

The Florida Bibliophile

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IN THIS ISSUE

- Minutes of the Florida Bibliophile Society, April 2020: A Selection from Asylum by Lola Haskins* p. 2
- Remembering Madeline Kripke, “Dame of Dictionaries”* p. 15
- A Few Words on a Piece of Paper: Keep Calm and Carry On* p. 17
- Max Beerbohm in Delaware (Mark Samuels Lasner Collection), by Maureen E. Mulvihill* p. 18
- FBS Review: The Booksellers: Cinematic Elegy and Homage to a Bookish Way of Life – Review by Ben Wiley* p. 20
- FBS Review: The Dictionary Wars, by Peter Martin – Review by Jerry Morris* p. 23
- Books in Brief* p. 25
- Upcoming Events* p. 29
- Florida Book Events Calendar* p. 30
- FBS 2019–2020 Season* p. 31
- Endpaper • Inspirations* p. 32

Deadline for the September newsletter is August 28, 2020.
See page 28 for details.

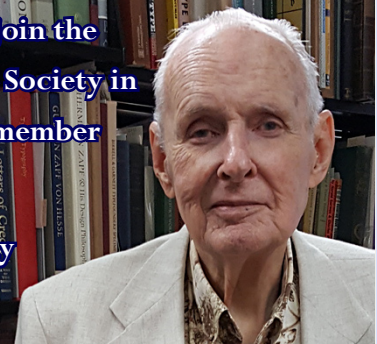
Membership in the Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies is included with your FBS membership. The FABS newsletter is now electronic as well as in print. Access a PDF of the Spring 2020 FABS Journal [here](#).



Florida poet Lola Haskins finds a resonance with the work of English poet John Clare in her latest collection, *Asylum* (2019), published in the prestigious Pitt Poetry Series from the University of Pittsburgh. In this issue, Lola shares some of these poems.

On May 12, please join the
Florida Bibliophile Society in
wishing founding member

Lee Harrer
a happy and healthy
90th birthday!



Florida Bibliophile Society
A community of book lovers

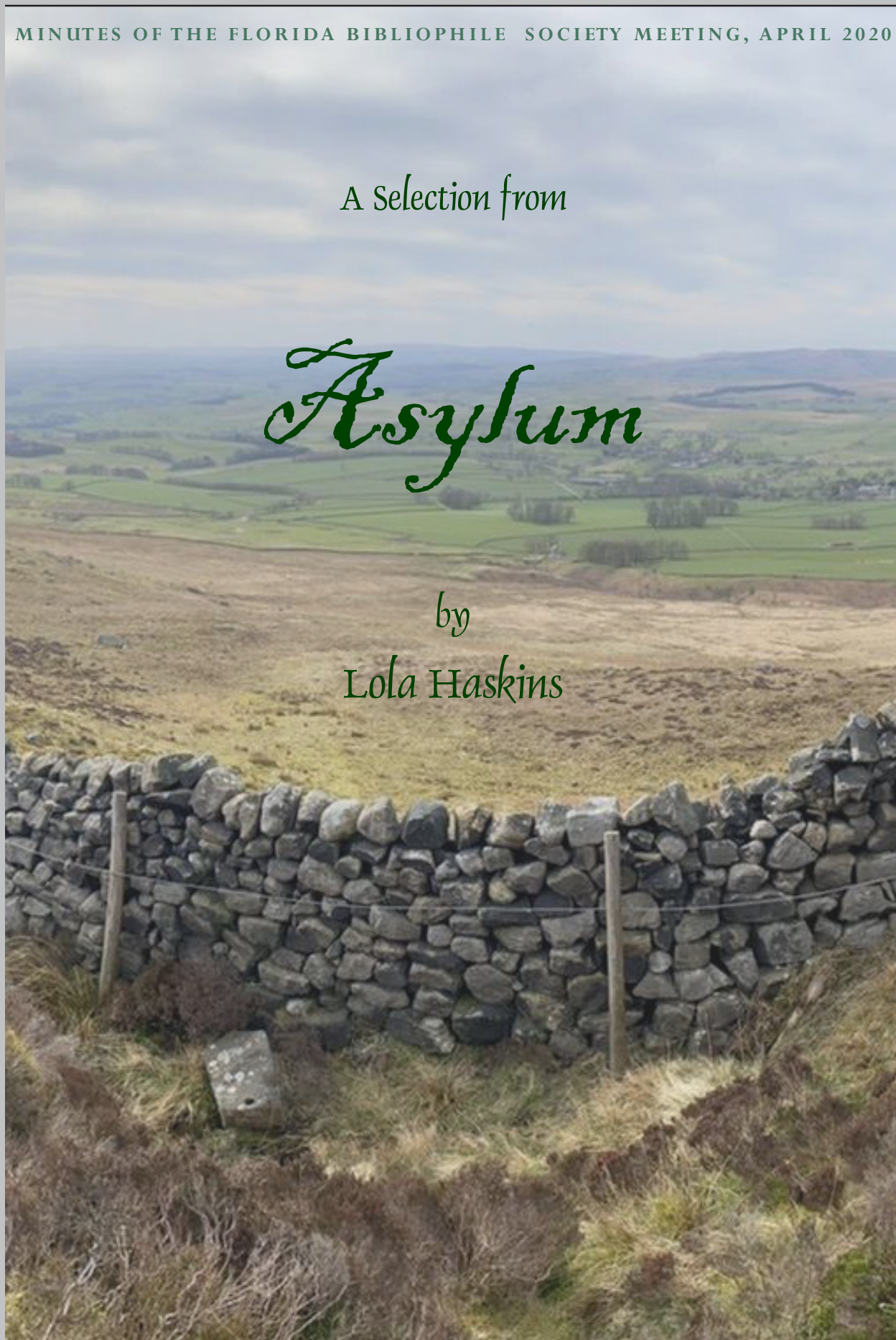
MINUTES OF THE FLORIDA BIBLIOPHILE SOCIETY MEETING, APRIL 2020

A Selection from

Asylum

by


Lola Haskins



Mortality

Every thrown stone falls.
But there is a moment first
as it hangs in the air

that the blurred hand
that tossed it will not come again,
thinks the stone as it flies.



Serenade

Soon your small yellow leaves
will become meteors

falling through the dark as
each of us will fall

no matter how hard we love,
no matter how close we come

to composing a line the angels
would recite, if only there

were such a perfect line,
if only there were angels.



In Tide Pools

lavender-spined urchins reside. And anemones with wavy mouths. And periwinkle snails, full of themselves because they have been given such a beautiful name. And over these low-dwellers, fine-haired grasses drift as if underwater there were always a wind. And since these communities, not touching, are like language groups that have grown apart, it is not surprising that each has its legends. In one, it is said that the Maker, taking pity on the rocks' empty cups, filled them. In this way, the rocks, once beggars, became kings. In another, that certain stars, unhappy to be among multitudes, found solace in these smaller skies. Elsewhere, it is said that long ago the dwellers in these valleys lived deep. But slowly and slowly, wave-rush drew them upward. And now they are visited every day by her who, breaking over them, leaves parts of herself, which they drink and want for nothing. It is not only humans who have religion. On the edge of the ocean, the finger limpets see the Almighty, and cling.



Thirteen Music Boxes

Luckily, Beauty

Far over my head, an eagle crosses
the dappled light and vanishes.
No cry, no wingbeat, yet I looked up.

*

Of Kindness

A sweetgum leans out from its roots
on the hill, to touch
my window when it rains.

*

Purple and White

The glories of the morning are
climbing an oak. How often
have I passed them, unawares?

*

Fickle

The autumn leaves cling to
each other in their drifts. The
wind has abandoned them all.

Meditation

A swirl of bark said: If the tides
inside you lose their way,
what will you have to follow?

*

Mantra

An albino frog squats on a philodendron.
He is white he is waves he sings ragas
while we sleep he is one one one.

*

New

A storm births pink mushrooms.
A doe licks the blood off
her fawn. Whose child is wind?

*

A Loss

Across the lake the
leafless trees
have turned to smoke.

