

A message from new Caxton president

Michael Thompson



I am honored to have been chosen the president of an organization as venerable and distinguished as The Caxton Club. Throughout our 108 years of meetings, programs, exhibitions, and publications, we have brought to Chicago an appreciation of our own passion for books and the book arts, and we have made important contributions to bibliographical scholarship. In just the past year, we published *The Diaries of John M. Wing*, we mounted the successful and critically acclaimed "Inland Printers" exhibition at Columbia College and the Chicago Public Library, we revitalized the website, and we created scholarships for two graduate students in the book arts. Becoming president after a year like that can be a bit daunting; the principal challenge I see ahead is trying to maintain the momentum.

A hearty thanks is clearly due to our outgoing president Jim Tomes, whose helmsmanship kept the club on course while all its creative and hard working members undertook their responsibilities with care, commitment, and competence. The club's activities are sustained by the efforts of many people, obviously too numerous to mention, who prepare the meeting invitations, plan the programs, chair the committees, edit and proofread the *Caxtonian*, update the website, and support the club with generous financial contributions.

In terms of my own goals as president, and despite our recent phenomenal successes, I do think we can improve the club by doing more

Chinese poet Bei Dao talks of poets and poetry

Junie L. Sinson

Author's Note: In the fall of 2002, Caxtonian Junie L. Sinson learned that the internationally famous poet, Bei Dao, was Poet-in-Residence at Beloit College in Beloit, WI. With the gracious assistance of the Caxtonian Charlotte Slocum, Beloit College Librarian, there developed an opportunity to interview Bei Dao.

Bei Dao (pseudonym of Zhao Zheng Kai) was born in Beijing in 1949. In his late teens, he was conscripted into the Red Guard. In the 1970's, he was removed from any formal education and directed into construction work. It was during the 1970's that he began to write poetry under the pseudonym "Bei Dao." By mid-1970, he was a respected voice of the Democracy Movement. By the early 1980's, he had become an international voice in poetry. Shortly thereafter, he earned the wrath of the Chinese establishment. In the mid-1980's, he and his family began travels about the world. Upon his return to China, he supported with his person and pen the Chinese quest for freedom and democracy.

On June 4, 1989, he was in Europe when fighting broke out in Tiananmen Square. His poems and his message were a supportive voice of the student dissidents. His support of the movement was recognized by the Chinese authorities, and he chose to remain in exile. He continued to write and publish his poetry while in exile. That production further enhanced his international reputation. His preeminence was acclaimed, and he was repeatedly referenced as the most probable Chinese author and poet to be the future recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Although the Nobel Prize has eluded him, he has continued to be productive. The following interview at Beloit College, on November 12, 2002, may permit readers to better understand his art, his ambitions, and perhaps the depth of his character.

JLS: I am curious about where you call "home" today. In your writing, you talk about floating. Do you float?

BD: I think about having been out of my home for a long time. It's hard to find your home. Actually, I visited my home town, Beijing, about a couple of months ago. The first time, you know, after 30 years, I visited my home town. It was a shock. Many recent changes. So what was your question? Where is my home?

JLS: Yes.

BD: I think probably I have no home. I'm just

floating along.

JLS: Did the government know that you were there, or did you just come in and go?

BD: Oh no, of course, I got permission. I got permission to visit my sick father.

JLS: You were there for two months?

BD: Twice. Each time, for one month.

JLS: Were you surprised at the physical changes in Beijing and in China? Were you surprised, or did you know of that?

BD: There is a part of me that was surprised. I know that it is not my Beijing anymore. My Beijing was what we called "Beijing Corridors." There is a square. Very beautiful. But I think the high buildings have taken over. The skyscrapers destroyed the old Beijing.

JLS: One sees a country like China showing great physical advancement, under a totalitarian, communist government. At the same time you see democratic countries like those in Africa and even the Philippines showing little advancement. Doesn't a sensitive person, like yourself, have to say that in order for a third world country to emerge dynamically in the free competitive world, that you would almost have to have a totalitarian strong central government?

BD: It is more complicated than you said. China is more capitalistic now. It's not really communistic. It is mixed. Yes, both. There is a certain freedom. There is little comparison with other countries. You know, China is a big country. It's a huge country. It is in the process of democratizing. But I think it is probably taking longer than people expected. It is certainly most complicated. Media controls are still there, but now it's more commercializing.

JLS: There's a balance of the two.

BD: Yes, it's a kind of a two heads of the monster. It's really quite hard to use a few words to describe that phenomenon.

JLS: Right.



Musings...

CAXTONIAN

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A few months ago, I read a splendid novel by Indiana writer James Alexander Thom. The book, *Sign-Talker: The Adventure of George Drouillard on the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (2001), tells of the remarkable journey in 1803-05 by a company of daring Americans, and their brilliant American Indian interpreter and hunter, George Drouillard.

