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Uncovering Shakespeare's Sisters in Special Collections and College Archives, Musselman Library

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Abstract

Foreword by Professor Suzanne J. Flynn

I have taught the first-year seminar, Shakespeare’s Sisters, several times, and over the years I have brought the seminar’s students to the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. There, the wonderful librarians have treated the students to a special exhibit of early women’s manuscripts and first editions, beginning with letters written by Elizabeth I and proceeding through important works by seventeen and eighteenth-century women authors such as Aemelia Lanyer, Anne Finch, Aphra Behn, and Mary Wollstonecraft. This year I worked with Carolyn Sautter, the Director of Special Collections and College Archives, to give my 2018 seminar students the opportunity to produce a sequel to the Folger exhibit of early modern women writers. Special Collections houses an impressive array of first editions from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of them acquired from Thomas Y. Cooper, the former editor of the Hanover Evening Sun newspaper, who donated over 1600 items to Musselman Library in 1965.

Working with Kerri Odess-Harnish, we chose first editions of eight significant works of literature written by American and British women from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. The students worked in pairs, researching a single book and producing a report that outlines important biographical facts about the author, the book’s publication and reception history, and finally the significance of the book in the years since its publication. We hope that our project will draw attention to the wealth of literary treasures housed in Special Collections at Musselman Library, but especially to these works by eight of “Shakespeare’s Sisters.”

Keywords
Shakespeare’s Sisters, Special Collections and College Archives, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charlotte Bronte, Kate Greenaway, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Margaret Mitchell, Zora Neale Hurston

Disciplines
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Comments
A project by the students of “Shakespeare's Sisters,” a First-Year Seminar Fall 2018.

Authors

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a First-Year Seminar

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Foreword by Professor Suzanne J. Flynn

I have taught the first-year seminar, Shakespeare’s Sisters, several times, and over the years I have brought the seminar’s students to the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. There, the wonderful librarians have treated the students to a special exhibit of early women’s manuscripts and first editions, beginning with letters written by Elizabeth I and proceeding through important works by seventeen and eighteenth-century women authors such as Aemelia Lanyer, Anne Finch, Aphra Behn, and Mary Wollstonecraft. This year I worked with Carolyn Sautter, the Director of Special Collections and College Archives, to give my 2018 seminar students the opportunity to produce a sequel to the Folger exhibit of early modern women writers. Special Collections houses an impressive array of first editions from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of them acquired from Thomas Y. Cooper, the former editor of the Hanover Evening Sun newspaper, who donated over 1600 items to Musselman Library in 1965.

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Brief biography: Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in 1811 to Lyman and Roxana Beecher in Litchfield, Connecticut. Her mother died when she was four, leaving her and her twelve other siblings to live with her Congregationalist minister father. Beecher began education at the Litchfield Female Academy, and later studied at the Female Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, where she eventually became a teacher. In 1833 she wrote a textbook titled *Primary Geography for Children*, in response to her sister Catherine complaining that there were no good geography textbooks at the time. Stowe joined the Semi-Colon writers club in Cincinnati and began submitting writings and drawings which eventually became picked up by *The Western Monthly* magazine. In 1834, *The Chronicle*, a Cincinnati weekly magazine, picked up her works from *The Western Monthly*, and in 1835 she started writing for the New York religious periodical, *The Evangelist*. Stowe began writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1836, and had seven children during the years before the publication of the novel. She wrote various pieces over the years and used the money from her publications to help pay for her family’s expenses. In 1846, fifteen
of the works that appeared in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* were published by the publishing firm Harper and Brothers in *The Mayflower*. In 1852, Stowe published the completed work of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, her first published novel. Stowe died on July 1, 1896.

**Publication history and provenance:** Like many novels of the time, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was originally published in a magazine. Starting in June 1851 and continuing over the next ten months, the story was introduced to the world as a serial in the *National Era* in 14 installments. In March 1852, John P. Jewett & Company of Boston published Stowe’s serial as a novel.

This first edition of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was given to Gettysburg College by Thomas Y. Cooper in memory of his parents M. Cooper, M.D. & Kate Miller Cooper.