*

Perseid

An eyebrow of light trailing a red cloud
hisses out in the dark sky waters
on which still float a million stars.

Post-Traumatic

Half buried in the sand
a printer still in its case, intact
but mute forever.

*

Airboat

The styrofoam cup tossed
over the rail
carries a bitter tang.

*

A Table on the Shore

A tenantless shell, rinsed, makes
a spoon
for the delicate soup of the sea.

*

Amphitrite's Necklace

On the high tide curve, large, slick
beads glittering with sand
from whose past a mist rises.

Useless

When I take the persona of a lover who says he wouldn't mind in the slightest if I were to be social with someone else, my palm suddenly dampens. But that sensation doesn't make me an actor.

Every dancer worth her salt knows where she is in space. I, on the other hand, wonder how I got here. When I try to move, I stumble over a barstool someone has left by the bed.

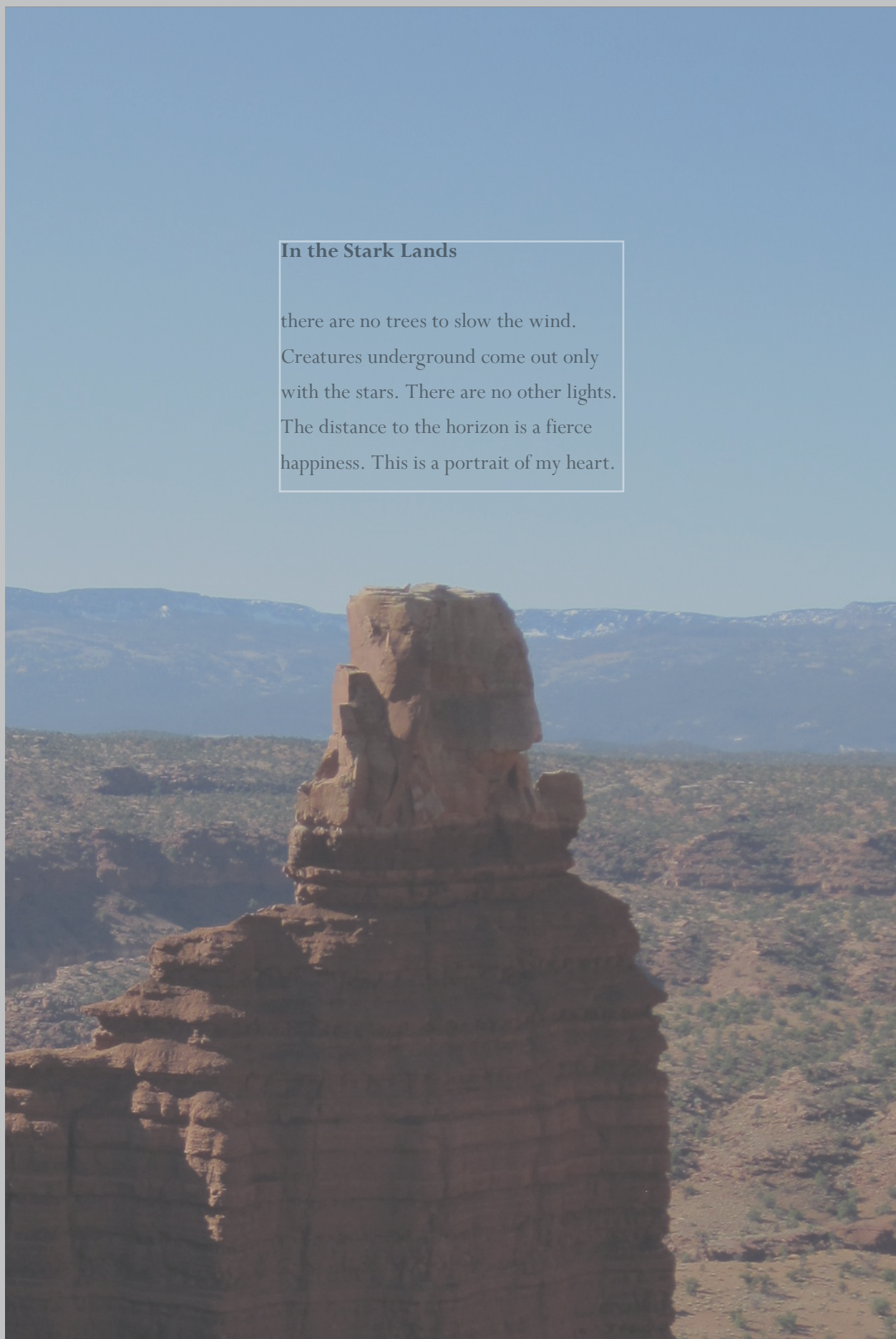
The painter parses tubes of viridian, carmine, and ultramarine like birds he is about to release. I mix red, blue, and gamboge like a frenzied kindergartener and end up with mud.

I may, however, be a poet. I am merciless enough. Every day I tear limb from limb sheets of paper I know to be completely innocent.

For Zbgniew Herbert

In the Stark Lands

there are no trees to slow the wind.
Creatures underground come out only
with the stars. There are no other lights.
The distance to the horizon is a fierce
happiness. This is a portrait of my heart.



Selections from “Variations on Twinkle Twinkle Little Star or Something like That”

Where Wolf

Listen, friend. I know what is and isn't a pillow when I see one and I'm not taking a single clo off in this room let alone getting into bed. So give it up.



Weird Wolf

The Vietnamese lady is leaning intently over your paw, finishing your French nails. Little bits of fur are floating in the footbath.



Ward Wolf

In the night-lit hospital a sister, black-and-grey hairs sticking through her wimple, clicks in to check on Granny. Check? Well, not exactly, check.



Wart Wolf

The little mound of hair on your arm that you absentmindedly stroke when you're thinking.



Whirr Wolf

A pest with wings who meets his petite amie at you and they suck your blood through a straw.



Altar

Between Rhyllstone and Cracoe the plague stone lies, tangled in nettle and fern, where once the villagers in the one that had not sickened left sustenance for their neighbors in the other – turnips and potatoes, tobacco and vinegars, and woolen mantles, cotton shifts dyed with tea, caps, scarves, trousers and skirts for those cold with fever – then crept off home to sit by their firesides from whence, though they found no tokens on their breasts or backs nor rising under their ears or armpits, they swore they could feel in their chests the coughs that poured from the dying like the blood of Christ. And in the mornings while their own babies slept, the pale faces of children – they all saw them – would drift over their roofs like mist off the hills, then vanish as if they had never been.





Across the Tops

our path runs narrow through heather whose purple sprigs,
being September's, are mixed with brown. A bleak sacramental
wind cleans us for Rhylstone Cross and the miles that may
remain to us under this dark-gray roiling sky whose blue-patches
open and close in a blink. May no step we take go unnoticed,
may we mark the whirr and complaint of each flushed grouse,
and may we glory in the cold forever, for it is the cold of the sea,
which is grass and heather and birds and sky, and most of all the
breaking light that gleams, wild and holy, in our eyes.



The Hedgehog

Yesterday, along a walled track
I came upon a dark-brown brush
just the size of my hand. From
under it poked a narrow snout
which, when it sensed my boot,
pulled back as fast as it could.
I know that rush, that flight.
Real fear, imagined fear, it
Makes no never mind. There
Is something huddled in us all.



The End of Our Lives Is at Hand!

Oh that we were all lock-pickers, fetters-busters,
Chimney-climbers! That we all wrenched out iron bars
to make our way into the streets! That we all carried
signs, Down, Abas, Abajo with what keeps us slow
and fat and puts us to bed by eight and steals our
dreams so we wake tired no matter how many
revolutions that black hand has made since our hair
first mapped our pillows with lines to nowhere. Oh
that we were all roused rabble, elbow to disheveled
elbow, sporting placards we painted ourselves
in letters raggy as crows. Oh that there were not
one unpeopled inch on any boulevard in town!
Oh that when we went home, freed of charges
never lodged though we had been held all our lives,
we did not forget! See the dust shafting from
the small high window over the room? Feel
the confinements on your wrists and ankles,
your bracelets and pretty chains? I know.
Those are you. Were. Flex your fingers so
they make a church, a steeple, flapping birds.