I am captivated by the tales of hardships of the Lewis and Clark explorers, just 200 years ago, as they wended their difficult ways westward over rugged, unexplored lands, through societies of people totally unknown and not always friendly, carrying on their scientific and sociological studies in an age before such studies were understood.

This book is a natural preparatory study for the forthcoming Newberry Library exhibition, *Lewis and Clark in Indian Country* (2005), for both the book and the exhibition are views from the perspective of the American Indians encountered along the Lewis and Clark trail, from St. Louis to the Pacific Northwest. The Indian perspective in the novel is most certainly enriched by the fact that author Thom's wife is an American Indian and collaborated with him in Indian languages, customs, and history. The Indian perspective of the exhibition will be enhanced by the leadership of Frederick E. Hoxie, lead curator, who was former director of the Newberry's D'Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian History and is, since 1998, Swanlund Professor of History at the University of Illinois-Urbana.

Shortly after reading Thom's novel, NJC and I had occasion to drive U.S. 33, from Ft. Wayne, IN, to Columbus, OH. It was springtime, and farmers in northwest Ohio were busy in their vast fields and gardens, bringing the earth to life through corn, soybeans, and fruits and vegetables of all sorts. Lawns were trimmed and often fenced in white picket; homes were well tended, with flowering plants adorning window boxes and small, well-tended flower gardens. Northwest Ohio was a new Eden, created and sustained by human enterprise.

As we drove, I thought of Middlebury, VT blacksmith John Deere (1804-86), who, in 1836, came to northern Illinois in search of a better life and invented a remarkable new plow in 1837, which revolutionized agriculture and led to the creation of one of the finest corporate enterprises, the John

Deere Company, in America. I recalled, as well, Cyrus McCormick (1809-1884), who came to Chicago in 1847, from his home state of Virginia, bringing with him for use on the vast prairie west of Chicago the McCormick reaper, which he had invented in 1831. It was another revolutionary development, altering the way Americans farmed and leading to the creation of the International Harvester Company, an enterprise still a pillar of the American corporate community.

What an accomplishment of progress has been the American heritage these past 200 years. Individuals set free to think, to labor, to create, to share, form the critical structure of the American enterprise. Corporations, brought into being to manufacture, refine, expand the creative genius of founders, and provide labor and wages for others, form the tissue — the muscle, if you will — of this remarkable nation. Across America, unknown lands have now been mapped, untamed elements have been harnessed, networks of individual initiatives and corporate undertakings have brought forth a society our Founding Fathers could not have envisioned. From farm to village to city, America is a land of fulfilling promise and unending dreams.

Although not perfect by any means, America yet stands as the one great hope for humankind throughout the world. Those intent on destroying us would do well to look to their own lands, where people have lived thousands of years in caves, tents, and hovels, unimproved by genius, untouched by corporate enterprise, uninspired by high human aspirations, which drive an enlightened people to establish peaceful communities, in which social justice prevails under the rule of law — and where all become strong through rich national diversity.

While I may sound a bit nationalistic, these are my thoughts as I contemplate the Lewis and Clark accomplishment of two centuries ago, and I make no apologies.

Robert Cotner
Editor

Caxtonians extend book fellowship to West Coast

Wendy Husser

The June 2003 Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Society (FABS) Tour and Symposium took place in Pasadena and Los Angeles, CA. More than 75 attendees were shepherded around under the able and impressive leadership of John Carson of the Zamorano Club. Our own Caxton Club was represented by: Susan Hanes and George Leonard, Hayward Blake, Robert McCamant, Jim Tomes, Peggy Sullivan, and Wendy Husser.

The tour began at the Huntington Library and beautiful gardens, traveled to the Chaves Home with its Roycrofters furniture, and then to the international masterpiece of the Arts and Crafts movement in American, the Gamble House (1907-09). This house was built for David and Mary Gamble of Procter and Gamble. The architects, Charles and Henry Greene, were to make a profound impact on the development of 20th Century American architecture. The evening dinner festivities took place at the University Club in Pasadena, and included a mini-book fair hosted by the southern California Chapter of the ABAA.

Thursday's itinerary was as busy as Wednesday's — with the group traveling to the Claremont College and lunch outside on the Elm Tree lawn of Scripps College, which, even in the misting rain, was a rare treat. The Smiley & Watchorn Public Libraries in Redlands and a trip to the Longo home followed, and then the group was treated to an incomparable evening reception and dinner (complete with strolling musicians) at the Burgesses' beautiful Victorian Redlands home, complete with orange trees and miles of flowering gardens.