**Reception History:** The first copies of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* flew off the shelves. On the first day alone over 3,000 copies were sold and within the novel’s first year the sales tallied over 300,000. That is a best seller even by today’s standards. “People devour it, they cover it with tears. It is no longer permissible to those who can read not to have read it,” said Annie Fields, a columnist for a French newspaper *La Presse* in 1852. Many adaptations to the book have been created and even more critical responses have been published. At this time, America was divided strictly into two factions, the North and the South, during the Antebellum period before the Civil War. This dichotomy of positions led to clear opposing reviews on the book that attacked the effective cause of the war. While there were many contemporary views similar to Field’s review (a letter to the editor of *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* by William G. Allen praised “How its descriptions stir the blood, indeed almost make it leap out of the heart!”), there were also plenty of scalding takes on the story. George F. Holmes of Louisiana wrote to *The Southern Literary Messenger* about his dislike for the novel: “We have already shown, by a reference to the laws regulating slavery in the Southern States, that many of the allegations of cruelty towards slaves brought forward by Mrs. Stowe, are absolutely and unqualifiedly false.”

*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had a crucial role in raising tensions in the North. While the abolitionist movement had been gaining power in the North for a while, the narratives of Uncle Tom, Eliza Shelby, and her son, George, worked with a “rally around the flag” effect. People, more than ever, were willing to support the American cause of freedom. Slaves were no longer slaves after hearing their stories; George Shelby was now just a child pitted against monsters.

**Significance of the Book:** Abraham Lincoln, upon meeting
Harriet Beecher Stowe, referred to her as “the little lady who wrote the book that made th[e] great war.” Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to voice her opinion that slavery could not exist inside a Christian society. There are many examples of Christianity throughout her novel, including the martyrdom that came with Uncle Tom’s death, and Christian morality. In her novel, Stowe envisioned a society in which black and white men were treated as equals, which sparked immense debate throughout the community upon publication. Stowe changed the roles of females in her novel as well, by using a female heroine, instead of using the typical male hero. In addition to changing the roles of females, Stowe also used the mother figure of the female slave to create a politicizing of domesticity, and changed the expected roles of the mother at the time. Since the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, there have been many plays and movies created from the story, though they all change the story to have different endings.

**Sources**


**Brief biography:** Charlotte Bronte’s novel *Villette* was her final novel, which was written in 1853. She wrote it after the death of her sisters and brother, and the intense sense of loss that she undoubtedly felt can be seen throughout the novel. Bronte was born on April 21, 1821 to Reverend Patrick and Maria Bronte and was the middle child of six children. Due to their isolation because of their father’s position as reverend, as well as their home’s location at the end of town, all of the children were very close and relied on each other for companionship. Their closeness and isolation also stemmed from the death of their mother in 1821. Following their mother’s death, Mrs. Bronte’s sister, Elizabeth Branwell came to supervise the children; she was a strict woman who showed little affection toward the children. In July of 1824, Rev. Bronte sent Charlotte’s older sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, to boarding schools to train as governesses, and they were soon followed by Charlotte herself and her other sister, Emily. However, a year later they were brought back home after both of her older sisters died from illnesses connected to the horrible living conditions of the school. As for her writing career, Bronte published various works under the pseudonym “Currer
Bell,” but she didn’t gain much popularity until the publishing of her classic novel *Jane Eyre* in October 1847. However, the happiness of that success was short lived when her brother and sister- Branwell and Emily- died in 1848 and her sister Anne died in 1849. She published her novel *Villette* in January of 1853, which took an emotional toll on her because it was the first novel that she wrote completely alone, without any of her family besides her. She died on March 31, 1855, on Easter’s Eve.

**Publication history and provenance:** *Villette* was first published in January 1853 by Bronte’s publishing company Smith, Elder & Co. The novel was once again published under Bronte’s alias, “Currer Bell” to capitalize on the popularity of her prior novels, such as *Jane Eyre*. The first edition of the novel that is currently in our special collections library is the first edition published in America in 1853 by Harper and Brothers Publishers in New York. It was gifted to the Gettysburg College Special Collections Library by Kenneth C. Cramer Class of 1952 in honor of President Katherine Haley Will. There is an inscription in the book that says, “Mrs. Berya Chadbonme, Boston, Oct. 9th, 1855,” who is thought to be the original owner of the book.