Constellated

When the atoms in my body

return to stars

They will not remember

this five am

out my window,

neither the moor

asleep on the horizon,

nor, across her darkened hips,

the scatters

of bright yellow gorse.



Remembering Madeline Kripke, “Dame of Dictionaries”

FBS president Jerry Morris recently wrote to say that in his periodic news browsing he had seen a notice in the *New York Times* that Madeline Kripke had died. He was stunned. Madeline and he had been “book friends” for many years through their common interest in collecting dictionaries and through many discussions of fine points and research questions about the history of dictionaries.

Madeline appeared in *The Florida Bibliophile* in April 2018 in an article by Jerry, “The One That Got Away.” That story briefly described Jerry’s efforts to obtain the true first edition of the style guide *The Elements of Style* (1918), by William Strunk, Jr. In 1957, *The Elements of Style* came to the attention of author E. B. White while he was working at the *New Yorker*. White had studied with Strunk in 1919 but had long since forgotten the little book that Strunk had shared with his students. White revised and expanded the book, and Macmillan and Company published it in 1959. “Strunk & White,” as it was known to millions of students in the following decades, was an immediate bestseller, selling two million copies in 1959 alone. (E. B. White will be known better to many as the author of *Stuart Little* (1945), *Charlotte’s Web* (1952), and other children’s books.)

Jerry’s search for his own copy of the Holy *Elements* Grail led him, as book research often does, on a fabulous tour of publishers, authors, and collectors, and among them was Madeline Kripke.

Madeline’s fascination with dictionaries began in the fifth grade when her parents gave her a copy of *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. Madeline explained that this book opened a new world for her; suddenly, she could “read at any vocabulary level” she wanted to. Already an avid reader, she began to try more advanced works, like Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pnin*, Aldous Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception*, and *The Frogs* by Aristophanes. Every day, she would write new words she had encountered in a notebook as well as reviewing words she had already recorded. She continued this practice for years.

Sources: Narratively; *New York Times*; thecut.com



Emon Hassan/ NYT

Madeline Kripke appears before a portion of her collection. The photo appeared with her New York Times obituary, part of the series “Those We Lost” that highlights individuals lost to COVID-19.

Madeline, born in Connecticut, spent her childhood years in Omaha, Nebraska. She was the daughter of a conservative Jewish rabbi, Myer S. Kripke, and his devout wife, Dorothy, who wrote religious children’s books. She had an older brother, Saul, who like her, was bookish and would eventually become a philosopher. When Madeline went to college, she went to Barnard College in New York City. Her mother felt this choice was appropriate because it was near Jewish Theological Seminary, which would allow Madeline to continue her religious studies.

But New York in the 1960s was a center of a blossoming counterculture, and by the time of her graduation, Madeline described herself as “a cross between a beatnik and hippie.” She remained in New York City, and it would be her home for the rest of her life.

She began exploring the world of work, first as a welfare worker, then as teacher, then as computer programmer. But she soon discovered the world of publishing and became an editor, working for a series of magazines and publishing houses. She was back in the world of words and debates about meanings and usage.

It was early in this phase where she began to see the dictionaries at work not as mere tools but as objects of wonder. In New York, she had access to marvelous bookshops and libraries and began to read everything

Kripke, concluded

she could about dictionaries and the people who created them.

In the 1970s, Madeline realized that the specialized knowledge she was amassing could serve her as a book dealer. This connected her with other collectors and dealers in a new way, and her collection really began to grow. She encountered unusual and fascinating types of dictionaries, each a window into a little known corner of the world. Far from their proper and proscriptive reputation, she located dictionaries – both scholarly and popular – that catalogued the nether worlds of prison slang and bathroom graffiti. Madeline grew to love this side of language, describing it as “the most fun of any part of language” with its hidden meanings and importance to subcultures.

Her oldest book? A Latin dictionary from 1502 – a giant book: “These pages look like they were printed yesterday.” She described it as a foundation stone in the history of dictionaries.

Madeline kept around 20,000 books in her two-bedroom loft apartment, most on custom-made bookshelves, but also in boxes that lined the rooms. At one point, they spilled out into the hallway of her building, and she received an eviction notice from the landlord. From that time, she kept the overflow in storage facilities. Most of the books in her apartment related to her first love, dictionaries, and her collection has been described as one of the foremost in the world. To the outsider it may have seemed like a jumble, but Madeline had a system, and she knew where the books were. (In an email to Jerry, she mentioned that she knew where a particular book was but needed time to dig it out *safely*.) Madeline described her situation as “no way to live” and herself as “a bit constricted” but “fairly content.”

The numbers might indicate indiscriminate collecting, but Madeline’s collection has been characterized as carefully assembled. She knew each volume in the collection and had an encyclopedic memory of their contents.

Simon Winchester, the author of *The Meaning of Everything: The Story of the Oxford English Dictionary*



Seated at her desk, the epicenter of her collecting work, Madeline Kripke holds a Latin dictionary from 1502, the oldest in her collection.

(2003), reported that he “would challenge her to find this volume of Czech loanwords or that collection of Greenland slang or *Common Terms in Astrophysics* — and she’d always say, ‘Yes, I’m sure I have it somewhere,’ and would dive in like a truffle hound and come up for air holding the volume in triumph, and I would retire, always defeated.”

Madeline had considered several fates for her collection. Her hope was to build a library of dictionaries to house the carefully assembled, if large, collection, but at the time of her death, there were no concrete plans. Her brother has stated that he is working with a number of experts to determine what should be done. Her slang dictionaries and word lists form one of the most valuable parts of the collection.

Madeline contracted COVID-19 in March and died, age 76, in early April of complications of pneumonia. Her obituary in the *New York Times* is part of their series “Those We Lost,” which seeks to put a face on the losses due to the pandemic.

Jerry has compiled a series of emails he exchanged with Madeline which portray their friendship and her linguistic playfulness, “[Defining Madeline Kripke: A Remembrance](#)” – a snapshot for those of us who did not know her from someone who did.

A Few Words on a Piece of Paper: Keep Calm and Carry On

Lost for over 50 years, a simple slogan and a simple design have become an icon of the 21st century – and by the look of things, just in time.

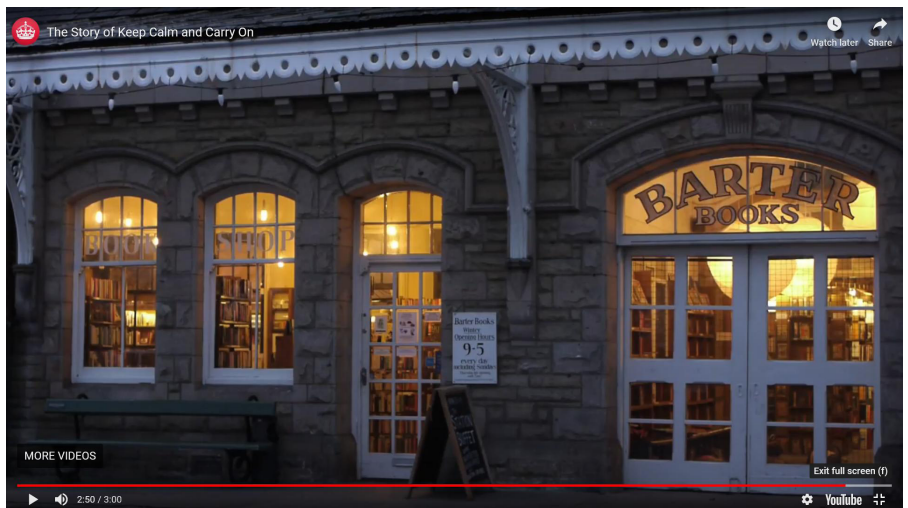
The war had not begun in 1939 when the British Government commissioned a poster to support public morale when the inevitable arrived. The commission called for uplifting words in a distinctive typeface. Three slogans were executed in a common design: the Tudor crown, a single colorfield, and white lettering. Two and a half million posters were printed and placed in storage on the eve of hostilities. The Ministry of Information was holding the posters for critical events, like a

bombing campaign, but though many bombing campaigns came, the posters were never officially released. A few were unofficially posted. A few months later, the Ministry of Information program that had created the posters was cancelled, and in mid 1940, the posters were pulped as part of a paper salvage effort motivated by wartime shortages.

