



Aldus Society Notes

Winter/Spring 2021

Volume 21, No. 1

From the President



Greetings Aldines!

Since we have been apart for so long, and not likely to socialize in the foreseeable future, I wanted to reach out and virtually clasp hands with all of you to let you know we are still the Aldus Society, there is news and information that you

need to hear, and that we can attempt and expect to stay connected through the newsletter, listserv postings, website, and future virtual events.

This comes from me because – in case you hadn't heard – I am the president again! In addition, the current Trustees along with me are: Dan Jensen, treasurer; Mary Saup, secretary; Tony Sanfilippo; Betty Sawyers (who is our new Membership chairperson); David Brightman; and Jack Salling. As this is the last year of my 3-year term on the board, it is also the last year I will serve as president. And, two other current members will end their terms along with me in May 2021. So, come later in the spring, consider volunteering to be nominated for a spot on the Board of Trustees!

And, I certainly cannot leave this subject until I say another word of thanks to the long-serving board members whose terms ended at the close of our last program year: Pat Groseck, president; Janet Ravneberg, treasurer; Leah Kalasky; and Scott Williams. In fact, I say an *extra* word of thanks for these out-going members who, because of the pandemic complications, willingly stayed active throughout the summer beyond the official end of their terms in May. You will observe

that the board went from nine members down to seven, as allowed in our by-laws.

Good news: We are planning some future virtual program presentations – it looks like George Bauman will again round up some members to share their collections in our January 14 Aldus Collects, and probably our February 11 speaker, Koritha Mithchell – to fill in for future live programs that will not be presented. In addition to the Caxton Club programs that we have shared in, we are exploring the potential for our own regular virtual talks.

Not so good news: We are cancelling/postponing all live programs on our winter/spring schedule (January 2021 through May 2021). Although vaccinations have begun with a potentially highly effective vaccine, the pandemic continues to surge to greater and greater heights daily – locally, nationally, and worldwide. Some are hopeful that we will see great improvement by summer, while other medical experts are predicting we won't see much progress until a year from now. Wear masks. Protect yourself and others. Be tolerant. Be patient.

Remember, as announced in the fall newsletter, there will be no dues to pay for 2021, as a result of cancelled and tentative programming and activities caused by the uncertainty of the coronavirus pandemic.

Finally, what a year it's been! Unfortunately for Aldus, 2020 was our 20th anniversary year. We were not able to enjoy a homecoming program evening and other events so ingeniously and carefully planned by Leah and Pat and other Board members. As we move on to our 21st year, let us hope that we can all be together again soon, in good health, and in a more stable world.

My warmest regards to you all, and hoping you are safe and well during this perilous time,

Harry Campbell

Aldus Society Meetings

*Regular meetings of the Aldus Society are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month between September and May. Meetings are held at **Thurber Center, 91 Jefferson Avenue, Columbus, Ohio** (unless otherwise announced). Socializing at 7:00 p.m. Free parking on Jefferson or behind Thurber House and at State Auto rear parking lot (between 11th St. and Washington).*

The Aldus Society

Board of Trustees

Harry Campbell—President
Dan Jensen—Treasurer
Mary Saup—Secretary
David Brightman
Jack Salling
Tony Sanfilippo
Betty Sawyers

Committees

Programming—Harry Campbell
Membership—Betty Sawyers
Financial—Dan Jensen
Audit—Tony Sanfilippo
Publicity—Dan Jensen
Web and Social Media—Tony Sanfilippo

Photographer at Large

George Cowmeadow Bauman

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Newsletter deadlines are August 1st, December 1st, and April 1st.

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Women Aldines Hold 4th Outdoor Meet-Up

On a perfectly beautiful autumn day, with clear skies, colorful trees, and 73 degrees of warmth, ten women members of the Aldus Society gathered in a large circle at Thompson Park in Upper Arlington and discussed books they are reading. This was the fourth “meet-up” since June for the group which, before the pandemic, met for lunch quarterly at the MCL cafeteria. Book suggestions/recommendations included:

- *The Relic Master*, by Christopher Buckley
- *Foodscape Revolution*, by Brie Arthur
- *Invisible Cities*, by Italo Calvino
- *Forty Autumns*, by Nina Willner
- *Nine Ways to Cross a River*, by Akiko Busch
- *American Duchess*, by Karen Harper
- *The Splendid and the Vile*, by Erik Larson
- *The Glass Ocean*, by Beatrix Williams, Lauren Willig, and Karen White



A gift from the Aldus Society was presented to Pat Groseck in appreciation for her service and leadership during her extended term as Aldus's president.

Carol Logue Biblio-Fellowship Award Presentation

2020 Recipients: Leah Kalasky and George Cowmeadow Bauman

This year the Aldus Society honored two long-serving members for their contributions over the course of many years. Congratulations Leah Kalasky and George Cowmeadow Bauman!

Their awards were formally presented to them at the December 10 Zoom Social Hour (see following story), after Covid-careful in-person, in-home delivery to George, and express UPS delivery to Leah at her home in Berlin, Maryland. The following tributes were read during the Zoom event.

Leah Kalasky



Since 2013, Leah Kalasky has generously and cheerfully given to us the gift of her creativity, time, organizational skills, salesmanship, tech expertise, flair for design and gentle personality for practically every Aldus task and event. An active member of the Board for five years, Leah served as publicity chair for one term expanding Aldus' reach to members of other book and literary-related organizations in Central Ohio.

While Leah served two terms as Membership Chair, it seems she has always been there inside the door at our program meetings, armed with the nametag boxes, greeting members and handing out membership information to guests. But behind the scenes, membership directories, renewal notices, follow-ups and welcome packets to new members don't just happen. Databases of members, former members and prospects must be kept. And, new members must always be recruited. Leah left no list, lead or prospect go unturned to seek new members, to stabilize and grow our Aldus Society.

During the past years she has:

- Volunteered on the Summer Picnic and Holiday Party & Annual Auction committees.
- Served as Chair of the Aldus 20th Anniversary Committee, which included among other special

events a Homecoming to celebrate our members and bring former members back to the fold. Unfortunately, these activities were put on hold by the pandemic.