**Reception history:** *Villette* garnered less publicity than Bronte’s first successful novel *Jane Eyre* due to its lack of plot and change of setting. This work was compared to her other novels and said to show the same “narrowness and harshness” as *Jane Eyre* with “proud and fierce rhetoric.” Other reviewers also commented on Bronte’s lack of range when writing new characters. One reviewer stated how as in *Jane Eyre*, in *Villette* readers meet “a woman of genius, unhappily placed craving for love and sympathy.” In contrast, other reviewers found her intense characterization in *Villette* as “more finished in character than *Jane Eyre*.” Due to her pen name of Currer Bell, there was considerable debate among reviewers on whether she was masculine enough in her writing to be a male while others believed her writing was just a female allowing “hatred to take up the pen.”

**Significance of the book:** Despite this novel’s lack of popularity after its predecessor *Jane Eyre*, *Villette* was admired by intellectuals for its psychological suspense and satirical humor. The novel was praised for its intense characterization fulfilling Bronte’s promise to her sisters to create “a heroine as plain and small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours.” While the novel did not have the love story of *Jane Eyre* that was so beloved by readers, it was still well read for its focus on independence for women and indignation at the status quo.
Virginia Woolf wrote that within Bronte there was “some untamed ferocity perpetually at war with the accepted order of things.” Some readers, like the famous writer, George Eliot found Villette to be a “more wonderful book than Jane Eyre” with its stream-of-consciousness writing and unrequited love story.

Sources:


Brief biography: Kate Greenaway was born in London on March 17th, 1846. Her father, John Greenaway, was a wood engraver, and her mother, Elizabeth Greenaway, was a seamstress. She grew up in London but spent parts of her youth in the village of Rolleston in Nottinghamshire. For her formal education in art, she attended National Art Training School. She also studied at the Heatherley School of Fine Art and the Slade School of Art. While still a student, Greenaway began her career as a commercial artist by illustrating greeting cards for Marcus Ward. She also illustrated for major magazines such as Illustrated London News. In 1879, her first children’s book, Under the Window, was published. Following the publication of her first book, she published various other children’s books such as the commercial success, Kate Greenaway’s Birthday Book (1880), and the critically acclaimed, Mother Goose (1881). By the time of her death in November 1901, Kate Greenaway had contributed to the illustrations of 150 books.

Publication history and provenance: Kate Greenaway created her children’s book, Under the Window, with the help of Edmund Evans, a prominent English engraver. The words and pictures
were solely created by Greenaway, while Evans assisted in designing and printing. He used photographs of Greenaway’s drawings to create almost identical engravings that could be used in the printing process. Also, Evans initially printed the book on his own. In the fall of 1879, Routledge, a publisher located in London, printed the children’s book as ordered by Evans. Routledge was a prominent publisher of children’s books at the time and was located in Britain but had branches in America that circulated volumes on the other side of the Atlantic. At the recommendation of the publisher, Frederick Locker edited the book. Against the advice of Routledge, Evans ordered the initial printing of 20,000 books, and the original edition sold over 100,000 copies. Special Collection’s first edition of *Under the Window* was presented to Gettysburg College in 1965 by Thomas Y. Cooper in memory of his parents M. Cooper, M.D. and Kate Miller Cooper.

**Reception history:** Upon first publication, *Under the Window* was generally well received. Kate Greenaway was praised most for her artistic style. One reviewer found that “it makes quite an attractive little picture-book.” Although most were drawn to Greenaway’s illustrations, others appreciated her verse as well. In fact, one reviewer said, “to be a poet as well as a painter is not vouchsafed to everyone.” Few people could look upon the sweet and innocent drawings of *Under the Window* and be moved to negativity, yet some were. One reviewer in particular criticized Greenaway’s writing, accusing it of lacking wit, while finding fault in her drawings because they depicted “humanized frogs, child stealers, and diabolical monstrosities of all kinds.” Despite the few voices of opposition, Kate Greenaway’s *Under the Window* proved a popular and beloved children’s book.