In 2000, Stuart and Mary Manley, owners of Barter Books in northeast England purchased a box of books at an auction. When they inspected their purchase, they found a large red poster. They liked it, put it in a frame, and hung it in the window. Others liked it too, and the Manleys had copies printed.

Barter Books is a very active bookstore, with more than 300,000 visitors a year, one of the largest bookstores in Europe, sometimes called the “British Library of used books”. Thousands saw the poster; thousands bought the poster, then the mugs, then the paperweights... And thousands imitated and parodied the poster and the slogan, creating one of the most recognizable memes of the 21st century.

Despite the commercialization and the ubiquitousness, a simple, direct slogan and the clean design still make a valuable point in a world suffused with media and messages. A still point in the madness. Just a few words on a piece of paper.



ABOVE: A still shot from a beautiful video from *The Atlantic* magazine, *The Story of Keep Calm and Carry On*, about the creation of the poster in the dark days leading up to World War II, its rediscovery on the threshold of the 21st century, and its continuing influence. The shots inside Barter Books alone are worth the price of admission! [View it here.](#)





MAD ABOUT MAX

Max Beerbohm Rarities in the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection
(University of Delaware)



Mark Samuels Lasner ("MSL")

Peter Astwood, Mr. Mark Lasner Taking a Perambulation

Pencil on paper, [c2004]. Image reduced & reformatted as cameo. Signed "Max", of course.

"MY MAX BEERBOHM COLLECTING began with a caricature of Frank Harris and Shakespeare (see facing page, last image). This was intended to be an example, nothing more, to add to first editions of Max's work in the 1890s. But owing to a collector's completist impulse, as Ed Maggs puts it, things got a bit out of hand: first, with my acquisition of *Carmen Becceriense* (1890), one of two known copies of Beerbohm's first publication; and then with the commission from Oxford University Press to compile a new bibliography of Max as caricaturist *and* writer. The bibliography got as far as 1,500 typeset pages, but was never completed. My Beerbohm collecting grew into "Maximania"—the desire to have *everything* related to Beerbohm (present listing, over 1,500+ items). And so, the title of this webpage. To me, Max Beerbohm is a creator of wonderful and witty visual images, an entire window on the Victorians, the Edwardians—and after." - **MSL**

In the spirit of outreach, the Florida Bibliophile Society newsletter is again pleased to spotlight our colleagues in Delaware. As their recent FABS Tour showed, they have a continuing commitment to book history, book preservation, and book education. One of their bibliophilic stars is **Mark Samuels Lasner**, whose extensive collection of Victoriana was recently donated to the University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press. Mr Samuels Lasner and his collection have been the subject of many feature articles, across the mediums, and we are pleased to bring attention to two recent essays in *The Book Collector* journal by distinguished bookseller **Ed Maggs (Maggs Brothers Ltd, London)**: "Rare Books: Mark Samuels Lasner," Summer 2019, with two images; and "Sir Max Beerbohm – At Home – in Mark Samuels Lasner's Collection," Autumn, 2019, nine superb images.

For your pleasure, this webpage also offers a few captioned selections from the Samuels Lasner *Beerbohm Collection*. We hope you agree that Max Beerbohm's contribution to the caricature as civilized graphic satire and social commentary cannot be overstated. Here's to you, Sir Max, thank you for all you gave us (and showed us!).



MAX BEERBOHM SELECTIONS
Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, Delaware



Image Left: Max Beerbohm, *Oscar Wilde* [1895-1900]. Pencil, ink, watercolor on paper.
Image Right: Max Beerbohm, *Rossetti's Courtship* [c1916-1917]. Pencil and watercolor on paper.
This *Rossetti* study is for the caricature published in Beerbohm's *Rossetti And His Circle* (1922). A lock of Elizabeth Siddal's famous red hair is a prized (and popular) rarity in the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection.



Kaye Webb, Max Beerbohm. Photograph, 1952. Reduced & Reformatted as Cameo.
Taken on Max's 80th birthday, 24 August 1952, when MSL was too young to meet his hero.

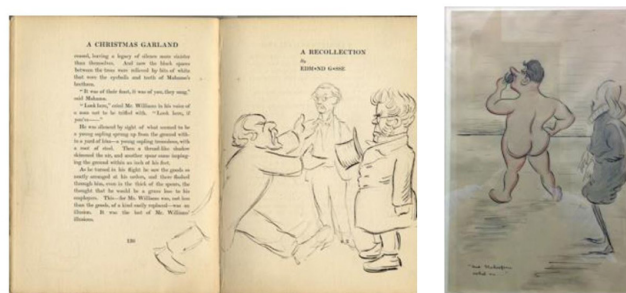


Image Left: Max Beerbohm, *A Christmas Garland* (1912; Beerbohm copy), his matchless parodies of contemporary authors. Above sketch depicts Sir Edmund Gosse introducing Henrik Ibsen to Robert Browning (a fictional and -- in Max's telling -- utterly failed event!). **Image Right:** Max Beerbohm, *Had Shakespeare asked me* Ink and watercolor on paper, 1896. Caricature of celebrity journalist Frank Harris. After spouting off at London's Café Royal about homosexuality, Harris was famously depicted offering a plump bum to the Bard.

Written & Designed by Maureen E. Mulvihill, FBS Member and 2012-2015 Vice-President
Technical assistance, Charles M. Brown, FBS Vice-President and FBS Newsletter Editor
Images & content coordination, Mark Samuels Lasner & Margaret Stetz. For Mulvihill's illustrated review of Lasner's Grolier Club exhibition (NY, 2008), view [here](#). For Mulvihill Collection, view [here](#). ♦

FBS Review: *The Booksellers: Cinematic Elegy and Homage to a Bookish Way of Life* – Review by Ben Wiley



Adam Weinberger examining a bookshelf, *The Booksellers*, Courtesy Greenwich Entertainment

Florida Bibliophile Society members recently had the opportunity to view the film *The Booksellers*, a new documentary about antiquarian book dealers. If that world sounds just a bit too staid and pedantic for you, too twee and too tweedy, consider it a mystery and a thriller on the lure of the book with as much romance and drama as any Hollywood love story.

For the bibliophile in us all, every slow tracking shot across peeling vellum and shredding fiber, every close-up of *The Great Gatsby* dust jacket's stunning design and art work, every loving, lingering view of the classics *Moby Dick* and *Don Quixote*, every microscopic magnification of ink on a deckled page will bring you to tears, or laughter, or orgasmic release.

You'll find yourself in every frame.

Directed by D. W. Young, this 2019 film is destined to be a must-see at the local art house theater and a must-have for the book lover's personal video library. Centered around the Antiquarian Book Fair

held annually in New York's historic Park Avenue Armory, the film highlights obsessive book-centric personalities with lots of celebrity talking heads and more than a few quirky, starry-eyed eccentrics.

We recognize them so well because they are we, and we are they.

The film wisely relies on text to punctuate the stunning visuals. After all, this is a text-centric audience, so we must let the

written word have its due. There are frequent quotations written across the screen so we're reading as well as viewing. Thus we know that A. S. W. Rosenbach said in *Books and Bidders*, "I have known men to hazard their fortunes, go long journeys halfway around the world, forget friendships, even lie, cheat, and steal, all for the gain of a book."

There's so much more to a book than reading.

– Maurice Sendak

The Booksellers, continued

Dave Bergman, *The Booksellers*, Courtesy of Greenwich Entertainment

Whether it's traipsing through the Antiquarian Fair with pricey editions for sale well into the six figures, or meandering through the Strand and Argosy bookshops, still standing and thriving, or gazing in rapture at the elegant apartments and crammed libraries of the film's featured book esthetes, we adore every second of this movie, joining the elite who have sold their souls to the book.