- Created a new Business membership category to develop better relations with book-related establishments and their customers to increase membership.
- And, from board suggestions, successfully promoted a half-price dues special during the pandemic!!
- In 2016 included member photos into the annual directory.
- Provided member engagement during the pandemic, organizing the first virtual movie and discussion program with the free streaming of "The Booksellers."
- Helped design, mail and keep data lists for the annual Holiday Party and Auction.
- Redesigned the auction bid sheets and created a program that printed out each auction lot, saving huge numbers of hours for auction coordinators.

Sadly for us, Leah and her husband have purchased a home in Maryland and will be moving there in the coming months. Leah please accept our deepest appreciation for your service and contributions to Aldus, as well as our best wishes for a fulfilling new journey in your life.

George Cowmeadow Bauman

Those of you who ever visited the Acorn Bookshop during its 25+ years of existence, as many Aldus members did more than once, may have noticed a laminated Aldus poster on permanent exhibit. George Bauman, the co-owner of the shop, actively recruited prospective members among his customers. Indeed, he has been a tireless promoter of the Aldus Society since its beginning as a founding member back in 2000. In fact, George has probably recruited more new Aldus members than anyone else in the Society. Truly, one of the founders of our fellowship! How many times have we heard new members say "I heard about Aldus at Acorn"?

The organization has benefitted over this span from his many talents and interests. George's love of

photography, for example, has generated a rich archive of Aldus history: meeting after meeting, event after event recorded by his ever present camera. He has served on various committees, including chairing the program committee. He has frequently contributed stories from his bookselling experiences in the newsletter. He has regularly hosted Aldus Collects, the first and hopefully last virtual version scheduled for next month, which permits interested members to share their treasures with the group. For it is the love of books and the book arts we all have in common.

Books, George will tell you, have always been a major part of his life, as reader, as writer and, for over 50 years, as a bookseller, so it should be no surprise that the Aldus Society, a community of bibliophiles, has become a part of it too. And for that we salute him.



Above: George Cowmeadow Bauman with his award.



Left: Aldus President Harry Campbell (left) presents George Cowmeadow Bauman (right) with his award.

Annual Holiday “Party”

Twenty-five Aldus members participated in a Zoom call orchestrated by Tony Sanfilippo on Dec. 12. The lively two-hour meeting consisted of personal news, book and activity recommendations, and the formal presentation of the Carol Logue Biblio-Fellowship Award. Comments from participants included these:

I think Harry did a great job MC’ing the meeting and making sure that everyone had a chance to talk. In the latter regard, it was totally unlike every other Zoom meeting I’ve been involved with, and a VAST improvement. So: Thank you, Harry!

—John Bennett

What a great “Christmas Party.” Tony looked dapper in his tuxedo. Harry did a great job of moderating. It was fun to see Leah and George fake their surprise at being named Logue Award winners. Loved John

Bennett’s reading. Best of all, it was great to see and hear everyone and catch up on the exciting projects they are working on—far more ambitious than what I’m doing.

—Pat Groseck

Mary Saup told us about a virtual nursing conference she attended this summer and was pleased with the creative way it was presented, even with a virtual vendor show! Then five or six attendees mentioned how much they enjoyed participating in virtual classes/seminars.

—Leah Kalasky

I enjoyed seeing Leah and George receive their well-deserved awards and I enjoyed seeing Tony in his tux!

—Mary Saup

I want to thank Miriam and others for the reference to *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman* for my budding physicist grandson and to thank John Bennett for reading the fascinating passage from his new book. I loved this Zoom because so many people spoke, thanks to Harry, because so much information was transmitted, and because it was simply great to see everybody. What a great group!

—**Karen Robinson**

Hello. What a good evening to hear from everyone. Thanks, Tony, for the set and Harry, doing the awards. Miriam and others, thank you for the suggestions. Happy Holidays Everyone.

—**Brenda Allinger**



Aldines gather on Zoom.

Looking for Learning Opportunities While You're Staying at Home? *Ideas Generated During and After the Zoom Event*

You can download or borrow “The Great Courses” through the public library. From the Bexley Public Library (<https://bexleylibrary.org/digital>), look for the Great Courses under “Online Learning.”

The Bexley Public Library also has a selection of digital movies, books, and music through Hoopla and many British programs through Acorn TV. You can check out Acorn TV for a week, then it is returned automatically, and you can renew or check it out again. (Note: Acorn TV through the library isn't the same as your own account or the app through Amazon TV/Roku or other streaming devices.) Don't have the Bexley library card? You can register online.

You can get eContent through Columbus Metropolitan Library (<https://www.columbuslibrary.org/ebooks>). Try Hoopla or Kanopy for movies. Hoopla also provides access to The Great Courses. I've also been going to online lectures at various bibliophilic societies and special libraries like the American Antiquarian Society and the Huntington. Online learning opportunities abound. Just look at the various websites or subscribe to newsletters. Many are free, some are even available on YouTube for later viewing.

—**Miriam Kahn**

Several people recommended the free lectures available on www.Coursera.org, including:

- Learning How to Learn: Powerful Mental Tools to Help You Master Tough Subjects

—**Erik Jul**

- Soren Kierkegaard: Subjectivity, Irony and the Crisis of Modernity

—**Jack Salling**

Other recommended webinars:

- Programs on Botanicals and Florida flora from the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota
- Columbus Museum of Art presentations on art books facilitated by Executive Director Nanette Maciejunes and on specific works by Chief Curator David Stark
- National Geographic's wide variety of programs on diverse subjects (ecology, lullabies, wolves, young activists)

—**Karen Robinson**

How about a virtual trip to Europe?

Aldines wishing to leave the country for a unique and currently appropriate virtual tour can Google Airbnb Online Experiences “Plague Doctor Tour of Prague.” For \$19 per person, a guide will follow the Plague Doctor describing the sites in the city that were specifically notable during the plague which ravaged Europe from 1347 to 1351 killing one-fourth of the city’s population and up to 200 million through Europe and Asia. In addition to seeing beautifully lighted historic sites in Prague, you’ll find out the purpose of the Plague Doctor’s strange bird-like mask, his robe-like clothing and the long staff he carries—protections relevant to the current pandemic. I was able to take the tour with my niece and sister in Los Angeles, so it can be a nice way to have a family experience. We have also done a “Dogs of Chernobyl” tour through Airbnb Online Experiences. For other one-of-a-kind virtual visits, Google Airbnb online experiences (Online Experiences (airbnb.com)).