**Significance of the book:** *Under the Window*, along with other works by Kate Greenaway, had significant impacts on both children’s literature and society in general. Greenaway’s colorful and artistic work was part of an innovative new genre of children’s books that included imaginative and fanciful depictions of Victorian childhood that many people still recognize today. The book was published during the time of the Aesthetic movement and the Arts and Crafts movement. The Aesthetic movement began in approximately 1868 and was a movement that spurred society to emphasize aesthetics and artistry in books instead of socially or politically charged themes. The Arts and Crafts movement began in the late nineteenth century and displayed the emerging social emphasis on the fine arts. The success of *Under
the Window was greatly enhanced by these social and cultural movements because of its artistic value. Greenaway greatly contributed to the emerging idea of creating children’s books that were also works of art, and many followed in her path. The beautiful images and quaint stories captured the attention of Britain, but they also achieved great success in North America. Under the Window started the “Greenaway Vogue,” an aesthetic that mimicked her quaint and beautiful artistic style. This style was imitated in novels, clothing, jewelry, needlework, and in many other visual forms. Under the Window was one of the key books that spurred a new era in children’s literature.

Source:

Brief biography: Frances Hodgson Burnett was born in Manchester, England, in 1849, the third of five children. Her father’s death, when she was only 4 years old, sent her family’s modest life into poverty. In 1865, after the American Civil War, Burnett’s family moved to rural New Market, Tennessee. In 1868, after failed attempts to contribute to her family’s poor financial state, Burnett was pushed to send a story to *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, an American women’s magazine, where she eventually published her first written work at the age 19. Burnett continued to sell stories for American magazines during the following years and eventually started writing and publishing novels, establishing herself as an adult novelist, with a couple children’s works. One of her children’s novels published in 1886 was *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, which was an immediate success. The novel brought Burnett financial independence and fame, which led to her living a flamboyant and international lifestyle. Burnett showed interest in plays, having previously written a couple herself. *Little Lord Fauntleroy*’s theatrical release and success allowed her to continue a theatrical career as well. In 1890 her oldest son, Lionel passed away. Burnett’s grief over Lionel’s death guided her
choice of charities and also accounts for the many stories she wrote at the time dealing with dead or dying children. Burnett died in 1924. Throughout her life, Burnett published more than 50 written works, 13 play productions, and several periodical publications.

Publication history and provenance: *Little Lord Fauntleroy* was originally published in *St. Nicholas*, a magazine for children, as a serial in 1885 after Burnett sold it to Mary Mapes Dodge. Dodge paid her about ten dollars more per page than most *St. Nicholas* writers received and allowed her to expand the work to 53,000 words. Later, in 1886, the publisher of *St. Nicholas*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, released it as a novel in the United States while Frederick Warne did the same in Britain. Our copy is a first American edition, part of Thomas Cooper’s collection of first editions and other rare works that he donated to the college in 1965.

Reception History: *Little Lord Fauntleroy* is often referred to as a ‘transatlantic best seller’ because of the warm reception it received in both Burnett’s place of birth, England, and her lifelong home, the United States. An American reviewer expressed “Little Lord Fauntleroy is already too well known and too much admired to need further words of introduction, but it is a pleasure to dwell with emphasis upon anything so perfect of its kind.” Any flaws found by critics were minuscule; as one British reviewer put it, “In spite of these blemishes--if blemishes they be--the book is one which appeals equally to old-young reader and the young-old reader.” More than anything in the novel, critics and the public had an intense infatuation with little Cedric Errol. “Tiny as he is,” one reviewer wrote, “he fills the stage whenever he is present.” Burnett was highly praised for her ingenious novel; reviews went as far as classifying it as an instant classic. For instance an American church review stated, “The children have already added the book to their classics, and raised Mrs. Burnett to their young esteem.”