Friday's dazzling (and still drizzling) schedule took the FABS to the Rothschild's magnificent home, filled with collections of Johnson, Fielding, Boswell, Pope. Lunch was at the "Rolls-Royce" of bookshops, the Heritage bookshop in Los Angeles. We had a great tour of the Young Research Library of the UCLA Special Collections to end a long day. Saturday's event was the long-awaited "Symposium on the Book," and for the entire morning, the FABS group listened spellbound to the Clark Library's own Bruce Whiteman, and a panel consisting of Jason Epstein, Peter Krause, Jay Fliegelman, and moderator, Robert Jackson.



The Gamble House (1907-09), a masterpiece of the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts movement, built for David and Mary Gamble of the Procter and Gamble Company. The home is now owned by the City of Pasadena in a joint agreement with the School of Architecture of the University of Southern California. Image from a university publication.

The finale of this grand tour was the Getty Museum, an inspiring building, collection, and environs.

Next year's FABS meeting will be in New York City in mid-May; the Grolier Club will host the 2004 meeting. Many newly-made friends are eagerly looking forward to the next meeting! As Joan Knoertzer, self-styled FABS poet, rhymed:

*On to New York, that city east;
Meantime, try to tame that book beast,
Stay happy and well
May your collections swell
God willing — 'til the New York Book Feast.*

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Brochure cover from Heritage Book Shop, Inc., Los Angeles.

Interview

Continued from page 1

BD: But, I think in general people, mostly in the big cities of China, people's living has improved.

JLS: I understand you have a daughter. Where is she living?

BD: She was in China for two years and she just moved back to the United States. She is studying in this country.

JLS: What does she study?

BD: She is still in her senior year of high school.

JLS: Does she have writing skills?

BD: No, no, no. I don't think she does. She didn't adopt my side. She seems to have adopted my ex-wife's side.

JLS: Perhaps you recall that Virginia Woolf wrote an essay, "Room of Her Own." In it she asked, "Why are there no great woman poets? Why are there no women Shakespeares?" Her theory was that for a woman to have that degree of productivity, a woman had to have some independence and resulting personal strength. How, as a Man of Letters, do you see women exhibiting a degree of independence and excellence in literature or poetry today?

BD: I disagree with what Woolf said.

JLS: You disagree?

BD: I disagree. I think there are many great poets in the world, including Chinese poets. They also existed in classical time. Included were some great Chinese women poets. There is a book called, *The Chinese Female Poets*. It was published by Stanford University Press.

JLS: Why aren't they better known? Why would Virginia Woolf make statements like that?

BD: Maybe during her time, she didn't really know this work in the Orient. Actually, in western countries there are few women poets, like Emily Dickinson.

JLS: Who would be an example of a great Chinese woman poet? One who you would have described as a "classical" poet.

BD: Yes. Quian Zhao of Sung Dynasty. Yes. She's one of the greatest female poets

JLS: The American author, Pearl Buck, was intimately associated with China. When you were a boy growing up in China, did you know of Pearl Buck and her writing?

BD: Pearl Buck?

JLS: Pearl Buck. You've never heard of her?

BD: Never heard of her. No. I'm so sorry about that.

JLS: At this time in your career, with an international reputation, what is your objective? Does Bei Dao have an objective? Are you on a mission?

BD: It is hard to describe myself. I think I am just this person who tries to keep writing and who has spent his life writing in the life.

JLS: Writing about life.

BD: No, no, no. Writing and expanding. I try to keep writing and expanding my life.

JLS: As you grow, you hope what you say is becoming even more relevant and more important?

BD: Yes.

JLS: In what language do you write?

BD: Chinese.

JLS: Your poetry translates well. I'm sure people tell you that.

