master: The Model-Wives of Cezanne, Monet, and Rodin* by Ruth Butler

Rare Book Cafe Coffee Break

RBC was begun several years ago by Florida booksellers and FBS members Steve and Edie Eisenstein. It continues as “Coffee Break,” the brainchild of T. Allan Smith.

“Coffee Break” is co-hosted by long-time RBC regulars Lee Linn (The Ridge Books, Calhoun, GA) and Ed Markiewicz (Montgomery Rare Books & Manuscripts, Portland, OR). Get a cup of coffee and join [RBC Coffee Break on Facebook](#).

COFFEE BREAK No. 82: Books in Boston

(what a show!) – Ed, fresh from the Books in Boston Shadow Show, congratulates Richard Mori, an organizer of the show. Lee missed the show due to a broken leg and arm. The three reminisce about Boston and Florida book shows.

COFFEE BREAK No. 81: A lively discussion

about ethics in rare book selling – Special guest is Kyle Smith, who inspired hers and Lee’s hometown book club to read Amor Towles’s latest, *Table for Two*. Its story about a young man who fakes signatures on rare books to make them more valuable sparked a lively discussion between Ed and Lee and frequent visitor Richard Mori.

COFFEE BREAK No. 80: Stacy Waldman, House of Mirth Photos, East Hampton, Mass.

– Stacy exhibited at the Books in Boston Shadow Show. Ed and Lee are joined by bookseller Richard Mori, a co-producer of Books in Boston. Stacy shares some interesting photos she has recently acquired, including a collection related to UFOs and flying saucers.

COFFEE BREAK No. 79: John Townsend of Town’s End Books, Deep River, Mass.

– Guest John Townsend will be an exhibitor at Books in Boston, the shadow show to the Boston International Antiquarian Book Fair. He shares some of the items he’ll be bringing to the shadow show. Ed and Lee are joined by bookseller Richard Mori, a co-producer of Books in Boston.

See p. 26 to learn about *Book Lovers’ Paradise*, the new magazine from the producers of RBC.

Book Events and Podcasts, *continued***The Biblio File, with Nigel Beale**

THE BIBLIO FILE is one of the world's leading podcasts about "the book" and book culture.

Host Nigel Beale fosters wide-ranging conversations with authors, poets, publishers, booksellers, editors, collectors, book makers, scholars, critics, designers, publicists, literary agents, and others who just love books. The website provides podcasts back to 2006, lists of reading, links, etc.

Recent episodes

Oct. 14 – Siegfried Lukatis on Insel Bucherei, the Iconic German Book Series – Lokatis is a retired professor of book history and former head of the University of Leipzig's Institute for Communication and Media Studies. He is the author of *Book Covers of the GDR* and working on a history of the S. Fischer publishing house. We toured Leipzig's Bibliotop to discuss its splendid Insel Bucherei book collection, a staple of German publishing since 1912. Known for their quality production – especially the decorative papers used for their covers – its 2,000 titles (now published by Suhrkamp Verlag) includes well-known and little known texts from world literature, art history, nonfiction, poetry, and fairy tales.

Coffee with a Codex

Every Thursday at noon, the Kislak Center at the University of Pennsylvania presents **Coffee with a Codex**, an informal virtual meeting with Kislak curators about a manuscript from Penn's collections. Free but requires registration to receive a Zoom link. Past events are available on YouTube.

Dec. 19, 12–12:30 p.m. – Order of Teutonic Knights – Curator Dot Porter will bring out Ms. Codex 105, a collection of papal bulls and documents concerning privileges granted to the Order of Teutonic Knights. It was copied in Germany around 1450.

Book Lovers' Paradise – Magazine for Bibliophiles Releases Issue 2

Wearing the slogan "Produced in Paradise for Book Lovers Everywhere," the second quarterly issue of *Book Lovers' Paradise* was released in July.

A joint effort of T. Allan Smith, producer of *Rare Book Café's Coffee Break*, Mike Slicker, a founder of FBS and owner of

Lighthouse Books in Dade City, Florida, and Sarah Smith, manager of the Florida Antiquarian Book Fair, *Book Lovers' Paradise* is "a labor of love for all of us, and I think the result is something we can be proud of, knowing that we're offering useful tools for people with an abiding interest in the subjects we cover."

Allan, Mike, and Sarah view *Book Lovers' Paradise* as a way to extend the sharing of book knowledge and love of fine books that is enjoyed in encounters with booksellers at the book fair.

Articles in Issue 2 include:

- In pursuit of your passion: In the bibliosphere, there are many roles
- Collecting fine bindings: what you should know
- Collecting appliance ephemera
- How old are the maps in your collection?

Book Lovers' Paradise is published quarterly and electronically, free of charge. To receive a link to each new edition, send an email to bookloversparadisemagazine@gmail.com with SUBSCRIBE in the subject field. Also available on Issuu.



Book Events and Podcasts, *concluded*

American Antiquarian Society

Virtual Book Talks

Founded in 1812 by Isaiah Thomas, a Revolutionary War patriot and printer, the American Antiquarian Society is the oldest history society in the U.S.