Significance of the book: *Little Lord Fauntleroy* was something of a global literary sensation. It was translated into twelve different languages and sold a million copies of the English edition. In the United States, there was an undeniable craze for the novel, one that might be attributed to the recent events of the Civil War and the need of Americans to establish amiability between England and the United States. Cedric Errol and his mother represented a sweetness and innate goodness in the United States that many Americans appreciated, along with their ability to overcome the preconceived notions that Cedric’s
grandfather had about the boy’s motherland. The book was so well-received both in the United States and England that it spawned countless theatre and film adaptations, even a century after its release. During the time of its release, many American and English mothers dressed their sons in costumes, similar to the one Frances made for her son Vivian who was the inspiration for the character. You can still find Burnett’s influence in today’s pop culture in the form of the 2003 film *What a Girl Wants*, starring Amanda Bynes, whose plot bears a striking resemblance to that of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*.

**Sources:**


*Books for The Young*. Church Review (1885-1891); Nov 1886; 48, 166; *American Periodicals*, p. 529.


*The Critic: a Weekly Review of Literature and the Arts* (1886-1898); Oct 23, 1886; 147; *American Periodicals*, p. 195


**Brief biography:** Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts in 1830, the second of three children. Dickinson received an education at Amherst Academy and attended one of the first women’s colleges, Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, for a year. After leaving college, she returned home, where she gradually developed agoraphobia, a fear of public places. Dickinson appeared in public less and less until she became more of a myth, her existence verified by few. During the time she spent as a recluse, Dickinson wrote poetry and letters, some to her sister-in-law and some to a man known as “Master.” During her lifetime only eight of her poems were published. In 1886, Emily Dickinson died of Bright’s disease. Her collection of private poems were found after her death and published in collections, including *Poems: Second Series*, published in 1891.

**Publication history and provenance:** *Poems: Second Series* was published in 1891, five years after Emily Dickinson’s death. The book contains only a small portion of Dickinson’s poems that were discovered in her room, the full collection amounting
to nearly two thousand poems. Emily Dickinson’s friends, T.W. Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, took her poems and edited some in order to have them published. While Dickinson herself had edited a number of her poems, many were left untouched after the first draft. Higginson and Todd then had to decide to what extent they should alter her works. *Poems: Second Series* also contains two facsimile pages in order to show the progression of Dickinson’s handwriting throughout her years. Through her handwriting, the editors were able to place the poems in an approximate chronological order. Higginson and Loomis Todd published three series of Dickinson’s poems: the first in 1890, the second in 1891, and the final in 1896. The three series together contain only a fraction of Dickinson’s 1800 poems. The copy we have of *Poems: Second Series* is the first edition of the second series published by The Roberts Brothers in Cambridge, USA. It was donated to Gettysburg College by Thomas Y. Cooper in 1965, “in affectionate memory of his parents M. Cooper, M.D. & Kate Miller Cooper.”

**Reception History:** Emily Dickinson’s *Poems: Second Series* received mixed reviews from journalistic critics at the time of publication in the 1890s. Reviews were split between those who criticized her lack of formality, unusual thematic elements, and lack of attention to grammar and those who accepted these poetic violations as a part of her craft. Although Dickinson’s editors, Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, attempted to prepare the reader for her unusual word choice and rhymes in the preface of the book, critics still argued that her poems required further revision. Reviewers were also divided in their critiques based on American or British ideals.
One American reviewer claimed that Dickinson’s works are “the perfect expression of her ideals,” and that her poetry had made “a distinctive addition to the literature of the world and could not be left out of any record of it.” On the other hand, a British reviewer harshly claimed that Dickinson’s lack of grammar was a direct symptom of America’s savagery: “Savages do not use bad grammar in their own conversation or in their artless conversations. That is a fault of defective civilizations.”

Significance of the book: Over time, Emily Dickinson’s poetry was no longer harshly questioned for lack of formality or attention to grammar and became regarded as “perhaps the finest, by a woman, in the English language.” Dickinson is now considered one of America’s most prominent poets whose works are classified under the context of New England transcendentalism and Puritanism, as well as the European intellectual tradition. Her works from Poems: Second Series were transcribed from her personal renderings and include themes of love, life, death, and immortality, topics that Dickinson was not afraid to question. She was successful in questioning the world around her in an unforeseen unconventional form, so much so that her works underwent a “scholarly and critical explosion.” As proof of this eruption of critical and scholarly response, there are more than fifty entries in the annual MLA listing per year in regards to Dickinson’s works by scholars around the globe.