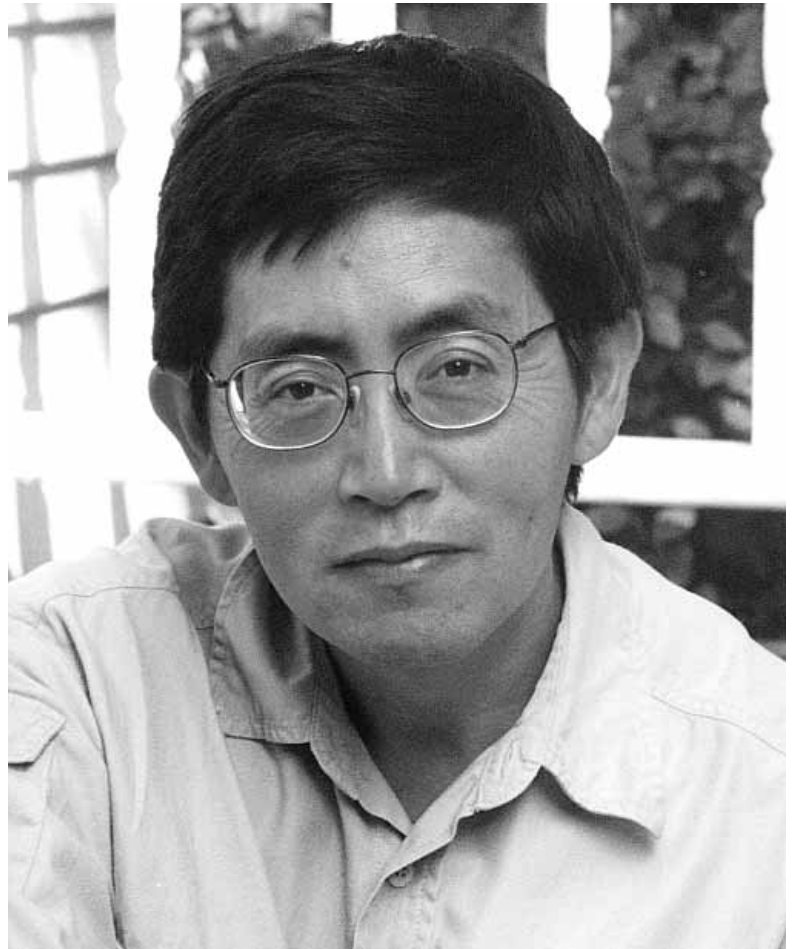
BD: Have you read my poems?

JLS: I've read some. Either you have a very good translator or it's something that lends itself to clear expression in English. It appears to have simplicity and directness. Do you sometimes feel your poetry loses in translation and that Americans can't hear the sounds you wish to communicate?

BD: Sure, something must be lost, but, you have no other choice. You have to translate a beautiful poem for cultural exchange.

JLS: What subjects are you addressing in your poetry today? Is freedom one of your subjects?

BD: Well, you know, this is hard to describe, the subjects of the poetry. It is very mysterious,



Bei Dao, Mackey Distinguished Poet-in-Residence at Beloit College, Beloit, WI, through whose courtesy the image was provided.

you know; it comes from the unknown part of the human consciousness. Each poem has a different sort of subject. It's kind of unclear.

JLS: You don't start off with an agenda: "I'm going to write this."

BD: No. It just sort of happens. It happens.

JLS: Do you believe that you possess an aesthetic genius or an aesthetic skill that is unique? I'm not asking you to be immodest. Is it an innate thing? Can you teach somebody to be a poet if they do not have innate skills?

BD: Partially true. You can't teach poetry, but you can teach certain skills of craftsmanship. That part you can teach.

JLS: When you teach here at Beloit College, is it those skills you are teaching, or are you inspiring or finding people who might have some extraordinary innate skills?

BD: I found some very brilliant students.

JLS: Have you really?

BD: You know it's a very small percentage.

You know the brilliant one, it's always rare.

JLS: Is that what you also found when teaching

at the University of Michigan?

BD: At Michigan, I taught creative writing. I was writer in residence there. There I taught critical and also contemporary Chinese poetry.

JLS: In literature and in philosophy, authors are often given labels. They may be called an “existentialist” or, for example, a “post-modernist.” How would you describe yourself?

BD: Actually, I don’t like those kind of labels.

JLS: Who in the western world has been a great influence on you?

BD: In poetry, the Spanish poet, Consia Lorca. He died in 1936. He was muzzled by Franco. I have been teaching international poetry. Not only Spanish but Russian. Mandelstam is a fine Russian poet.

JLS: What do you see as the status of literature in China today?

BD: You know, I’ve been out of China for 30 years. Of course, I have certain contacts there.

JLS: Is there a younger generation of poets in China?

BD: No. I think that Chinese poetry is declining. That is because of the commercialization.

JLS: What about writers like Mo Yan? Do you feel that he is good?

BD: Mo Yan is one of the best novelists.

JLS: Are there some very famous Chinese women writers?

BD: Yes. Wang Anyi.

JLS: Were you ever a member of the Writer’s Union?

BD: I was.

JLS: You’re not today?

BD: I’m not so sure because I lost contact with them. For many years, I don’t know if I am still a member.

JLS: When Gao Xingjian won the Nobel Prize, and they asked the Head of the Writer’s Union, “How do you react to Gao Xingjian’s getting the Nobel Prize? Is he a Chinese man getting the Nobel Prize?” He said, “He is not a Chinese man; he is a Frenchman who writes in Chinese.” If you were to get the Nobel Prize, would they say the same thing about you?

BD: I couldn’t know.

JLS: How about the author, Ba Jin? Is he still alive in China?