—Pat Groseck

Aldus-Caxton Programs Continue Through Winter

If you need a fix of bibliophilic enlightenment during the dark winter confinement, we have good news! As an Aldus member benefit, The Caxton Club of Chicago will continue to make their fine quality virtual programs available free of charge to other Federation of American Bibliophilic Societies members and guests as part of their 125th Anniversary Celebration last year. And, they have invited us to join their daytime programs too.

You are invited to visit the Caxton website at www.caxtonclub.org to view programs and dates and pre-register online. Daytime programs are generally held at 1:30 p.m. EST. Evening programs generally begin at 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time. When you click on the “register” button, you’ll provide your name and email address and fill in “Aldus Society” in the line labeled “organization.” A day or two before the program, you will be emailed the link to join the Zoom program.

If you are not able to view the presentation live for any reason, please contact Caxton at info@caxtonclub.org and request a link to the title of the program. They will send a link to the complete program with Q & A.

Daytime Programs

January 8, 2021, 1:30 p.m. EST

Miles Harvey

Interviewed on “The King of Confidence”

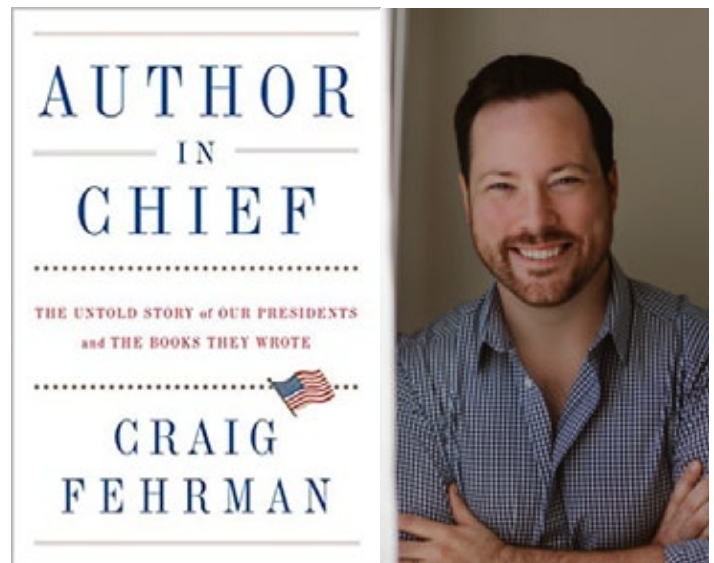
How did steam presses and a quirk in postal laws help crown a king in the continental United States during 1850 ... in an obscure place called Beaver Island ... only a boat ride from Chicago? Your guide to this remarkable tale will be Miles Harvey, familiar to Caxtonians for his terrifying book *The Island of Lost Maps*, which still has librarians sleeping with the lights on. You’ll hear about pirates, voting irregularities, a traveling secretary who was

not what a first glance might suggest, a brazen murder, and more. Plus, you’ll learn the precise time and place that the term Confidence Man was coined.

February 12, 2021, 1:30 p.m. EST

Craig Fehrman

on *Author in Chief*



Trivia question: “What American President’s autobiographical article in a magazine started a stampede to the newsstands?” Did you answer Calvin Coolidge? Did his name even come to mind? If not, then you’ll want to mark your calendar for a talk by Craig Fehrman, whose book illuminates the history of Presidential writing. (You may also want to go back to your August Caxtonian, in which *Author In Chief* was reviewed.) Fehrman is a very engaging speaker who will reveal some surprising stories that might upend what you thought you knew about this unique set of authors.

**March 12, 2021, 1:30 p.m. EST
Carl Smith
on Chicago's Great Fire**

October 1871. Drought. Barn. Fire. Chaos. Destruction. That's the story that has been told and told again about this signal event that is remembered with one of those stars on Chicago's flag. But noted historian Carl Smith is going to share a much more specific tale, one crafted especially for Caxtonians. He'll answer the question, "What did the fire and its aftermath mean for books, authors, publishers, and libraries?" Smith, an emeritus professor from Northwestern University is well known to Caxtonians; he has two essays in the Club's most recent publication, *Chicago 101*. Join us for this remarkable story about The Great Fire's impact on all things printed!

Evening Programs

**January 19, 2021, 7:30 p.m. EST
Heather O'Donnell and Rebecca Romney
on The Antiquarian Book Trade**

Heather and Rebecca are made famous in their trade by their appearance in the film *The Booksellers* and for their Honey & Wax Award for young women collectors.

**February 17, 2021, 7:30 p.m. EST
Library Holdings from the Smithsonian**

Shauna Collier Founding and Current Director of the Library at the African American Museum at the Smithsonian. She will discuss the collation of the Library holdings from the Smithsonian collections, some of the interesting items the Library received upon the call for materials as the Library opened, and the Library's current initiatives.

**March 17, 2021, 7:30 p.m. EST
Kinohi Nishikawa
on the Chicago Black Renaissance
and the Black Cat Press**

Kinohi is an Associate Professor of English and African American Studies at Princeton where his work focuses on 20th century African American literature.