Sources


Brief biography: Virginia Woolf, née Stephen was born on 25 January 1882. She became an accomplished writer during her lifetime and wrote in various genres that became contemporary classics. She married Leonard Woolf, a writer from Cambridge, in 1912. She was born and raised in London and spent the majority of her life in Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury. Together with her husband, and a number of other English intellectuals and artists, she was a member of the Bloomsbury Group (a collective of some of the most influential artists and thinkers of the 20th century). Her life has been well documented, providing readers with various backgrounds about her early life, sexual abuse, mental illness, sexuality and feminism, her class and her role in the publishing world. She committed suicide by drowning on 28 March 1941.

Publication history and provenance: Monday or Tuesday was first published in 1921 by Hogarth Press, a publishing house founded by Leonard and Virginia Woolf. It was printed by F. T. McDermott, and the first edition had one thousand copies printed. The collection contains eight short stories and ninety-
one pages, including “A Haunted House,” “A Society,” “Monday or Tuesday,” “An Unwritten Novel,” “The String Quartet,” ”Blue & Green,” “Kew Gardens,” and “The Mark on the Wall.” Monday or Tuesday is the only collection of short stories published in Woolf’s lifetime. It was published in 1921, years before her other major works such as Mrs. Dalloway (1925), To the Lighthouse (1927), and Orlando: A Biography (1928). The title Monday or Tuesday comes not only from the fact that one of the short stories is titled “Monday or Tuesday,” but also from one of Woolf’s previous works, Modern Fiction, an essay written in 1919. In this essay, Woolf writes “From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday.” Monday or Tuesday was her first “experimental” set of short stories, which marked a turning point in her career. The cover was specially printed with the wood carved design of Virginia Woolf’s sister, Vanessa Bell. Due to the enlisting of a bad printer, Woolf’s husband, Leonard, called the book one of the “worst printed books ever published” due to the typos and publishing mistakes in the text. Several of the short stories printed in Monday or Tuesday were reprinted several times by Leonard Woolf in other collections of Virginia’s writings, and subtle differences can be found between the original and these reprints as well. The copy of Monday or Tuesday in Special Collections is the first edition, first printing, and is a recent acquisition. It was purchased in 2017 from Lucius Books Ltd. in the United Kingdom.

Reception history: The short stories were received well. Virginia Woolf was a fairly established writer at the point this collection was published, so she was already respected within the writing community. In her assessment of Monday or Tuesday, Winifred Holtby suggests that Woolf is “stretching prose to the fullest limits of intelligibility, and sometimes beyond, seeing how far it was possible to discard description, discard narrative, discard the link sentences which bind ideas together, seeing how far it was possible to write her prose from within, like poetry, giving it a life of its own.” Desmond MacCarthy, writing under pseudonym Affable Hawk, gives a positive analysis of the collection by ”stressing the impressionistic style of Woolf’s stories.” However, MacCarthy also claims that “the inner life of dreams and straying thoughts has not authority to impeach the other, and when, as in ‘A Society,’ Woolf writes from contempt, her work is not her best.” T. S. Eliot in his The Dial review, states that Monday or Tuesday “is one of the most curious and interesting examples of a process of dissociation which in that direction, it would seem, cannot be exceeded.”
**The significance of the book:** Although *Monday or Tuesday* is not on the list of the most famous works by Virginia Woolf, it plays an important role in her œuvre. The eight stories are characterized by the ‘stream-of-consciousness’ style of writing that Woolf fully adopts in her future works. The significance of *Monday or Tuesday* lays in Woolf’s choice to question the norms and ideas of the society through seemingly simple storytelling. She often offers intellectual analysis of societal problems (feminist examination in “A Society”), and enriches her style by including other art forms in her writing (color creating associations in “Blue and Green”). This collection was published after World War I. The self-reflective stories, full of rhetorical questions, symbolise the general state of the population after the war. Since for Woolf “fiction is often her version of biography” (Lee), such stories when published, gave readers hope they needed.