AAS focuses on pre-1876 events and holds the “largest and most accessible collection” of related print materials. The AAS’s Program in the History of the Book in American Culture (PHBAC) was established in 1983. PHBAC sponsors [Virtual Book Talk](#), showcasing “authors of recently published monographs and creative works broadly related to book history and print culture.” Free, but advance registration is required for upcoming presentations.

Recent and Upcoming Episodes:

Nov. 21 – Sara Johnson: *Encyclopédie noire: The Making of Moreau de Saint-Méry’s Intellectual World* – Lawyer, philosophe, and Enlightenment polymath, Moreau’s (1750–1819) prolific output opens a vital window into the U.S., French, and other revolutions. But his achievements were built on the work of enslaved and free people of color whose labor gave him leisure to research, think, and write and whose rich cultures fill his most applauded works. Johnson explores these cultures to build a communal biography of the women and men who made Moreau’s world.

Feb. 27, 2025 – Bryan Sinche: *Published by the Author: Self-Publication and Nineteenth Century African American Literature* – Many Black writers bypassed white gatekeepers and editors by self-publishing their life stories. Based on extensive research and brimming with new discoveries, Sinche recovers long-forgotten authors and shows how they capitalized on the economic and social possibilities of authorship and bookselling. *Published by the Author* is the first book to analyze African American self-publication as a historical and literary phenomenon. It offers new ways of thinking about African American autobiography and 19th-century print culture.

Cambridge University Press

[Contours: The Cambridge Literary Studies](#)

[Hour](#) is presented by Ato Quayson, Professor and Chair of the Department of English at Stanford University. Each episode of *Contours* will address a pressing issue, theme or concept in the field of **Literary Studies from Medieval Literature to the present day.**

David Sterling Brown: *Shakespeare’s White Others & Black Shakespeare* – What is the racial impact of an individual regarded by many as the greatest writer in the English language. In part, this results from Shakespeare’s contribution to racial thought. Brown presents an outstanding contribution to understanding the logic of whiteness. Shakespearean reference to ‘white others’ helped foster the racial reasoning used to promote enslavement and colonialism. This work is essential and insightful reading for those interested in the invention of racism in modern literature and more generally in modern society. —Tukufu Zuberi, Lasry Family Professor of Race Relations, University of Pennsylvania

Princeton Ideas Podcast

[Marietje Schaake: *The Tech Coup*](#) – Over the past decades, under the cover of “innovation,” technology companies have successfully resisted regulation and have even begun to seize power from governments themselves. Facial recognition firms track citizens for police surveillance. Cryptocurrency has wiped out the personal savings of millions and threatens the stability of the global financial system. Spyware companies sell digital intelligence tools to anyone who can afford them. This new reality—where unregulated technology has become a forceful instrument for autocrats around the world—is terrible news for democracies and citizens.



... and More

Books about Books

It's about time to end the confusion . . . or at least add to it.

The phrase “Books about Books” is almost a secret password among bibliophiles. A quick search on Google will not clarify. Artificial intelligence does not understand. And yet many bibliophiles become avid collectors of Books about Books. It must be – as we say these days – a thing. Let's give it a try.

First, Books about Books are nonfiction. A great fictional book about a library, a bookstore, a book that holds the secret of a family, a murder, a treasure, or all of the above is not among Books about Books. A nonfiction book about these subjects is a BAB.

Second, BAB are, like bibliophiles, generally focused on physical books, and this includes the technologies and cultures that have built up around what literary critic and theorist Northrop Frye has called “the most technologically efficient machine that man has ever invented,” i.e., the book.

For example, the book itself – meaning the recording of texts on durable materials – goes back almost 6,000 years. As soon as people realized these things would pile up and be hard to find, they invented the library about 5,000 years ago. The earliest evidence of a cataloging system goes back around 4,000 years. Then there are the great royal libraries of the Middle East, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and onward, followed by the great private libraries, the great monastic libraries, the great university libraries, and great



Most of the books that appear in the Books in Brief feature in this newsletter are Books about Books. The range of topics is very broad, including the preparation of books for printing, the influence of author associations on publishing, miniature books, bookselling, and more.

public libraries. The role these institutions have played in preserving and advancing civilization is incalculable. Books about any of that are BAB.

Then there are the technologies of writing books, producing books, reproducing books, designing books, publishing books, distributing books, new book markets and used book markets, rare books, book restoration and conservation, collectible books, researching books – this list could go on and on. This may help to explain where the 10,000 BAB that former FBSer Lee Harrer donated to the University of Tampa Library came from (UT had a book arts program at the time). Let this be a warning, BAB are a fascinating area of collecting and reading, and once you get interested, you will need more shelf space!

Now, did that clear up anything?



Florida Bibliophile Society 2024–2025 Season



Ben Wiley

FBS meetings will be held both in-person and via Zoom, unless otherwise noted. Check the Upcoming Events page for details.

September 15 • FBS Members – September Show and Tell: Members brought a wide variety of fascinating books. It was a great afternoon!