**Right: Kinohi Nishikawa, Associate Professor of
English and African Studies at Princeton.**

What You Missed

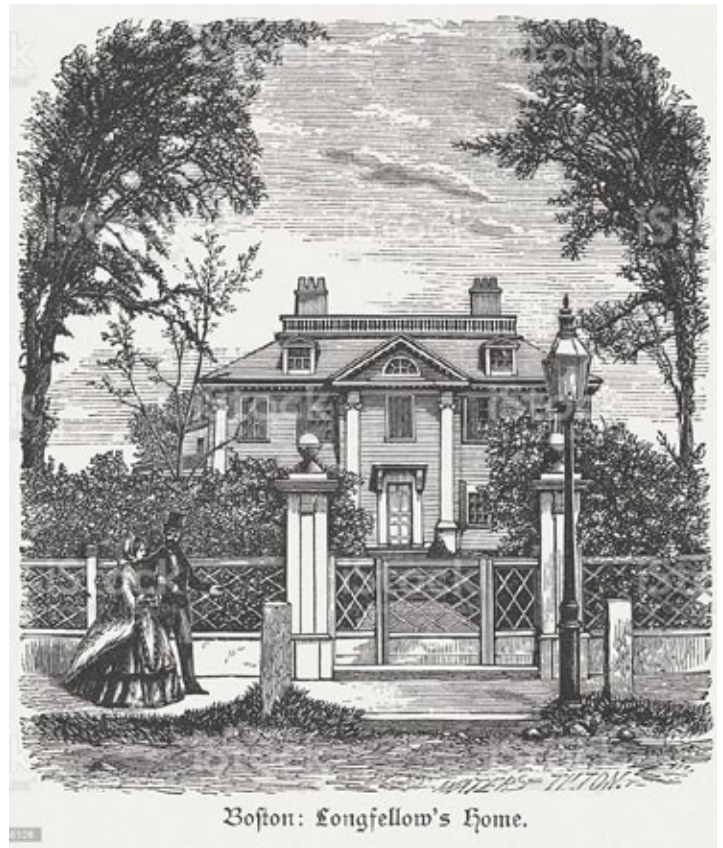
"In Search of Emery Walker" was jointly sponsored by Caxton and the William Morris Society of America, and presented by author Simon Loxley live from London on October 21, 2020. Loxley, our charming and knowledgeable speaker, is himself a graphic designer and author of numerous books on typography and design history. His most recent book brings forth Walker's life and career in all its dimensions. Loxley took us on a tour of the beautiful historic narrow streets and sites which housed Walker's Dove Press, Walker's home and the home and business of William Morris—the Kelmscott Press.



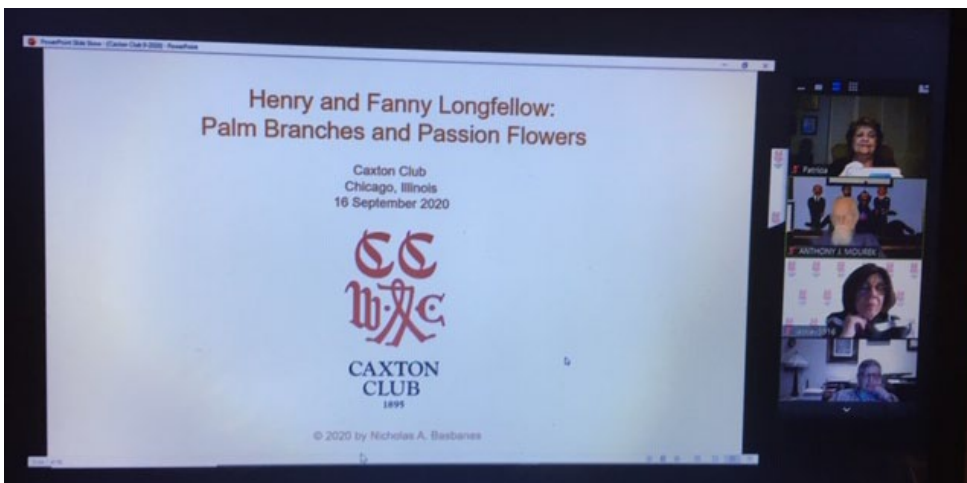
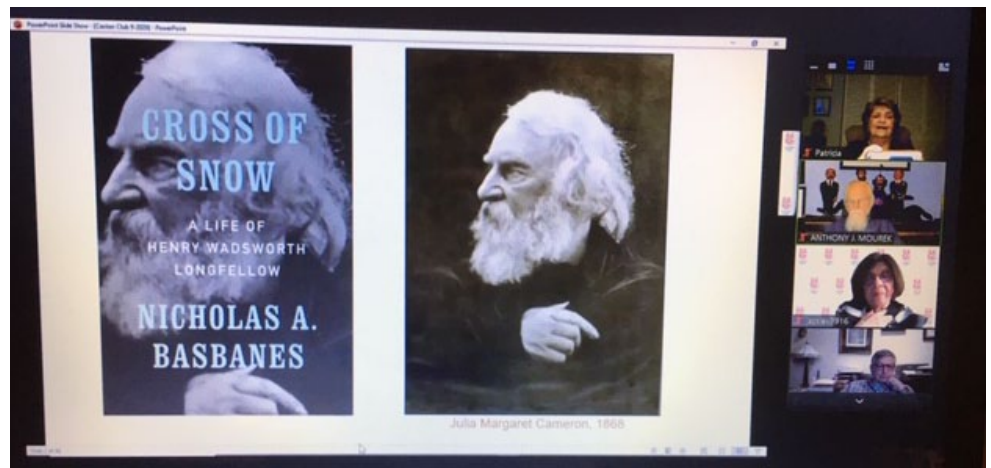
**Simon Loxley Presentation
on Zoom, Live from London
(October 21, 2020).**



The September 16, 2020 evening program featured **Nick Basbanes' presentation on his book *Cross of Snow*, a biography of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.** Basbane took a new look at Longfellow through the words of his beloved second wife Fanny who left behind a huge number of letters, diaries and other writings. Fanny was from a prominent Boston family. Her father was the richest man in Boston. Basbane, a true expert on Longfellow, gave us an intimate look into their social life, their loving and intellectual partnership as a couple and musings on fellow authors and Brahmins of the time. His program included a tour of the Longfellow House in Cambridge, used by Gen. George Washington. For more about the book, visit <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2020/11/02/henry-wadsworth-longfellow-his-life-loves-in-a-moving-new-biography-2/>



Above and Top Right:
Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow's Home.