BD: Yes, he’s dying, but he’s 91 years old or more now. He may be almost 100.

JLS: How good of a writer was he?

BD: Oh, I don’t like his work.

JLS: Was it because he was too political?

BD: Oh no. His language was, how can I say? Not very good. I don’t think he’s a very great writer.

JLS: What about Gao Xingjian? Did you know him before he got the Nobel prize?

BD: Yes, we have known each other for a long time. Frankly, I haven’t had a chance to read his work. Actually, I saw his drama.

JLS: He had one called *Bus Stop* or something.

BD: I saw another one called *Absolute Signal*. It was a long time ago. Almost 20 years ago. It was almost an experimental type of drama.

JLS: Did you like it then?

BD: Yes, I liked it.

JLS: Is he also a painter?

BD: Yes.

JLS: Is he more a painter than a writer or more a writer than a painter?

BD: Ahhhh — I think maybe both. But I think that as a major contributor, he is a writer and a dramatist.

JLS: Were you surprised when he was selected for the Nobel Prize, or did you have some inkling?

BD: I think that in a way, the attention destroys the writer who wins the Nobel Prize.

It’s not the prize that destroys. It’s the attention of the world that destroys. I think that in post-modern time, the Nobel Prize, in a certain way, has become kind of commercial.

JLS: Well, do you think that’s good or bad?

BD: I think that it’s maybe both good and bad. In a positive way, in one moment, people maybe pay deeper attention to literature. That is good. But then, in a very commercial way, people sell a lot of books. I think it is best that the people pay more attention to literature and not only to the Nobel Prize.

JLS: Have you ever read Gao’s book, *Soul Mountain*?

BD: No.

JLS: You’ve still not read it.

BD: I read part of it. Actually, we had seen published a part of *Soul Mountain*. It’s published by (Cypher?) Press in Boston.

JLS: Part of *Soul Mountain* appeared in there?

BD: Yes.

JLS: That’s where you read some of *Soul Mountain*?

BD: Yes, I read part of it.

JLS: Do you know Goran Malmquist of the Swedish Academy?

BD: Oh yes, I know Goran Malmquist.

JLS: When Goran Malmquist presented Gao Xingjian to receive the Nobel Prize, Malmquist said that Gao uses pronouns instead of characters to communicate. Do you understand what he means by that? That sounds very similar to your saying that you use multiple narrators and interior monologue. Do you have multiple narrators in your stories? Is that true or not?

BD: This is a form of technique for many writers.

JLS: You do it and he does it too?

BD: It’s different. I use the pronoun in multiple roles.

JLS: How has the technique of communication evolved?

BD: In romantic fiction in the 18th and 19th Centuries the author became the authority. Author. Author. The writer. Author of the book became an authority. Through him one could see everything.

JLS: Is that an omniscient communicator?

BD: Yes, omniscient. But, in modern time, you actually have to communicate in different views. From different sides and from different persons.

JLS: When did that change?

BD: I think, really, in the early 20th Century. There was a war. After the first war, the First World War there evolved a kind of change in perspective.

JLS: Are you referencing the Freudian, the unconscious?

BD: Yes, the view of this world has been changed. So many of the writers, then, changed their approach. They wrote from different views and persons.

JLS: So, where Gao does multiple persons through pronouns, you do it through multiple narrators all giving different perspectives. Is that an oversimplification?

BD: No, I don’t think that references the greatness of *Soul Mountain*.

JLS: You don’t think that is the main greatness?

BD: No, I think that is just a general technique for many writers. I believe there must be other reasons for the book’s recognition.

JLS: It has been reported that Malmquist was the first to discover Gao’s writings and that

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Interview

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Malmquist ultimately became Gao's translator in Sweden. Do you think their friendship and collaboration compromised Malmquist's objectivity?

BD: I don't know. I think because Sweden is a very small country. Just because Malmquist is the translator and also happens to be member of the Academy. I don't think it would compromise the Academy's objectivity when evaluating Gao. I believe they are quite honest people.

JLS: Did Goran Malmquist also translate for you?

BD: Yes, he translated for me and many important Chinese writers.

JLS: Do you have an agent who represents you in the United States?

BD: My publisher, New Directions, is my agent, and also I have an agent in Europe.

JLS: Does your agent promote you as a speaker? Or, don't you like to do that.

BD: I've received invitations to speak. Tomorrow I will go to Berlin; then I will go to Casablanca. But I travel too much already, so I think I should stay home.

JLS: Many of us remember the famous short Nobel Prize acceptance speech of William Faulkner. If you received the Nobel Prize and you were giving your acceptance speech would you consider saying, "I don't believe the sky is blue;/I don't believe in thunder's echoes;/I don't believe that dreams are false;/I don't believe that death has no revenge?" Would you think of saying that in your acceptance speech? Or, don't you believe that poem of yours anymore?