**Sources**


Brief biography: Margaret Mitchell was born in Atlanta, Georgia on November 8, 1900. She was born into a very wealthy and prominent family. Margaret’s father, Eugene Muse Mitchell was an attorney. Her mother, Mary Isabel Stephens was not only an attorney but a suffragist as well. Margaret Mitchell was a very rebellious woman. She did not want a family; she wanted a career. She also was a Catholic who actively defied the church and later left it. In 1918, Margaret enrolled in Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. Four months later her mother died of influenza. Margaret Mitchell finished out her freshman year of school and then returned home. She then married Red Upshaw in 1922; the marriage ended shortly thereafter. That same year, she landed a job with the Atlantic Journal. She wrote nearly 130 articles in this time. Margaret also remarried during her time with the journal. She married John Marsh, Upshaw’s best man in 1925. In 1926, Margaret Mitchell was unable to work due to a broken ankle. It was during this time of unemployment that she wrote Gone with the Wind. During World War II (1941-1945), Margaret had no time to write. She worked with the American Red Cross. On August 11, 1949 Margaret was struck by a car
while crossing the street. She died five days later. *Gone with the Wind* was her only novel. Margaret was inducted into the Georgia Women of Achievement in 1994 and into the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame in 2000.

**Publication history and Provenance:** Mitchell worked on the manuscript for *Gone with the Wind* for nearly a decade. In 1935, Harold Latham of Macmillan publishing read the manuscript and agreed to publish the novel. The book’s first printing of 10,000 copies was inadequate, since the novel had been chosen as a Book-of-the-Month club selection. There were four printings between May and July, 1936, totally 100,000 copies. It went on to sell more than thirty million copies. *Gone with the Wind* was a huge success and received the 1937 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. In 1937, the movie project had already begun. The film was produced by David O. Selznick, who paid Margaret $50,000 for the rights to her book. The Special Collection’s copy of *Gone with the Wind* is a first edition gifted to Gettysburg College by Thomas Y. Cooper in affectionate memory of his parents M. Cooper, M.D. & Kate Miller Cooper.

**Reception History:** *Gone with the Wind* quickly became a bestseller and was turned into a movie just a few years later. One review by Eleanor Van Alen in the *North American Review* criticized the “overembellishment” and how the novel had a “lack of restraint in its presentation.” However, Van Alen also described the novel as being excellent for “escapism” and praised Margaret Mitchell’s imagination. Ralph Thompson of the *New York Times* criticized the “unconvincing and somewhat absurd plot,” but referred to Mitchell’s writing style as “lively.” Both critics and general audiences thought that the book should have been shorter, and some even believed that the length should have been cut in half. Despite the somewhat negative reviews, critics acknowledged that *Gone with the Wind* was particularly impressive for a first novel. Donald Adams of the *New York Times* went so far as to call it “one of the most remarkable first novels produced by an American writer,” adding that Mitchell “can do more than tell a story” and that *Gone with the Wind* was “the best Civil War novel that has yet been written.”

**Social and Cultural Context:** Margaret Mitchell had a clear pro-South approach when writing *Gone with the Wind*, which was noted even by contemporary audiences. Ralph Thompson thought that the novel’s Confederate sympathies sprang from Mitchell’s southern background. Thompson also noted that “their scores of Negro slaves are lovable and happy,” which greatly differed from the truth of the antebellum south. The character of “Mammy”
has been particularly criticized, as it has led to stereotypes of black women and servants in both literature and film. The book thus led to a greatly romanticized antebellum period, although historians were quick to point out any inaccuracies in the novel. Although Mitchell’s novel did in some part promote Southern supremacy, it should be noted that this aspect was greatly exaggerated in the 1939 film. The film itself enhanced the novel’s popularity, and both remain a part of American popular culture.