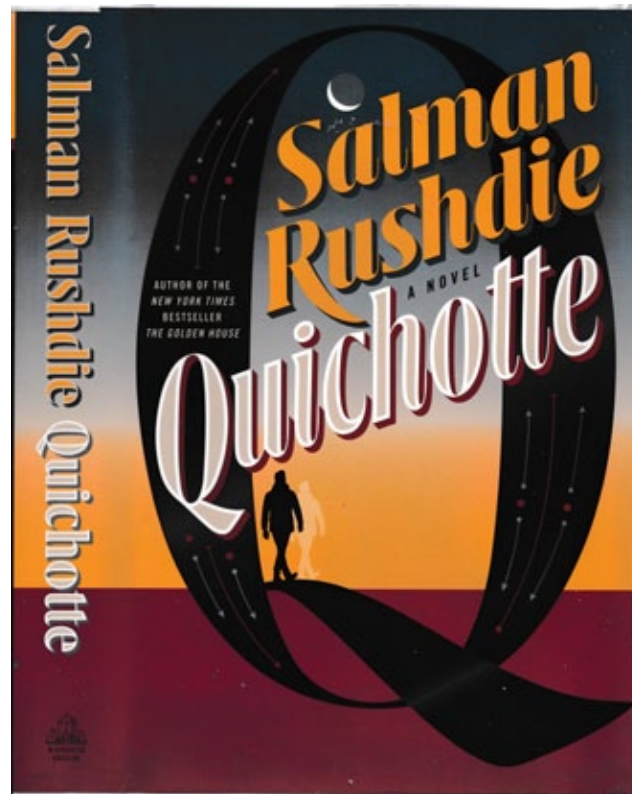


Above and Left:
Nick Basbanes'
Presentation on Zoom
(September 16, 2020).

Observations on Salman Rushdie's *Quichotte: A Novel*

Random House, 2019

By John M. Bennett



Salman Rushdie's delightful new book, *Quichotte: A Novel*, is far from being a "retelling" of Cervantes' original. But while including many aspects of Cervantes' *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, such as satire on popular literature and society, conversations between Quichotte and Sancho, and others, Rushdie's novel is very much his own. It includes references not only to books, but film, popular music, contemporary culture and politics, as well as real and imagined worlds (which also figure in Cervantes, of course). It is as if all the worlds Rushdie presents were superimposed and visible at once, which is a development, while indirectly implied at times in Cervantes, in Rushdie is a major quality of the structure and sense of his book. Among Rushdie's worlds are the contemporary United States and its popular culture, Bollywood fantasies, numerous ancient and modern fairy tales (Jiminy Cricket for one), the last ice age, and many others. The novel's context requires multiple earths and universes, an idea referred to often, and somewhat obliquely, in the book itself, but which is made explicit at its end. Much the same can be said for the book's point of view, which includes Quichotte as an author, a meta-author, and other characters. This work is, in fact, not only a meta-fiction, but a meta-meta-meta fiction. All while maintaining a playful, light-hearted tone and atmosphere; truly a remarkable feat.

For example, just as in Cervantes' work, the presence

of the book itself, and of the author himself, are part of the story. Also, Cervantes' Quixote, and Rushdie's Quichotte, the characters, know they are in a book, and comment on that fact. (Quichotte is the French and German spelling of the name.) Here the character of the author, who is not Rushdie, perhaps, but who is perhaps at the same time Quichotte himself, is thinking. It is difficult, and perhaps deliberately impossible, to know exactly who is thinking these words:

"The book had known better than he did from the start. He had not contemplated his own mortality until now, but his book had been talking about death all the way. So is that what he'd been up to, without being fully conscious of it? This whole performance about the end of the world had really been a way of talking about the imminent end of the Author?" — p. 357

I can't emphasize enough just how playful Rushdie is in the way he writes and presents his material. The book creates a kind of fantasy-tale world of protean possibilities, in which our "real" world, a world of conflicting or superimposed consensus realities, is only one of the many worlds he plays with. Here is part of a dialogue between Quichotte and Sancho, who is

Quichotte's semi-imaginary son in this book, a son who is at one level a projection of Quichotte himself, but who starts to become autonomous:

"Where have you been sticking your nose? Don't you dare go where you are forbidden to enter. You are a child. You are not me. There are things about me that are not for you to know."

"Okay," Sancho said, and it took some courage for him to say it. "I see that under your old-goof act, beneath your sweet nutty disguise, you're maybe someone else entirely, and that part of you is locked away right now. It's like you've caged the beast." — p. 100

All this does not mean the novel is a metaphysical fantasy world. It is, in fact, chock-a-block with observations, snide asides, and tongue-in-cheek critical remarks about contemporary culture, politics, and society. Our "real" present-day world is very much present.

Quichotte, the novel by Salman Rushdie, is playful, literary, profane, baroque, and all done with Rushdie's delightful style. The language itself plays with a variety of dialects and slangs, including Indo-English, American slang, and others. There is a lot of entertaining conversation and arguing in the book, (also a characteristic of Cervantes'). It is one of Rushdie's best, most entertaining, and at the same time most profound, books; a fascinating mélange of science fiction, fantasy, fairy tale, adventure, and literary shenanigans. It is rather as if all the stories from *The Arabian Nights* were being told at once, and still retained their immense appeal!

Regarding the contemporaneity of *Quichotte*, Trumpism and its numerous forms and manifestations are certainly present in some of the conversations and events in Rushdie's book. It is social satire, after all, as well as a fantasy tale. But it is refreshing to see the novel treat these distressing phenomena as something to take in stride, and with considerable humor. In these dark days, the book is surprisingly, if somewhat ambiguously, optimistic.

From the Acorn Bookshop Archives: *The Fellowship of the Ring*

A Christmas Bookstore-y

By George Cowmeadow Bauman



On Christmas Eve day, we were planning to close the Acorn Bookshop around four o'clock so that we Nuts could get an early start on spending the special evening with our families and friends for dinners, gifting, church, and/or caroling. Bing Crosby and the Ray Conniff Singers were doing some caroling of their own in the store – our last holiday CDs of the season.

I'll soon miss the non-stop Christmas music. (Thankfully I inherited my parents' nuts-about-Christmas gene.)

With about an hour to go, the jingle bells on the side door were jangled and a tall, well-built, and good-looking young man wearing a blue autoparts workshirt with "JAMES" stitched in red walked in. Wearing a Santa cap, I "Ho-Ho-Ho"-ed him and offered special Christmas

Eve elf-service.