BD: I wrote that poem. Yes, I know. I wouldn't give that poem if I did get the Prize.

JLS: In any event, do you still believe that? Or have you changed since then?

BD: That is a metaphor. I still challenge authorities. Yes.

JLS: Isn't it more than challenging authority? "I don't believe that dreams are false." That doesn't just have to be authority, does it?

BD: I think you have to put this all in a certain context. This came from a very dark period in China's history. So at that time, you really kind of challenge authority.

JLS: But can you take that metaphor beyond the challenging of the Chinese authority? You can wake up tomorrow morning and say, "that's a contemporary view that I have."

BD: No, I don't want to generalize this poem. I don't like that poem anymore.

JLS: Because it's no longer timely?

BD: Yes, maybe I'm getting old. I am really trying to lower my voice. That poem is high pitched. You know.

JLS: Yes. During your last visit to Beijing, what did you feel was the attitude of the people towards freedom?

BD: I visited Beijing in very short periods. Only months. I didn't contact many people. Most of the time was spent with my family. It is hard to tell you about this kind of change I observed. There was a kind of a mixture of feelings.

Something positive, something negative. You know, it's really hard. Yeah, I wrote a poem about this kind of mysterious mixture of feelings.

JLS: Was that when you came back.

BD: Yes, when I came back. In general, I had a very sad, dark feeling.

JLS: In your book, you describe yourself as a person who likes to gamble and you describe that habit as an example of the Chinese national propensity for irrational behavior. Do you still like to gamble?

BD: It is a very bad habit.

JLS: Do you still have the habit?

BD: No. Not really.

JLS: You mentioned Octavio Paz. What is it

On Eternity

*beneath a radiance rented from the stars
long-distance runners transit death's city*

*chattering heart-to-heart with sheep
we share a lovely wine
and under-the-table crime*

*fog's lured into night-song
and stove-fire like mighty rumor
greet the wind*

*if death's the reason for love
we love unfaithful passion
love the defeated
those eyes gazing into time*

Bei Dao

about him, about his poetry that you like so much?

BD: I said in my article, that I don't like his long poems. I prefer his early work.

JLS: Was it the message or the style that you liked?

BD: I mention the poem called "Street." He is too ambitious, I think, when he tried to write this

long poem. In general, I don't like long poems. But, generally, he is a great master of poems.

JLS: A person who you were not kind to was Joseph Brodsky. You said that Brodsky's personality was insufferable.

BD: We should not criticize dead people.

JLS: I understand. But that was what you wrote perhaps when he was alive. Do you still agree with that? Brodsky said, "If you have sharper aesthetic expression that leads to sounder taste. Sounder taste leads to sharper moral focus. Sharper moral focus can lead to freedom and the truth." He said that doesn't necessarily mean you will be happy. But, he said, that is progress.

BD: I don't think that poetry reading can lead to truth. First I think, what is the truth?

JLS: Do you think there are some true standards?

BD: Probably, but what is the concept of truth? There are too many truths. Muslims have their truth, and Christians have their truth.

JLS: Are you saying that truths become cultural?

BD: Yes, truths are really hard to see. There are no general truths today.

JLS: Are the truths then cultural?

BD: It's cultural in many different respects. Different ways, different cultures, different history. So it's really hard to say what are the truths.

JLS: Since 9/11, it has been asked why people of the world don't seem to like us, the Americans. As an outsider looking at American deportment, conduct, public policy, is there any advice as a poet that would say to the American people as to why many of the people of the world don't like us?

BD: I think you ask very complicated questions. It's hard to answer in, you know, a few words. But, I think the American people should reflect on what their government is doing. Yes, I think this is a very important moment for the American people to think about that. I really think that Americans, under certain circumstances are being impacted by propaganda. I fear that people are losing their independent sources of the news. Of the truths. We call it the truths. That is a very dangerous thing. ❖

A letter of inquiry, seeking Bewick blocks

Dear Bob,

I'm writing to ask for your assistance with a research project documenting the 1300 Thomas Bewick blocks, their arrival in Chicago, and their subsequent dispersal from the Argus Bookshop from 1943 to 1955. This story is known to many Caxton Club members; however, at this writing, the whereabouts of one half of the blocks is still unknown and undocumented. Most are in private hands and at real risk of being discarded by unknowing heirs.

Fortunately, there is a document, listing buyers of the individual blocks from the Argus. The document was copied by Greer Allen from a set of *The Memorial Edition, 1885 to 1887*, with notations alongside the cuts of buyers' names and, occasionally, a date. Many of the buyers listed are unknown and several of them purchased sizeable numbers of blocks. Identifying these individuals would help to locate, possibly, the dispositions of their collections. I have also listed known individuals, whose blocks are unaccounted for.

