

# THE PRIVATE LIBRARY

Seventh Series Volume 5: 1 & 2  
Spring & Summer 2022



COLLECTING BRITISH & IRISH THEATRE

PART 1: BRIAN MCAVERA

ARTHUR RACKHAM AND

*A CHRISTMAS CAROL*: SIMON COOKE

REVIEWS; DAVID BUTCHER

PAUL GOLDMAN 1950 - 2024: SIMON COOKE

Harvard in 1870). He recorded the endless takes and retakes involved, experiencing both the excitement and tedium of making a Hollywood film. His diary is followed by a colour-illustrated account of the film, its stars and its reception (a disaster for the studio, United Artists), and its more recent reappraisal.

Alexander Lawrence Ames and Mark Samuels Lasner, *Grolier Club Bookplates Past & Present*. New York: Grolier Club, 2023. 160 pp., with 136 illustrations + tipped-in bookplate. \$85. ISBN 978-1-60583-104-6.

THIS HANDSOME VOLUME was designed by Jerry Kelly, who also designed or printed (or both) ten of the bookplates shown, including his own. It derives from an exhibition of Grolier Club Bookplates Past & Present from November 2017 to January 2018. Unlike many of the distinguished catalogues accompanying the Club's exhibitions, it was only published almost six years later and includes several more recent bookplates. The first third of the book comprises three essays based on talks given at a Grolier Club symposium on bookplates during the exhibition. The main part is in two sections, reproducing forty ex-libris of past members and sixty of current members. Past members include such luminaries as Philip Hofer, C H St John Hornby, Paul Mellon, John Pierpont Morgan, and Bruce Rogers, with biographical information about the member, and often the designer responsible for the plate. The statements from current members are mostly shorter, with more about their collecting interests and the inspiration for the plate.

The bookplates display a great diversity of styles and designers, from the simple typographic book-labels of Emery Walker and Monroe Wheeler to the elaborate designs of Edwin Davis French, the great American bookplate artist of the golden age of bookplates. A fifth of the bookplates were designed by their owners, who had a clear idea of what they required. Suze Bienaimée's bookplate, for instance, combines a memorial for her parakeet Bella and a list of her collecting interests. Several labels present the name of the owner in distinguished calligraphy, including three by Will Carter and one by his son Sebastian. My own favourites are the wood-engraved designs, for which members often turned to British artists, notably Eric Gill, Reynolds Stone, Simon Brett and Richard Shirley Smith, but Richard

Wagener's engraving for Jane Rodgers Siegel is one of the finest. There is even a pop-up bookplate for Tom Freudenheim, a collector of such books. Most bookplates were printed on papers of various colours and kinds, but those for Paul Mellon and Pierpont Morgan were gilt on red leather, a style echoed by the spine label of the book.

The introductory essays are themselves illustrated and contain some fascinating case studies on the origin and development of bookplates. Lawrence Ames has introduced academic rigour into the study of bookplates by linking them to the concept of 'self-fashioning', which offers 'a theoretical and methodological framework within which to interpret the art of ex-libris'. His first case study is on the then First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, who commissioned a bookplate design by Dorothy Sturgis Harding in 1933 and their correspondence during and long after the design process. The second indicates that the designer, Walter Crane, was unhappy with the way in which his original drawing was translated into an engraving, especially the treatment of his lettering. The bookplate, with an elegant lady seated by a porthole through which a map of the Atlantic can be seen, was for the young Harry Elkins Widener, who was lost four years later on the *Titanic*. His grief-stricken mother continued building his collection of nineteenth-century British literature and paid for the building of the Widener Memorial Library at Harvard to house it. Molly Dodson's essay takes Irene D Andrews Pace as another example of self-fashioning. Pace commissioned almost 300 bookplate designs from a hundred artists between 1924 and 1961. She used them for exchange to develop a collection of over 150,000 bookplates, now part of the Yale Bookplate Collection. Practical advice on bookplate collecting and commissioning is provided by William Butler, who has published so much on bookplates at his Primrose Hill Press and Primrose Academy.

Although this book is a celebration of bookplates, some members had reservations about their use, raising the question of whether the presence of a bookplate enhances or defaces the book. However, most people feel that they add to the history of the copy, with some being exquisite works of art providing visual delight.

This book offers an array of different designs that may inspire readers to commission their own bookplate. It is set in Caslon and

printed in the Czech Republic on a sympathetic laid paper and bound in golden yellow cloth with a gilt design on the front. The tight binding means that the pages refuse to lie flat and the visible inner margin is reduced. The deluxe edition with original bookplates is no longer available, but the regular edition, with an original Grolier Club bookplate designed in 1889 tipped-in, is well worth acquiring.

Charles Shannon, *Old Chap, Dear Ridgeley, Old Chump, Dear Old Ruffian, My Dear Ricketts: Ten Letters to Charles Ricketts*. Edited by John Aplin and Paul van Capelleveen. The Hague: At the Paulton, 2023. 40 pp., with 3 illustrations. 60 copies. (€35 inc. p&p to UK). No ISBN. To order email Paul van Capelleveen (paulton@xs4all.nl).

Paul van Capelleveen, *Charles Ricketts's Early Drawings*. The Hague: At the Paulton, 2024. 60 pp., with 46 illustrations. 75 copies. €25 (€36 inc. p&p to UK). No ISBN. Order details as above.

CHARLES RICKETTS (1866–1931) and Charles Shannon (1863–1937) met at art school and lived together for the next forty-five years. Ricketts gave up painting to support Shannon's artistic career as a painter and lithographer initially by working as an illustrator. Ricketts and Shannon built up a wide-ranging art collection together, from Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to Old Master drawings and Japanese prints. They were seldom apart, and wrote to each other regularly if separated. The nine letters and a postcard in *Old Chap...* include five from March 1906, all sent within twelve days, when Ricketts was in Italy researching his book on Titian (Methuen, 1910). Shannon wrote about new plays, society events, his paintings ('The Mill Pond' is reproduced, as is his self-portrait lithograph), a visit by Lady Gregory and W B Yeats, and much more. Three letters were written when Shannon visited Cambridge and his Lincolnshire roots in September 1918, meeting Sydney Cockerell and visiting the Fitzwilliam Museum, to which much of their collection was bequeathed. The postcard in August 1930 dates from after Shannon's fall off a ladder, from which he never fully recovered. Characteristically, Ricketts sold off part of their collection to fund Shannon's care, but predeceased him by six years.

There has been a resurgence of interest in the Ricketts and