He smiled and asked for a hardback copy of Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

We often get requests for special editions of the J. R. R. Tolkien books.

Earlier that month, a 30-ish guy in a long black coat and dark blue scarf bought my own former copy of *The Hobbit*, a green leatherette edition in a slipcase.



"I'm so glad you had this," he said enthusiastically, while we ran his credit card.

"My mother and father were snowed in during a 1974 blizzard. The way they got through the storm was to read this to one another.

"They recently told me that they didn't have a hardback copy of it, just the ratty paperback they read that winter. So this is going to be a very special Christmas gift to them!"

For today's customer James, we couldn't find a hardback copy of *The Fellowship of the Ring* at first, upstairs or down. Lani, Yvonne, and I seemed more disappointed than he with our lack of success. He then asked about Harry Potter hardbacks "with a design on the cover." I showed him all seven of the Potter books, but he decided to pass on them. I asked what he had in mind, for his request about design was unusual.

"My girlfriend and I love the *Lord of the Rings* series," he began, "and I'm planning to do something special for her. If I can't find *The Fellowship of the Ring*, then a Harry Potter book would be my second choice, for we both love those books, too. But *The Fellowship of the Ring* would be my first choice!"

He looked at me with a wide grin, and explained. "I want to take that book and cut out a section on the first page, right under the heading 'The Long Awaited Party', deep enough to place an engagement ring inside, with a cut-out piece of the Middle-Earth map from the back underneath the ring."

He was right; It *was* the perfect title for a ring-bearing gift.

We were thrilled to be a part of this well-thought-out proposal; I searched with increased dedication to finding what he wanted, checking a couple of other places in the store for *Fellowship*, and finally found one in the Horror section, a hardback copy with dust jacket in very good condition – just what he wanted. Each holiday season's busyness increases the number of books "creatively reshelfed" by the many customers, so I was very pleased that we found the very edition he wanted.

At the counter, before I rang him up, he was so excited and appreciative of our enthusiasm for his idea that he opened the book and showed me exactly how and where he was going to cut into the book to hide the ring. He turned to the fold-out map in the back of the book, opened it up, and pointed to the section he would excise and place at the bottom of the cut-out so the ring would be cradled on it. He'd planned this well.

"How are you going to present it, and when?" I asked, as I rang up the \$20 book.

"On New Year's Eve," he answered. "When we take the dog for a walk in Goodale Park. I'm going to give it to her and say that I ordered a special book for her for Christmas, but it came in late. Then I'll hand it to her."

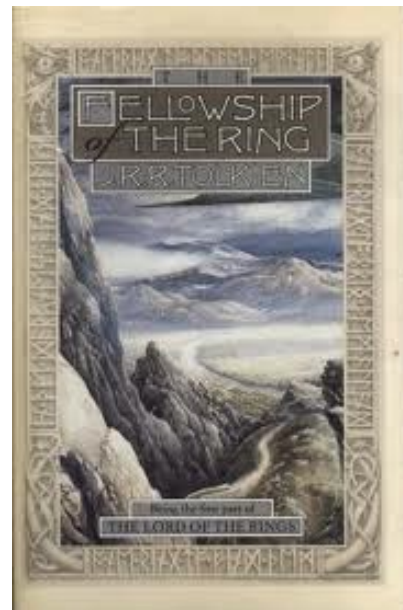
I thought to myself that they better be careful about the specific place he chose, for if she opened the book quickly in her excitement and the ring popped out of the book and fell to the ground and into the grass or snow, or even the Goodale Park Fountain lake...

"Is she expecting a proposal?"

"Well, she thinks it's going to happen *eventually*, but..." He concluded with a smile and said, "She's gonna love having it in *this* book! Thanks *so* much!"

I suspect that that copy of *The Fellowship of the Ring* with its ring-holding, cut-out text, and its accompanying story will be in their family for years.

Tolkien would be amused, and appreciative.



The World of Collectible Beer Labels

By Jay Hoster

Some years ago a construction worker came upon what the archeologists call a midden—for the rest of us that's a trash pit—that contained old beer bottles, many with the labels still on them. So he did what seemed to be a sensible thing to do: he put his finds under a faucet to clean off the dirt.

Of course he also washed off the labels as well. Some bottles without labels are noteworthy collectibles, but most fall into the run-of-the-mill category.

Which means that of all the forms of ephemera—those printed objects from the past that offer glimpses into history—beer labels have to be among the most—well, *ephemeral*.

At the same time beer labels from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are, in many cases, excellent examples of the printing process known as chromolithography. While we take for granted that the products that we purchase will be presented with bright coloration, that was not always the case. Jay Last, whose collection is now in the Huntington Library, entitled his book on chromolithography *The Color Explosion*.

My collection of beer labels centers on those issued by my family's brewery, although I also have representative examples of labels from other Columbus breweries, including those issued after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933.

You might assume that the Hosters would be awash in brewery memorabilia, cheerfully handing out historic artifacts like candy at Halloween.

Thanks to Uncle Carl, you would be wrong. That would be Carl J. Hoster, the last president of the brewery, who closed everything down in the early years of Prohibition—and then walked away from the brewery without taking a damn thing with him.

So now to retrieve bits and pieces of my heritage, I have to go up against pre-Pro breweriana collectors—"pre-Pro" being a collector term for the period prior to Prohibition. When so many collectible items depend on the pull of nostalgia for their appeal, this material

remains in surprisingly high demand. Perhaps it's the attraction of seeking a lost world.

My attitude toward my fellow collectors in this field hinges on whether there's something I want to buy—in which case they're scoundrels standing between me and my family heritage—or whether I have duplicates to sell, when they morph into highly knowledgeable people well versed in the history of brewing and possessing an excellent eye for value.

Then as now, bottles had both a main label plus a neck label. The latter are particularly hard to find, perhaps because that's the part of the bottle that's most likely to be handled. One of my favorite bottles is a Ben Brew bottle from the Franklin Brewing Co. It's from the 1950s and is noteworthy for its dual image of Ben Franklin on the label and the neck label.