As high falutin' as it sounds — "Books are the arbitrary sum of our dreams and memory. They give us our model of self-transcendence" — I thrill and shudder when people talk codex to me. This movie brought a lot of thrilling and shuddering even in its all-too-brief 90 minutes of screen time.

It features a veritable Who's Who of the modern book-dealing world, including the three sisters of the Argosy Book Store, Adina Cohen, Naomi

Hample and Judith Lowry; Jim Cummins, who owns over 400,000 books; Stephen Massey, founder of Christie's NY Book Dept. and auctioneer of the most valuable book ever sold, Leonardo's Hammer codex (bought for \$28 million by Bill Gates); Bibi Mohamed, preeminent dealer in leather-bound books, including human skin; Henry Wessells, poet, writer, sci-fi collector; David Bergman, "smallest dealer with the biggest books" (short man, elephant folios); Rebecca Romney, Pawn Stars go-to expert and rare book dealer; Nicholas Lowry, Antiques Roadshow book appraiser and President of Swann Auction Galleries; Caroline Schimmel, owner of a massive collection of books by women writers; Nancy Bass Wyden, co-owner of The Strand; Michael Zinman, one of the most influential collectors of Americana; Jay Walker, founder of priceline.com and founder of the *Walker Library of The History of Human Imagination*, one of the

The relationship of an individual to his books is like a love affair. It's hard to explain to people, if at all, yet totally satisfying to yourself. – Michael Zinman

The Booksellers, concluded

Adina Cohen, Naomi Hample, and Judith Lowry of the Argosy Bookstore, *The Booksellers*, Courtesy of Greenwich Entertainment

world's great personal libraries; Kevin Young, *New Yorker* poetry editor and director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; and William Reese, widely considered the greatest American rare book dealer of his generation, and to whom the film is dedicated, *In Memoriam*, 1955–2018.

Books are a sort of cultural DNA, the code for who, as a society, we are and what we know. – Susan Orlean, *The Library Book*

Sardonic musings from Fran Leibowitz, Gay Talese, Susan Orlean, Parker Posey and others pepper this film with contemporary zip and zest that lighten the antiquarian heaviness. We all have a knowing laugh, too true not to be true, when a patron is overheard at the book fair declaring, “The moment he croaks, I’m on the phone to Sotheby’s.”

Some predict the printed word will die an analogue death, forever altered and corrupted by the Internet and the digital marketplace. Others believe the

book is destined to stay alive, still central to who we have been, who we are, and who we hope to be. The book is not a mere fossilized artifact but a living, breathing, organic entity. As difficult as the profession is, all the booksellers featured in this film attest to the mystical power of the printed book.

The film’s final voiceover is from Henry Wessells, reading his own title poem from his collection, *The Private Life of Books*, in which the book itself has the last word:

Cloth, flesh, ink, skin, paper, dust — these are but material form in which ideas dwell. In the roar of a crowded shelf of books, desert sun and arctic night and distant seas of thought awaken, mingle and are still. Minds meet where the reading hand grasps the void and inks its passage in empty margins. Lost, forgotten, thumbed, split, we bear the scars of patient decades and century dreams. Whose hands will next hold me I do not know. The book too reads its readers in real time.

If you are a reader, a collector, a dreamer, in short, a human being, then this elegiac, celebratory film is for you.



FBS Review: *The Dictionary Wars: The American Fight over the English Language*, by Peter Martin – Review by Jerry Morris

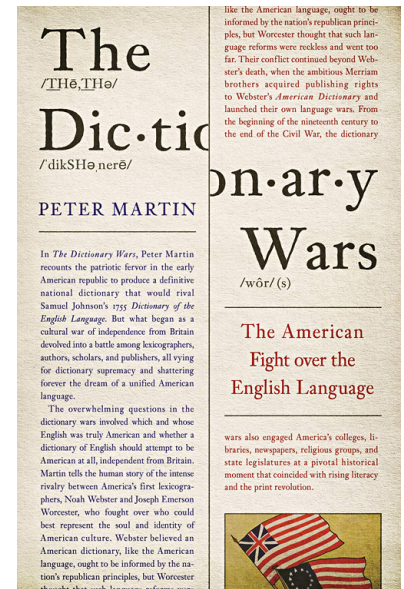
I have bought and read quite a few of the books that Charles Brown posts in the Books in Brief section of *The Florida Bibliophile*. *The Dictionary Wars* by Peter Martin, which appeared in the March issue, is the latest one.

I wanted this book for several reasons:

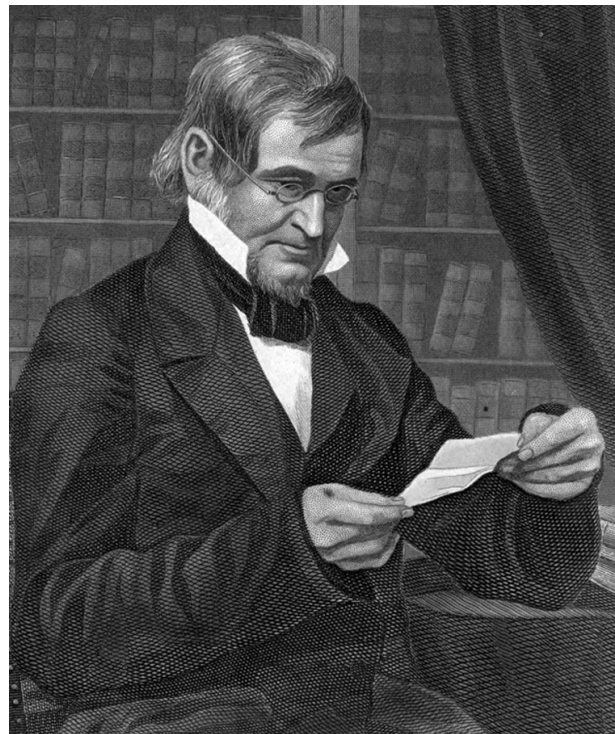
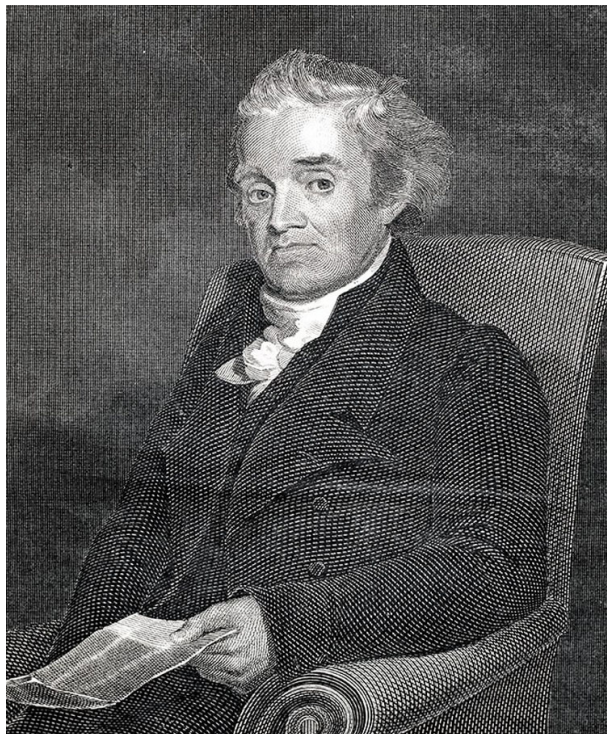
1. I collect [dictionaries](#) and books about dictionaries.
2. I read two other books by Peter Martin: *A Life of James Boswell*, which I enjoyed reading, and *Samuel Johnson: A Biography*, which did not impress me. I guess I've read too many other biographies of Johnson.
3. I wrote about *The Dictionary Wars* in the September 2015 post to *My Sentimental Library* blog, "Some Worcester Sources and Other Discourses Concerning the Dictionary Wars." (See link at the end of this article.)
4. Martin appeared to be presenting a different slant on what I believed the Dictionary Wars were all about. He presented it as "The American Fight Over the English Language." I wanted to see where he was going with that idea.
5. While researching my article on *The Dictionary*

Wars in 2015, I came across several erroneous statements about Joseph E. Worcester (pronounced wuss-ter) that, to this day, besmirch his good name and reputation. I wanted to see if Martin repeated any of these falsehoods.