October 20 • An Afternoon of Books – We spent the afternoon chatting about the future of FBS and enjoying a couple of special presentations by Gary Simons and Charles Brown. Sean Donnelly’s presentation, “Tales of a Bookseller,” has been postponed.

October 26–30 • Gainesville Getaway: Alachua County Friends of the Library Book Sale is held twice a year, in October and April. The sale features over 500,000 books, CDs, and other media. Many book lovers had a fun day of book shopping!

November 17 • Russell Spera*: Dante for Collectors – Russell spoke enthusiastically about his years of collecting and researching Dante. His personal collection contains over 300 English versions of the *Divine Comedy*; he brought several examples. His answers to the many audience questions added much to the presentation.

December 15 • FBS Holiday Party: Always a great time for members to celebrate the holidays! Join us at the Largo home of Ben and Joyce Wiley. Call 727-215-2276 to confirm the festive dish you’re bringing.

January 19 • Field Trip to Olde Mill House Print Museum in Homasassa, Florida – Owner Jim Anderson will guide us through his extensive collection of letterpress equipment. A must if you have any interest in letterpress printing. Featured on Atlas Obscura. Lunch to follow at a nearby cafe.

February 16 • Field Trip to Ersula’s History Shop – Owner and writer Ersula Odom* will introduce us to her museum/shop featuring books, memorabilia, primary source documents, black history, and more. Located at 1421 Tampa Park Plaza, Tampa.

March 1–2 (Sat.–Sun.) • Florida Antiquarian Book Fair, one of the largest antiquarian book fairs in the U.S., held at the historic St. Pete Coliseum. FBS will be represented at our hospitality table in the foyer and at our table in the fair. Meet dealers from across the U.S., see amazing books, make new friends! The ultimate book party.

March 16 • Field trip to the Jack Kerouac House, St. Pete – Kerouac helped define the mid-20th century Beat movement. His wanderings ended up in St. Pete, and his final home is becoming a museum. Join us for a tour and an afternoon of reflection on this American original, led by owner Ken Burchenal.

April 27 • Irene Sullivan: Studies in Juvenile Justice – A retired juvenile judge, Irene is author of two books, *Born and Raised to Murder* and *Raised by the Courts*, which explore Florida’s courts and their impact on the state’s youth.

April 26–30 • Gainesville Getaway: Spring edition of Florida’s biggest library book sale. Stay tuned for details.

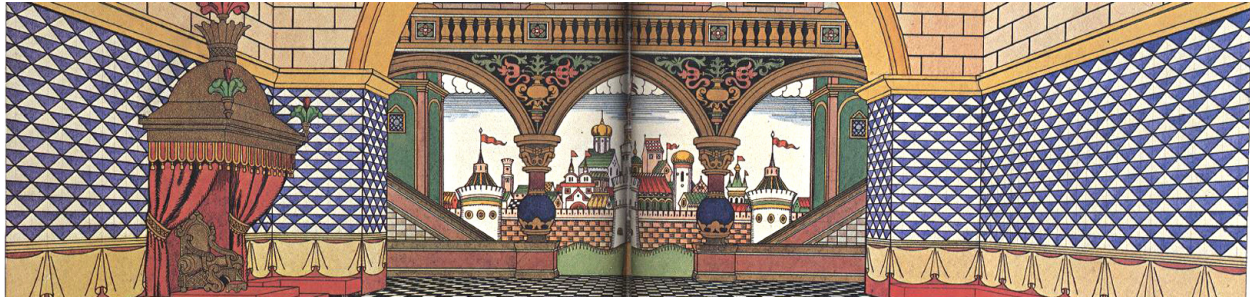
May 18 • Annual Banquet: Our annual May banquet is always a highlight! This year’s event is still being planned. Watch this space!

All meetings are held at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoons unless otherwise announced.

* FBS member



Endpaper • Our Best Wishes for Happy Holidays!



As the holiday season begins and 2024 winds down, we can reflect on another great year of books and bibliophilic friendship. We've had great presentations, great field trips, a memorable banquet, and we're looking ahead to a holiday party where we will enjoy some delicious food and fun activities with our bookish – but let me assure you fun-loving – friends.

I recently learned about a Yale study that found one secret to a long life is community, and the Florida Bibliophile Society and the book world in general provide a wonderful supportive community. Last month, we encouraged our members to be more involved, but that involvement has serious benefits both ways.

Our recent meeting with Russell Spera was a true bibliophile delight! Many of us collect books, but

not so many of us research and write like Russell. I encourage you to sign up for his Substack and follow his research into English editions of the *Divine Comedy*.

So much research has been done into Dante from every angle, but the kind of publication history that Russell is doing makes a special contribution, even to a field already rich with research. We're so glad to have him as a member of FBS, and let me take this opportunity to thank him for answering the call and working with Carl Nudi on our archives.

On behalf of the Florida Bibliophile Society, I'd like to wish all our members and friends a happy and safe holiday season filled with wonder and delights (and a few books!). See you in 2025!

... and at the bookstore! — Charles

The Florida Bibliophile Society

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