Many of the labels in my collection are not on bottles, and while some have been soaked off (carefully, to be sure), many were clearly never placed on a bottle. These would have come directly from the brewery.

My first forays into the history of Columbus brewing were made during the period when beer was simply beer—whatever label may have been on the bottle or can, it was all meant to taste pretty much the same. So I was surprised to see how many different types of beer were being produced prior to Prohibition.

That statement needs something of a disclaimer, because by current standards, when craft brewers vie with each other in

creating ever more exotic IPAs, the brews from an earlier day don't offer a competing panoply of flavors. I've been tempted to jokingly refer to Kumquat IPAs with the assumption that that they would represent the ultimate *reductio ad absurdum* of current trends.

No joke: a Google search reveals that among the offerings currently available are a King Kumquat IPA and a Kumquat Belgian White IPA.

The pre-Pro products reflect European styles. One of



The Banner Brew label, seen here with its accompanying neck label, featured a distinctive red, white, and blue bull's eye design.

the longest lasting Hoster brand names was Hoster's Wiener Beer, a Vienna-style beer whose name was pronounced "veener." There was also a Muenchner, a Munich-style beer with an *u-with-an-umlaut* pronunciation that presumably would have been familiar to many of the people buying it. Perhaps with those who didn't speak German in mind, the brewery also offered a Munich Special Brew. There was also Hoster's Prager Lager, reflecting the brewing tradition of Bohemia, the region whose capital is Prague.

Hoster's Banner Brew debuted in 1907. Widely advertised in local newspapers as being lighter in color and lower in alcohol content, the label had a distinctive red, white, and blue bull's-eye design.

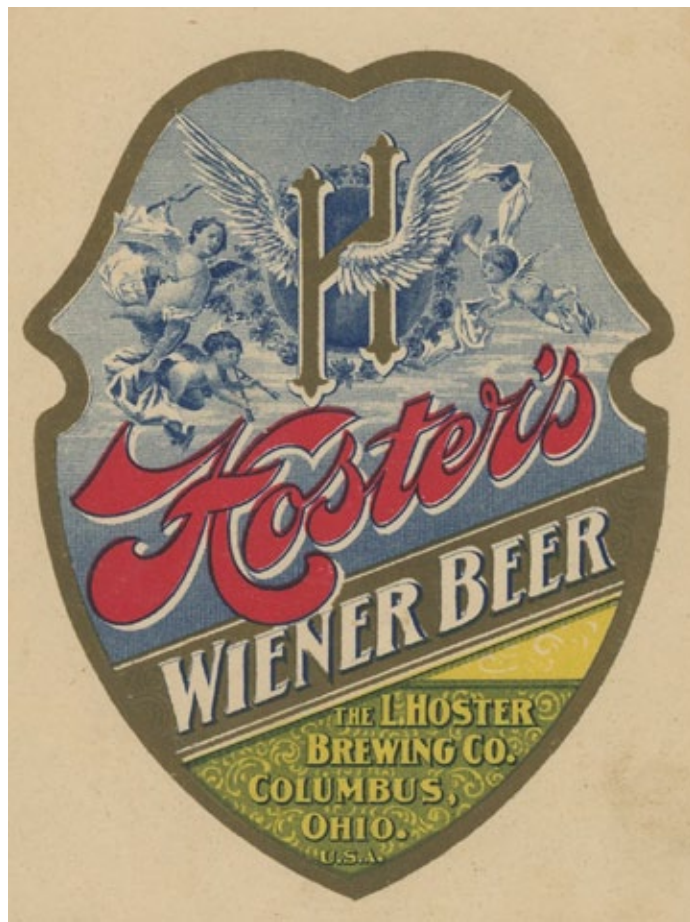
Unfortunately, brewery customers of the day weren't ready for a light beer and Banner Brew flopped. I've recently been able to acquire a label and neck label for Banner Brew. With my own collecting experience in mind, and the experiences of two other collectors, one local and one national, I think it's reasonable to conclude that the Banner Brew labels I own constitute unique copies.

That's also true for some of the other labels in my collection, such as a die-cut label for Half and Half. I haven't been able to find any mention of this product, so I don't know what constituted the two halves—half beer and half ale?

Advertisements from the period depict labels that must have existed in thousands of copies but which now are extraordinarily rare or never seen at all. In addition to Ben Bew, Franklin Brewing offered Arch City Brew in recognition of the arches over Columbus streets, a tradition that has been revived in the Short North. But Arch City Brew has sunk without a trace.

As seen in many ads, Select Beer from the Columbus Brewing Co. (no connection to the current craft brewer) has an oval shaped label with a portrait of Christopher Columbus. The neck label, merely glimpsed at in the ads, has a *trompe l'oeil* design that is an excellent example of the lithographer's art.

The Wiener Beer label exists in two different formats, a rectangular format with a typographical design and a shield format with *putti* flying about the brewery's Flying H logo. This isn't a label that's particularly hard to find, but Wiener labels which remain on bottles show varying degrees of dinginess and wear. The copy I own, which at some point was stapled in its margin to another document, is unusually bright. It may have been used in a copyright registration application.



An ornate label for Hoster's Wiener Beer, a Vienna style beer.

There's an additional unexpected pleasure with lithographed beer labels: if you hold them to the light at just the right angle, the light glints off the gilt elements of the design.

Lithography wasn't used for all pre-Pro labels; the less expensive printing method of offset was also employed, as in the case of the Brown October Ale label. As it happens, I have two bottles that still have the ale inside, and if you shake them, the ale foams up. Upon seeing that, people often ask if I've been tempted to drink the contents.

Answer: no.

I acquired one of the Brown October Ale bottles when someone from out of town sent me a letter with a snapshot of the bottle and asked if I'd be interested in purchasing it. I wrote back indicating that I would be, and we were able to get together when they came to Columbus.



The neck label for the Columbus Brewing Co.'s Select Beer.

I mention that because I'm sure for young people this method of communication must be as quaint as using a quill pen.