Martin gives a thorough and impressive summary of the state of the English language in America in the early to mid 1800s. Except for one occasion, his story tracks with mine. But he greatly expands upon it while striving to prove his theme: that the Dictionary Wars were all about the American fight over the English language. The truth of the matter is that Noah Webster accused Joseph E. Worcester of plagiarism. Their feud played



The *Dictionary Wars* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2019) by Peter Martin was featured in *Books in Brief* in the March 2020 issue of *The Florida Bibliophile*.



Left: Noah Webster, from the frontispiece of *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828); Right: Joseph Emerson Worcester

Dictionary Wars, concluded

out in the newspapers and became known as the Dictionary Wars. The Merriam Brothers continued the Dictionary Wars after Webster died. The Dictionary Wars continued until Worcester died in 1865. But it's a hell of a story!

In the early years of our republic, most Americans were completely satisfied with dictionaries from England, particularly Johnson's *Dictionary*. But Noah Webster and several other scholars wanted to have a national dictionary. Webster spent almost twenty years of his life compiling an American dictionary. There were, however, many scholars who thought Webster's orthography was too extreme. Webster believed that words should be spelled the way they sound. And that silent letters needed to be omitted. Webster had trouble finding a publisher. Webster toned down some of his more outlandish orthography, and Sherman Converse published Webster's dictionary, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, in 1828.

The dictionary cost \$20 (the equivalent of \$450 today!) and was too expensive for the average American. Moreover, Webster was ridiculed for the spelling of some of the words in his dictionary: ake for ache; aker for acre; and nehboor for neighbor. Mr. Rogers would not have been happy with that last one!

Earlier that same year, Joseph E. Worcester's edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* was published. This dictionary proved quite popular in America, going through 25 impressions from 1828 to 1860.

My understanding of events differs from Martin's over the next step for Webster's dictionary. In my article, I write that Converse wanted to publish an abridged edition, but Webster said he was too tired to do it. Martin writes that Webster wanted to have an abridged edition published, but Converse believed "it would be too much work to turn the 1828 quarto into a saleable commodity." Peter Martin, however, has the Webster and Converse letters to prove that his rendition is what actually transpired.

Reluctantly at first, Converse decided to publish an abridged edition. He had read one of the glowing reviews of Worcester's edition of Johnson's

Dictionary, and wanted Worcester to abridge Webster's dictionary. Worcester was already working on compiling a dictionary for American schools himself and turned down Converse's offer, not once but twice. Converse then offered him \$2,000 (the equivalent of \$50,000 today) and Worcester accepted. He was to regret that decision for the rest of his life.

To protect Webster's interests, Converse engaged Webster's son-in-law Chauncey Goodrich to act on Webster's behalf and oversee the changes in orthography that had to be made by Worcester. The abridged edition was published eight months later in 1829. A year later, it was already in its fifth edition. Later that same year, Worcester's school edition was published.

Webster was horrified with what Worcester had done to his dictionary and stewed and stewed and stewed. Finally, on November 26, 1834, Noah Webster fired the first salvo of the Dictionary Wars, accusing Worcester of gross plagiarism and calling him a "common thief." The Dictionary Wars went on for thirty years, first with Webster and then with the Merriam Brothers. Peter Martin covers every minute of it. And accurately at that!

If there was a winner of the Dictionary Wars, it had to be the Merriam Brothers. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary became the national dictionary. And if one really stretches it, one can say that the Merriam Brothers won "The American Fight over the English Language."

Peter Martin is a winner as well, for he has helped to restore the good name and reputation of Joseph E. Worcester.

Read more about the Dictionary Wars:

- [Some Worcester Sources and Other Discourses Concerning the Dictionary Wars](#)
- [121 Words or More About the Library of an American Lexicographer](#)

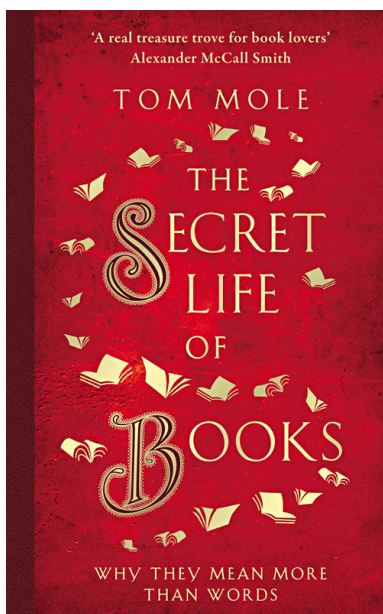
Books in Brief

The Secret Life of Books: Why They Mean More Than Words

Tom Mole

Elliott and Thompson Ltd.

256 pp., September 2019



We love books. We take them to bed with us. They weigh down our suitcases when we go on holiday.


We display them on our bookshelves or store them in our attics. We give them as gifts. We write our names in them. We take them for granted. And all the time, our books are leading a double life.

The Secret Life of Books is about everything that isn't just the words. It's about

how books transform us as individuals. It's about how books – and readers – have evolved over time. And it's about why, even with the arrival of other media, books still have the power to change our lives.

Books are far more than the words on their pages. Whether we favor leather tomes, dog-eared paperbacks, or files on our phones, what we read and how we read it says a huge amount about us. From illuminated manuscripts to the last edition of the *Yellow Pages*, books tell us stories about who we are.



In this thought-provoking meditation, **Tom Mole** brings the expertise he has gathered running Edinburgh University's Centre for the History of the Book to write an illuminating account that looks at everything from binding innovations to binding errors, to books defaced by lovers, to those imprisoning professors in their offices, to books in art, to burned books, to those we'll leave behind. A striking text in a stunning package, it will change how you think about books. 

Sources: Simon & Schuster; Univ. of Edinburgh

Wordsworth's Fun

Matthew Bevis

Univ. of Chicago Press

264 pp., August 2019

One of England's greatest poets, William Wordsworth was very influential in the 19th century and well into the 20th.

Matthew Bevis argues for a new reading of this great poet, a reading that shows Wordsworth's playful creativity and profound feeling for comedy.


The great critic and essayist William Hazlitt made this discovery for himself when he met

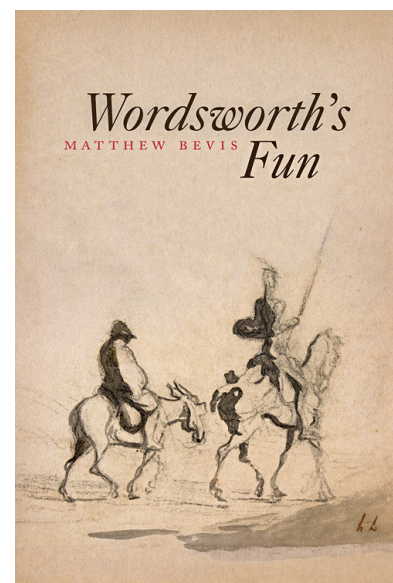
Wordsworth: "The next day Wordsworth arrived from Bristol at Coleridge's cottage," William Hazlitt recalled, "He answered in some degree to his friend's description of him, but was more quaint and Don Quixote-like . . . there was a convulsive inclination to laughter about the mouth."

Wordsworth's Fun explores the writer's debts to the ludic and the ludicrous in classical tradition; his reworkings of Ariosto, Erasmus, and Cervantes; his engagement with English poetic humor; and his love of comic prose. Combining close reading with cultural analysis, Bevis travels untrodden ways to study Wordsworth's interest in laughing gas, pantomime, the figure of the fool, and the value of play, shedding new light on how one poet's strange humor helped to shape modern literary experiment.

Matthew Bevis is professor of English at the University of Oxford. He is the author of *The Art of Eloquence*, *Comedy: A Very Short Introduction*, and *Lessons in Byron*.