It has been suggested to ask the membership of The Caxton Club to help identify these individuals and also to ask members to document their own blocks, as their provenance might reveal the whereabouts of some of these unknown collections.

The following names are listed as they were in the Argus records — the numbers of blocks and comments in parentheses are mine: Bortman (56 blocks); Carl Gazeley (31 blocks; a Caxton Club member?); Fitzpatrick (10 blocks); Harold Willoughby (3 blocks, U of

Chicago Religion Professor); Vilas Johnson (11 blocks); Mrs. Fred Biesel (7 blocks, Executive Secretary of the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago); Phillip Reed (4 blocks, Illustrator and fine press printer); Mish Kohn (28 blocks, artist and teacher, now living somewhere in California); and Richard Ellis (7 blocks, a designer in New York?).

I am sending you a photocopy of *The Blocks Revisited*, a recent Bewick work of mine, which introduces the Chicago story with the Abramson, Middleton, Detterer, and Newberry connections. It also documents my personal collection of blocks. The proposed *Blocks Revisited II* (working title page enclosed) will finish the Newberry story and document other known collections at the University of Chicago, Northwestern University, The Art Institute of Chicago, Harvard University, and the University of Kansas, among others.

If any Caxton Club member has knowledge of either the people herein listed or the Bewick blocks in question, I would appreciate a call at 847/328-4382.

Best Regards,
William Hesterberg

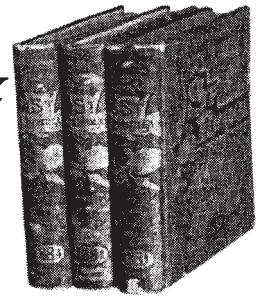
President

Continued from page 1

to increase our visibility in the community at large. To that end, Martha Chiplis has agreed to become the chair of our newly established Publicity Committee, which will have as its dual mission of building the club's relations with the media in Chicago and covering club activities and news about members for the *Caxtonian*. As a letter press printer and a staffer at the *Chicago Reader*, Martha is well qualified for this assignment, and we are all very lucky she is willing to take it on.

Another goal I have is to improve the means by which club members who wish to become active in club projects can do so. The programs, exhibitions, publications, and other activities of the club require a great deal of hard work by many people with various kinds of expertise, and in the past some of the burden has sometimes been too heavily concentrated on a few active members. We should try to mitigate this problem, at least to the extent we can, and I think the best way to do that is to identify more club members who have both the desire and the ability to make a credible contribution to club projects.

Saints & Sinners Corner



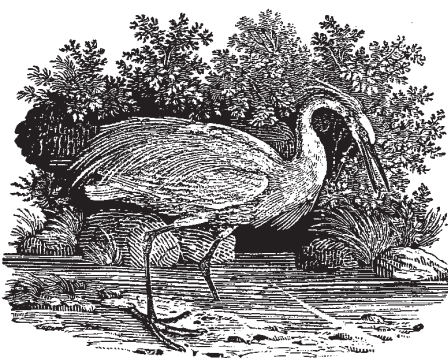
Caxtonian Susan Jackson Keig has been in Spring Hill, KY, where she produced, for the 34th year, the Shaker calendar-pictures of this Shaker village. She reports that the Western Shakers — especially the Kentucky villages — sometimes called “latter-day Shakers,” are quite distinct in their buildings and furniture from the Eastern Shakers of Maine and Massachusetts.

Caxtonian Richard Love, whose R.H. Love Galleries were located in the Nickerson Home, Wabash and Erie Sts., Chicago, for many years, has relocated to 645 N. Michigan Ave, 2nd Floor, with the entrance on Erie St. The new location is beautifully appointed to display the galleries' collection of American paintings.

A seminar, “Against the Law: Skulduggery and Sharp Practice in the Book Trade,” is scheduled November 29-30, 2003, in Birkbeck (29th) and St. Bride's Printing Library (30th), London, England. For information, consult the Web: www.bbk.ac.uk/fce.

The club will be sending a survey form to each member listing the current roster of committees, their purpose, and the activities on which they are working. Members with an interest in a committee or a project, and who are willing to make a contribution, are asked to respond to the survey. The responses will be distributed to the relevant committee chairs, and they will be asked to be in touch. Committees may not be able to accommodate everyone, of course, but every effort will be made, in some way, to involve anyone who wants to make a commitment and do something for the club.