Sources


**Shakespeare’s Sisters**

**Dust Tracks on a Road, by Zora Neale Hurston**  
First edition, 1942 (US)

**Report prepared by Logan Shippee and Professor Suzanne Flynn**

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**Brief biography:** Two years after being born in Notasulga Alabama in 1891, Zora Neale Hurston moved, with her family to Eatonville Florida. Hurston’s mother died in 1904 and her father soon remarried. Hurston was then sent to Jacksonville, Florida to attend school but soon had to return to Eatonville where she and her siblings experienced neglect from their parents. Soon after, she left her home and worked odd jobs for a few years before attending Morgan Academy high school (Morgan University today). In 1918 she continued her education at Howard University and published her first short stories. In 1925 Hurston moved to New York City. While in the city Hurston caught the attention of Annie Myers with her short story “Spunk” and was invited to study at Barnard College. At Barnard, Hurston began studying anthropology and traveled to Jamaica and Haiti. Her trip to Haiti inspired her most famous novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). This publication marked the height of Hurston’s career and with the insistence of her publisher *Dust Tracks on the Road* was written in 1940-41. After her autobiography was published, Hurston’s career quickly declined. Her publisher declined her
next novel, and she was accused of molesting a minor. In 1959 she suffered a stroke and was bedridden for a year until she passed away from hyperactive heart disease in 1960.

**Publication history and provenance:** In 1940, after publishing two important novels, *Their Eyes were Watching God* (1937) and *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), Zora Neale Hurston was asked by her publisher to consider writing her autobiography. She was reluctant to do it; she later wrote to a friend that “it is too hard to reveal one’s inner self, and still there is no use in writing that kind of book unless you do.” Still she spent 1942 writing the book, and *Dust Tracks on a Road* was published in November 1942 by J. B. Lippincott. A year later, it was published in London by Hutchinson & Co. The book went out of print for more than two decades; it has experienced a renaissance in the last third of the twentieth century when, along with Hurston’s other works, *Dust Tracks on a Road* has gone through many editions. Special Collection’s copy of the autobiography is the first American edition, and it is distinguished by having been signed by the important African-American poet, Maya Angelou. Her signature, preceded by “Joy!” is on the book’s flyleaf. The book was recently acquired through a very generous donation by Mrs. Magalen Ohrstrom Bryant and the Thomas Y. Cooper Fund.

**Reception history:** Reviews from white reviewers were generally positive. She seems to have made an effort to cater to white audiences. For example, Phil Strong in his review, published in *The Saturday Review*, claimed that Hurston’s story was “told in exactly the right manner, simply and with candor, with a seasoning--not over done--of the marvelous locutions of the imaginative field nigger.” He went on to write that *Dust Tracks* was a “fine, rich autobiography, and heartening to anyone, white, black, or tan.” *Dust Tracks* even won the Anisfeld-Wolf Award for its contributions to race relations. Some reviewers, however, both blacks and left-leaning whites, were disappointed in the book. Harold Preece, writing in the journal *Tomorrow*, claimed that the book revealed “the tragedy of a gifted, sensitive mind, eaten up by an egotism fed on the patronizing admiration of the dominant world.” Arna Bontemps, in the *New York Herald Tribune Books*
wrote that “Miss Hurston deals very simply with the more serious aspects of negro life in America--she ignores them.”

**The significance of the book:** Although Zora Neale Hurston has come to be considered among the most important African American writers of the twentieth century, her literary reputation rests almost entirely on her novels (especially *Their Eyes Were Watching God*) and her short fiction. *Dust Tracks on a Road* has been a problematic work for many critics who see it as insufficiently honest about race relations in mid-twentieth century America. The poet Maya Angelou (who signed this copy of *Dust Tracks*) wrote that Zora Neale Hurston’s autobiography contains “enough confusions, contusions and contradictions to confound the most sympathetic researcher.” Even Alice Walker, one of Hurston’s greatest admirers and champions, considers *Dust Tracks on a Road* “The most unfortunate thing Zora ever wrote.” Despite the reservations of some critics, *Dust Tracks* is an important part of Zora Neale Hurston’s literary legacy.

**Sources:**