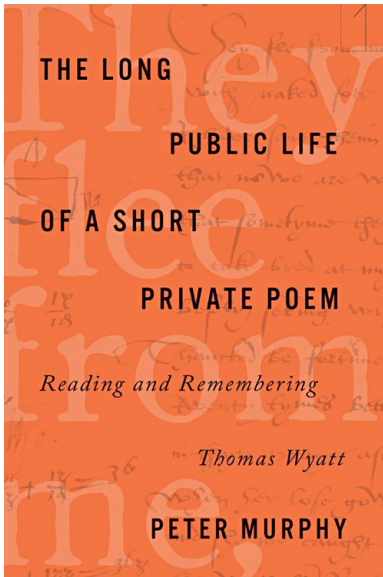
Sources: Univ. of Chicago Press 



Books in Brief, continued

The Long Public Life of a Short Private Poem: Reading and Remembering Thomas Wyatt

Peter Murphy
Stanford Univ. Press
272 pp., August 2019



The Elizabethan poet Thomas Wyatt was famous for introducing the sonnet to English poetry. He published many poems, *not* including “They Flee from Me,” the subject of this book. Murphy begins by asking how this poem came to be a fixture of modern poetry anthologies. He tells about the poem’s survival in vivid and

compelling detail and the accidents of fate that kept it alive for 500 years. Wyatt’s poem prompts numerous questions about literature, culture, and history. From the deadly, fascinating circles of Henry VIII’s court to the contemporary classroom, *The Long Public Life of a Short Private Poem* also introduces us to a series of worlds. We meet antiquaries, editors, publishers, anthologizers, and critics whose own life stories beckon. And we learn how the poem came to be considered – after many centuries of neglect – a model of the “best” English has to offer and an ideal object of literary study. The result is an exploration of literature in the fine grain of the everyday and its needs: in the classroom, in society, and in the life of nations.



Peter Murphy is John Hawley Roberts Professor of English at Williams College. His expertise includes the history of literary forms; the history of popular storytelling; comic strips, comic books, and contemporary graphic storytelling; the novel; and British Romanticism.



Sources: Stanford Univ. Press; Williams College

Poetic Thinking Today: An Essay

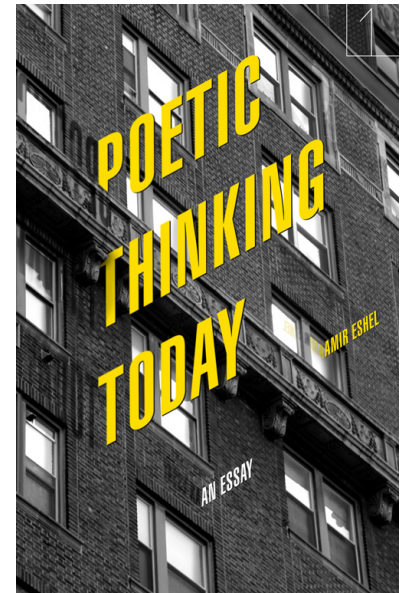
Amir Eshel
Stanford Univ. Press
240 pp., November 2019

Thinking is much broader than what our science-obsessed, utilitarian culture often takes it to be. More than mere problem solving or the methodical comprehension of our personal and natural circumstances, thinking may take the form of a poem, a painting, a sculpture, a museum exhibition, or a documentary film. Exploring a variety of works by contemporary

artists and writers who exemplify poetic thinking, this book draws our attention to the capacity of creative human insight to help protect and cultivate human freedom. All the contemporary works of art and literature that *Poetic Thinking Today* examines touch on our recent experiences with tyranny in culture and politics. They express the uninhibited thoughts and ideas of their creators even as they foster poetic thinking in us. In an era characterized by the global reemergence of authoritarian tendencies, Amir Eshel writes with the future of the humanities in mind. He urges the acknowledgment and cultivation of poetic thinking as a crucial component of our intellectual pursuits in general and of our educational systems more specifically.

Amir Eshel is Edward Clark Crossett Professor of Humanistic Studies at Stanford University. He is also Professor of German Studies and Comparative Literature and Director of Comparative Literature and its graduate program.

Sources: Stanford Univ.; Stanford Univ. Press



Books in Brief, concluded

Leonardo’s Library: The World of a Renaissance Reader

Paula Findlen and Others
Stanford Univ. Press
208 pp., October 2019



Leonardo’s Library catalogues an exhibition at Stanford University’s Green Library (2019) for the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci’s death. Coordinated by history professor Paula Findlen, the exhibition drew on Stanford’s Special Collections, the David Rumsey Map Center, and the Lane Medical Library to

reveal the authors and texts that shaped da Vinci’s world and influenced his ideas, reading habits, and understanding of books.

Da Vinci’s many interests led him to pursue learning in multiple ways. Artist, engineer, and keen observer of the physical world, his library, known only through various lists and his notebooks, shows that he was widely read and deeply curious about the printed book as one of the Renaissance’s greatest innovations. The 52 early printed books and medieval and Renaissance manuscripts in the exhibition provide a close look at books that Leonardo is known to have owned, borrowed, or otherwise read. Florentine manuscripts closely associated with Leonardo’s world, and Renaissance readers’ writing and drawing in Stanford’s copies of these books reveal the world of the Renaissance reader in general and Leonardo in particular.



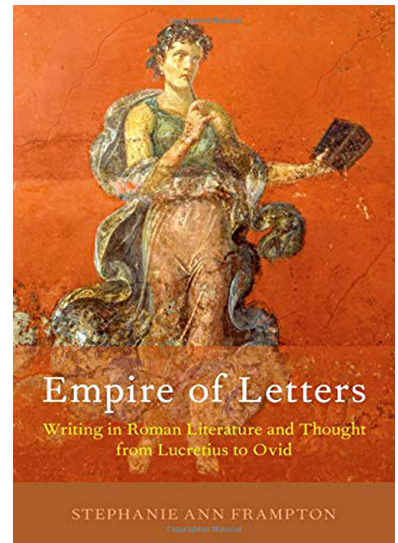
Paula Findlen is Professor of Early Modern Europe and History of Science and Co-Director of the Suppes Center for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology.

Sources: Stanford Univ; Stanford Univ. Libraries

Empire of Letters: Writing in Roman Literature and Thought from Lucretius to Ovid

Stephanie Ann Frampton
Oxford Univ. Press
224 pp., February 2019

Empire of Letters sheds new light on the history of the book in antiquity and tells the story of writing during the pivotal moment of transition from the Roman Republic to the Empire. Frampton uses close reading of the period’s major authors and detailed analysis of material texts to argue that the methods and materials of writing were



essential to the worldviews and self-fashioning of authors whose works took written form. Whether in wooden tablets, papyrus scrolls, monuments in stone and bronze, or the alphabet itself, Roman authors idealized textual forms and used them to compete.

Fewer than fifty fragments of classical Roman bookrolls survive, and even fewer lines of poetry. Understanding the history of the ancient Roman book requires us to think differently about this evidence, placing it into the context of textual forms that survive in greater numbers, from fragments of Greek papyri to Latin graffiti. By attending carefully to this kind of material, in conjunction with the rich literary testimony of the period, *Empire of Letters* exposes the importance of textuality itself to Roman authors and puts the written word back at the center of Roman literature.

Stephanie Frampton is an Associate Professor at MIT. Her research interests include Latin literature and material culture, ancient media and book history, and comparative approaches to classical literature.

Sources: MIT; Warburg Institute





Life imitates art: Jef Aerosol mural for the In Situ Art Festival (2014, Paris) is a perfect place to read your book.

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of gratitude. *Thanks* is common
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This Month's Writers and Contributors

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

David Hall
Jerry Morris
Linda Morris
Maureen E. Mulvihill
Carl Mario Nudi
Gary Simons
Ben Wiley
Barry Zack, SAC

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!

If you 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, enjoyable group. You will find contact emails on the last page of this newsletter.



Membership is \$50 per year. You can find a membership form on our website. It will give you the address to which to send your filled-out form and payment.