Once again, I would like to thank all of the members for electing me president and giving me the opportunity to make my own contribution to The Caxton Club. I'm looking forward to seeing all of you in the coming months at lunch, dinner, and at the other gatherings and events we organize “to promote the arts pertaining to books, and to foster their appreciation.” ❖



Woodcut by Thomas Bewick from Thomas Bewick: *The Blocks Revisited*, 2002, from the Hesterberg Press, courtesy of William Hesterberg.

Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

October 10, 2003

Dena Epstein

"Black Folk of the Civil War"

Dena Epstein will talk about her book, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977, which has just been reissued to mark its silver anniversary. In the intervening 25 years, no subsequent work has supplanted it.

A number of myths about black folk music have been widely accepted in academia although they have been proven false. It has been commonly assumed, for example, that blacks arrived in the New World culturally naked, and that blacks had no secular music. As late as 1959, D. K. Wilgus wrote about black folk music in his *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898*: "There is no trust worthy evidence before the Civil War."

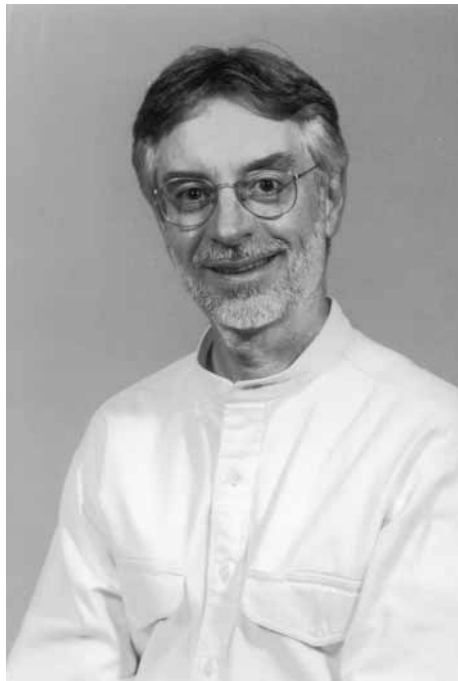
Dena Epstein has done considerable research to update her argument which refutes these and other commonly held misconceptions. She is a retired music librarian at the University of Chicago and past president of the Music Library Association.

Come, join fellow Caxtonians to hear one of the authoritative voices writing about the rich legacy of black music in America.

Edward Quattrocchi & Leonard Freedman
Co-Chairs

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of BankOne, BankOne Plaza, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon and discussion, 12:30pm. Dinner meetings begin with spirits at 5pm, dinner at 6pm, lecture at 7:30pm. **Members planning to attend luncheons or dinners must make advance reservations by phoning the Caxton number, 312/255-3710.**

Luncheon for members and guests, \$25. Dinner, for members and guests, \$45.



Thomas Slaughter

Dinner Program

October 15, 2003

Thomas Slaughter

"Exploring Lewis and Clark"

Thomas Slaughter will introduce us to his new book, *Exploring Lewis and Clark*. Slaughter, the Andrew V. Tackes Professor of History at Notre Dame University, has moved from his work on John and William Bartram to the famous explorers, who are known to have studied Bartram in the process of planning their journey.

Kirkus Reviews called the new book "rich" and "provocative" and commended it for gainsaying the myths and pointing out shortcomings while still honoring Lewis and Clark for their bravery. "There's no needless demolition of hard-won reputation here, and their self-doubt acquires a certain poignancy in Slaughter's hands," it observed.

Since its publication early this year, Slaughter's book has received wide praise. *The Washington Post Book World* called it a "rueful reading of the historical record that delights in considering some of the thorniest questions within it. Whatever happened to York, Clark's black slave, whom the Indians they encountered found 'more mysterious' — and more attractive — 'than the leaders of the expedition? Did York return to the Plains to become a Crow warrior, and elder, or did he fall to cholera in Tennessee? And what of the 'elusive, fictive, mythic, and real' Sacagawea?"

Copies of *Exploring Lewis and Clark*, as well as paperback copies of his previous book, *The Natures of John and William Bartram*, will be available for purchase, and the author will be available for signing.

You will not want to miss this evening's program. Join your friends and colleagues for our October dinner meeting.

Robert McCamant
Vice President and
Program Chair

November Caxton programs

The November 14 Luncheon program: Ed Vaulaskas, Manager, Library and Plant Information Office at the Chicago Botanic Gardens, will expand upon the stimulating discussion he moderated with Caxtonians upon the occasion of their one-day field trip to the Chicago Botanic Gardens on June 14, 2003. He will focus the discussion on "A Brief Survey of Botanical Literature Before 1600."

The November 19 Dinner program: "A Father-Daughter Affair," with David Starkey, who will share with us in the celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the death of Queen Elizabeth I. Starkey, the author of *Elizabeth: The Struggle for the Throne*, will help us understand the firmness of this great English queen.