Tectonic plates shifted in the middle of the first decade for the local brewery industry. In late 1904 four of the breweries—Hoster, Born, Schlee, and Columbus—merged to form the Hoster-Columbus Associated Breweries. The consolidation of these breweries wasn't enough to save the Born Capital Brewery, which closed in late 1909. Since beer was delivered to saloons on horse-drawn carts, stables were an important part of any early brewery operation. The building housing the Born stables, which had been stripped of its ornate corner turrets, survived until 1993. Despite the best efforts of preservationists, the building was demolished to provide access for the Kroger store.

The best known Born product, XX Pale Beer, was resuscitated as a brand name after repeal by the Washington Breweries, which marketed Washington Dub-L-Ex Pilsener Style Beer. The creative spelling was augmented by a view of Mount Vernon.

My favorite non-Hoster label comes from the Ohio Brewing Co. and features the Great Seal of the State of Ohio along with the indication that this product "Deserves a Place in Every Home." Which is to say, it's meant be consumed in a more wholesome venue than a saloon. The label also touts the ultimate statement of pride for a brewer in those pre-World War I years: "Germany Makes Nothing Better."



The Great Seal of the State of Ohio was featured on this beer from the Ohio Brewing Co.

New competition emerged in 1905 when August Wagner, the Hoster brewmaster, and two executives from the firm abruptly resigned. They announced that they planned to start a new brewery, the Gambrinus Brewing Co.

Gambrinus was a legendary figure in brewing lore. Differing versions of the story exist. One group of narratives offer up the brewing version of the Faust story, but a cheerier account involves a feat of strength that will determine who shall be the leader of the brewers. The task, which was to lug a large keg filled with beer over a prescribed distance, proved impossible for all comers until the enterprising Gambrinus hit upon the stratagem of drinking the contents of the keg before attempting to carry it.

Wagner was easily the most colorful character in Columbus brewing. He posed for the statue of King Gambrinus that was on the second floor of the brewery, and after repeal, Wagner took to horseback in regal attire in the role of Gambrinus.

Wagner purchased the rights to the Hoster brand names and kept his operation going through Prohibition making the legally permissible "near beer," which had an alcohol content of less than one half of one percent. The company became the August Wagner Products Co., and the Hoster slogan of "That's the Beer" became the Wagner slogan of "That's the Product." I have a letter that the company sent during Prohibition to a firm in Buffalo stating their "very urgent need" for a "bottom thrust bearing for dealcoholizer." Evidently the brewing operations had to be stopped without the equipment to remove alcohol from the product.

My favorite Wagner label dates from shortly after repeal in 1933. It's for Wagner Bock Beer and depicts the requisite billy goat with a sly anthropomorphic grin.

Wagner was the longest lasting of the Columbus breweries. In the early days of Columbus broadcasting the brewery sponsored a show on WBNS-TV called the Gamboree that featured Johnny Winters as host. Winters, by the way, became better known in his post-Gambrinus career as Jonathan Winters.

The brewery also made active use of television commercials. The slogan "Richer, Keener, Augustiner," promoting one of its flagship products, was regularly heard on local television.

The brewery closed in January 1974 and its buildings were leveled—everything was gone except for the statue of King Gambrinus. Local brewery historian Curtis Schieber notes that "the statue was moved to a tiny green spot in front of the Kroger grocery store on Front Street, where he laments over his fallen kingdom today."

Several objects in my collection illustrate the Hoster brewery in its expansionary mode. I have a label and neck label for Hoster's Nectar Beer, which was bottled in New York City; a corkscrew with the name of the Hoster agent in Charlotte, North Carolina; and a figural opener (a bottle opener in the shape of a car) with the wording "Mackenzie & Co., Port of Spain, Trinidad, B.W.I., Wholesale Dealers



Ken Burns' documentary on Prohibition included film footage of beer from the Hoster-Columbus Associated Breweries being delivered.



With the threat of Prohibition looming, a non-alcoholic beverage called Bruin was introduced in 1917.

Hoster's Famous Columbus Beer."

1914, however, proved to be a year of dramatic change. On May 14 the Hoster branch of the Hoster-Columbus Associated Breweries—as it was now called—introduced Gold Top Beer, which became the brewery's flagship product. Its distinctive label wasn't lithographed but the offset printing managed to incorporate complex design elements that featured a view of the sun between a pine tree and a mountain peak and the slogan "Pure as the Rays of the Sun." This realistically presented scene was flanked on either side by an art nouveau-influenced design of stylized birds delineated with sinuous lines.

Then on July 1 of that year statewide Prohibition went into effect in West Virginia, effectively eliminating an important market for Columbus breweries. Six years earlier an Ohio law allowed counties to vote themselves dry and 57 of Ohio's counties did so. With declining markets and increased competition—in addition to the

Columbus-based breweries, Pabst and Schlitz had local bottling operations for their beer—the Hoster brewery went into receivership in December 1914.

The start of World War I that year, which Barbara Tuchman chronicled in *The Guns of August*, and the anti-German sentiment that emerged following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, took a toll on a business that was closely identified with its German heritage.

With Prohibition looming, it became Gold Top Ginger Ale, and after the Hoster brands were taken over by Wagner, a new design emerged for Gold Top near-beer that eliminated the art nouveau elements. Gold Top's run wasn't quite over: in the 1940s the Ohio Brewery revived the name, although this iteration of the brand name didn't have much staying power.

That changed when the Hoster Brewing Co. brewpub opened in the Brewery District in 1989. Brewmaster Allen Young used Gold Top as the name of his Dortmunder lager—which is to say, a beer brewed in the style of Dortmund, Germany. Young also offered a sardonic homage to the Anti-Saloon League by creating Rev. Purley Ale, a reference to the Rev. Purley Baker, one of the organization's leaders. In addition, Dave Foster, an assistant brewmaster at the Hoster brewpub and a local brewery historian, ventured out on his own and attempted to revive the Gambrinus and Augustiner brand names.

The Hoster brewpub closed in 2002, but Dan Meyers, the owner of an artisan root beer called Frostop, is currently making an effort to revive Gold Top. Young is scheduled to return as brewmaster, although the pandemic has forced those plans to be put on hold.

But I expect to see more Gold Top labels in the future.



After its introduction in 1914, Gold Top became the Hoster brewery's flagship brand.