Joining FBS also makes you a member of our national organization, 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

May 2020

FBS Annual Banquet

Our annual banquet, originally scheduled for May 17, has been canceled. As we all ease into the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will consider the options for holding the banquet at a later time. Until then, we hope you will savor this literary Banquet of the Mind....



Guests at this Roman banquet recline at table and applaud as one of many sumptuous courses is carried in. The scene is Trimalchio's Feast from *Fellini's Satyricon* (1969), based on the ancient Roman novel by Gaius Petronius. Few Roman novels have come down to us, and this one has only survived as a series of substantial fragments. Romans who could read were avid readers, and long narratives were popular. *Satyricon* is the story of a young man traveling through Roman Italy seeking healing for a sexual affliction. In his travels, his experiences and encounters are bizarre. In the process, Petronius satirizes many aspects of Roman culture, especially its classes and their lot in Roman society.

At this feast, the excesses of the wealthy at table are contrasted with the silent duty of an endless procession of servants and slaves. The film received high praise when it was released at the 30th Venice Film Festival.

Fellini's film imitates the fragmentary structure of the surviving text and largely adheres to the original text (with important exceptions). The strangeness of the film was intended to portray the gulf between our culture and Roman culture, often portrayed in film with modern values and attitudes wearing period costumes.

Well... not exactly Brio Tuscan Grille, but definitely a relative.



Florida Book Events Calendar

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

Due to coronavirus concerns, book events in Florida are on hold. The Florida Book Events Calendar will return when confirmed event dates are available. In the meantime...

The BiblioFile, with Nigel Beale

From the website....

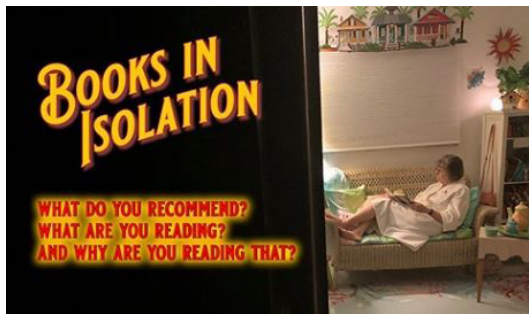
[THE BIBLIO FILE](#) is one of the world’s leading podcasts about “the book” and an inquiry into the wider world of book culture. Hosted by NIGEL BEALE it features wide ranging conversations with authors, poets, book publishers, booksellers, book editors, book collectors, book makers, book scholars, book critics, book designers, book publicists, literary agents and others on Robert Darnton’s “communications circuit” who just plain love books, as he does.

Check out this amazing website. There is an unbelievable amount of content, with podcasts going back to 2006, lists of reading, links, etc. The most recent podcast features



Nigel Beale

Helene Atwan, Director of [Beacon Press](#), an independent nonprofit publisher of nonfiction founded in 1854. Her subject is “Beacon Press and its social justice mission,” described on the Beacon Press website as “the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity and compassion in human relations;...” Refreshing.



Florida book dealers and FBS members Steve and Edie Eisenstein have been starring in “Rare Book Cafe” for a number of years, covering all aspects of books. Their homepage explains that “Rare Book Cafe is the only live-streamed program about antiquarian books, ephemera, and more. It is a project of the Florida Antiquarian Book Fair.”

Rare Book Cafe continues with new shows during the current period of isolation. A recent show was entitled “Book Collecting in the Coronavirus Era.” Collectors and

Rare Book Cafe, with Steven and Edie Eisenstein

dealers discussed how the pandemic has shifted the titles people are buying, for example, parents seeking children’s books or doctors seeking books on viruses, food safety, etc. In a wide-ranging conversation, dealers discuss how they are responding to the pandemic. This and many more episodes are available to view from the [Rare Book Cafe website \(on Facebook\)](#).



The most recent episode is “Books in Isolation”: “As the world remains in varying degrees of lockdown or containment in the Coronavirus Era, we consider the Books in Isolation, the volumes perfect for reading in quarantine, whether self-imposed or health-official mandated.”



Florida Bibliophile Society, 2019–2020 Season



David Hall

September 15 • FBS Members: Treasures We Found during the Summer Break. FBS members shared about recent acquisitions and brought books for a fascinating afternoon of show and tell.

October 27 • Mary Kay Watson: Tangled Shakespeare. Mary Kay recently published a book of imaginative illustrations to accompany *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She presented her book, discussed her process, and supplied materials for a brief workshop introducing the audience to Zentangle drawing.

November 17 • Jonathan Chopan: Imagining the Other: On Writing outside the Self. Mr. Chopan, an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Eckerd College, read from his recent book, *Veterans Crisis Hotline*, and took questions from the audience.

December 15 • FBS Holiday Party. FBS members Ben and Joyce Wiley hosted a wonderful holiday party at their home in Largo.

January 19 • Jerry Morris: My Books About Books Collection. Jerry is president of FBS and an accomplished book collector. Among other areas, Jerry collects Books About Books, a fascinating topic. His collection currently numbers more than 1,300 books, and as promised, he didn't miss a one!

February 16 • Mark Harris: Collecting Comics. For many people, comics are still a lighthearted collectible, but they are now widely recognized for their potential for serious business, art, and literature. Mark, an avid and knowledgeable collector, began with the 1938 advent of modern comics and outlined their history to the present day as well as that of the industry and the dynamics of collecting.

March 15 • FBS Open Mic – physical event canceled. Many FBS members are also writers. In lieu of a physical meeting, members contributed to a “meeting in absentia,” which was presented in the April issue of *The Florida Bibliophile*. It's all on paper, but if you know us, you can hear the voices, the laughter, and the appreciative applause!

April 19 • Lola Haskins, Poet – Readings from *Asylum* – physical event canceled. Lola delighted us with her readings in National Poetry Month 2017. She returned to FBS in 2020. Her most recent book, *Asylum: Improvisations on John Clare*, was published in the prestigious Pitt Poetry Series. The April meeting of FBS has been cancelled due to coronavirus concerns; however, with Lola's gracious assistance, a full virtual account of her virtual presentation appears – for real! – in the May issue of *The Florida Bibliophile*.

April 24–26 • Florida Antiquarian Book Fair – canceled. The 2020 Florida Antiquarian Book Fair has been canceled due to coronavirus precautions. Look for the nation's third largest book fair to return in 2021!

May 17 • ANNUAL FBS BANQUET – cancelled. As we watchfully wait for the phased reopening of communities around Florida, we remain cautious about large gatherings. We will look for a date – perhaps in the early fall – for our 2020 Annual Banquet, as well as looking to the fall for the all clear to resume our monthly meetings.

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



Endpaper • Inspirations



Another remarkable collector... I was fascinated by the story of Madeline Kripke and the dictionary that planted the seed – one that would blossom later in life into a world-class collection – in a two-bedroom apartment, no less. The passion with which she pursued this interest is an inspiration.

Dictionaries are everywhere, and like much utilitarian design, they are taken for granted. Who ever looks at the title page of a dictionary, much less the information on the back of the title page? Yet, Kripke looked. She discovered and revealed worlds. I'll be very interested to learn where her amazing collection ends up.

Will you ever look at a dictionary the same way?

I'm sure that the description of Kripke's living space and collection struck a chord with many of us for whom each book is a gem and has its own special appeal – we find beauty in the physical details, the subject, the design, and the connections –

connecting with other collectors (FBS!), connecting with the workers that created the book, connecting with people who owned the book.

Where to put them all... that's another issue!

Lola Haskins's poems were another source of inspiration. Lola spends part of each year in Yorkshire, and the remainder in North Central Florida. She finds the rarest details of these places, and on one level, her poems could be read as landscape poems or nature poems. But weaving through them is a very personal portrayal of her life experience and heart. Her poems will reward repeated readings. Lola read for us a couple of years ago, and it was an enchanted afternoon -- I hope we will be able to enjoy that again before long.

Enjoy your summer, and we'll see you in September!

See you at the bookstore... after a while!

Charles

The Florida Bibliophile Society

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Unattributed material has been prepared by the editor.

The Florida Bibliophile Society is a 501c3 organization. All contributions to FBS are tax deductible.
