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## Booklover-- Journey

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one's desiderata list without going bankrupt. One must eat, after all, and pay the landlord.

A book collector will need bookshelves. I remember my first shelves when my library was modest and reflected the subjects I was taking in college. They were unvarnished boards supported by cinder blocks. Such shelves have a certain charm but lack elbow room. Ideal are the ceiling to wall built-in bookshelves, an unfulfilled dream of mine. Somewhere in between those two models lie my IKEA bookcases and with a couple of those you can easily house a decent author collection.

You will also need time, interest, and knowledge. Of these, interest and knowledge are the most important. It sounds obvious but unless you are really interested in a subject or an author, you are unlikely to go far as a collector. Knowledge follows interest and grows as one digs deeper into the chosen subject, be it author or a broader interest. Author bibliographies and checklists are important sources of information for the collector. Good ones help authenticate first and subsequent editions and identify points, that is variant bindings, just jackets, typos, and other things that differentiate between editions, printing, and issues.

Although I have a couple of shelves of books about books, my collections, as such, include a half dozen writers, its own scope, limitations, challenges, and potential depth. My **Morley** collection contains 90 items. I have two printed bibliographies to guide me and I annotate them, in pencil, as I acquire an item. In each book I note (in pencil) the appropriate bibliography. **Morley** can be expensive, however, so I often have to be content with good reading copies instead of first editions. I can also afford first editions of reprints and first printings of paperbacks, a strategy that I also apply to my **Steinbeck**, **McFee**, and **Wright Morris** collections.

One way to build a collection on a shoe string is to find a new author that you admire and begin buying first editions as published.

Protect the dust jackets with Mylar covers and do not clip the price from the book jacket. Read each book but don't remove the book jacket until you are finished with it. Why collect a subject or author and not read the books? Why buy a toy and leave it in its box? And when you begin your fresh collection, be sure to write the author and express your admiration. You might get a letter in return and can add that to the books. And while you are at it, ask if you can send the books to the writer, with return postage included, and have them inscribed, not just signed. You have more than doubled the value of the first editions. To quote **McFee's Bibliography** introduction again, writing about book reviews: "But when one has welcomed a new writer of undoubted quality, and his next book turns out to be mere sawdust and painted cloth, the mood of the reviewer [substitute *collector*] is gloomy indeed. He feels that he has been let down." But **McFee** doesn't add that the next book and others that follow might be competent or compelling works and in the end you will have a collection to treasure.

Back in the early 1970s, I read the early works of **Cormac McCarthy**, a so-called Southern Writer at the time and variously compared with **Faulkner**. I admired **McCarthy's** first two books, *The Orchard Keeper* and *Outer Dark*, and was able to acquire, at a secondhand bookstore, first editions, dust jackets and all, of each. They weren't signed but today I could sell them and buy some of the pricey **Morley** items that I covet. But I lost interest in him somehow and sold them to another bookseller who also admired **McCarthy**. As most collectors and booksellers will tell you, it's the one that got away that haunts you the most but you get over it. Or do you?

In 1961 a friend sent me a quotation from a book and writer I had never heard of. The quote goes, "Be master of yourself. The world is not an oyster to be opened, but a quicksand to be passed. If you have wings you can fly over it, if not you may quite possibly be sucked in." The book was *Casuals of the Sea: The Voyage of a Soul* and the author was **William McFee**. I was smitten by those words and later, when I had my own copy of

the book, it became a treasured possession and a book that I re-read as if discovering it for the first time. At the time, I didn't know who **Christopher Morley** was and didn't note that my **Modern Library** copy contained an introduction by **Morley**, the person responsible for getting **McFee** published in this country. I now own 50 **McFee** items including eight editions and printings of *Casuals...* and I have at least two more to track down. One of my **Morley** books contains an essay by **McFee** and *Casuals...*, the **Modern Library** editions, contain the **Morley** introduction. The two collections share a bookcase and the books themselves reflect a friendship between two men, one a writer from his college days and earlier, the other, **McFee**, a ship's engineer who read and wrote letters during his free time and, happily, decided to write about some of his impressions of life at sea using the letter form. His first book is thus titled *Letters From an Ocean Tramp* (1908). I have the first edition, first issue, but my favorite copy is the 1928 **Cassell's Pocket Library** edition, a bit worn but bought from **Brian Teviotdale**, proprietor of **Belle Books**, Hay-on-Wye, Wales. He was of the opinion that one should buy books to read and not hold out for first editions. The book he sold me now has an association with **Brian**, his store (although he handed me the book and accepted payment for it in another store), my time in Hay-on-Wye, and reading the book during my train journey back to my home base. This is not what is known in the trade as an association copy but it works for me and reinforces my compulsion to collect books.

I came to collect **Morley** and **McFee** as if by chance despite the connection between the two. What drew me to each was something in their books that speaks to me. Then, in the course of my collecting and information about each man, I found that they became good friends, one living in Connecticut, the other in Long Island, and both close by to New York City, the literary hub they each radiated from. Kindred spirits. Would that I could have broken bread with them. Instead, I have their books. 🌻

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## Booklover — Journey

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There is a nice chill in the evening air. The sun is rising just a bit later and setting just a bit earlier. Those long days of summer are once again behind us. Fall is just around the corner. Time for that last summer read; it's going to be a journey through the library stacks.

Reading works by a playwright is something I've never done. I contemplated this challenge while I perused the stacks at the main branch of the **Charleston County Library**, my **Nobel Laureate** list in hand. The stacks are fewer as the book world moves to a digital format thus my journey to the "Os" and the works of **Eugene O'Neill** is a short one.

The **Nobel Prize** was awarded to **Eugene O'Neill** in 1936 "for the power, honesty, and deep-felt emotions of his dramatic works, which embody an original concept of tragedy." The choice of *Long Day's*

*Journey into Night* was an obvious one. Written between 1941-1942 and published in 1956, it is considered his major work. The treat is the discovery of *Selected Letters of Eugene O'Neill* edited by **Travis Bogard** and **Jackson R. Bryer**. This large volume was divided into eight parts: "Beginnings, 1901-1906; Apprenticeship, 1917-1920; Certainties, 1920-1926; Carlotta, 1926-1928; Voyager, 1928-1931; Laureate, 1931-1936; Heights, 1936-1945; and Ending, 1945-1952." Letters from the time **O'Neill** won the **Nobel Prize** — what an opportunity for a peek behind the curtain into the very personal world of a laureate.

The small paperback version of *Long Day's Journey into Night* that I checked out details the copyright as an unpublished work in 1955 by his

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wife **Carlotta Monterey O'Neill**; first publication in February 1956; copyright renewed by **Yale University** 1984; corrected edition copyright by **Yale University** 1989; **Harold Bloom's** Forward copyright 1987; first published as a **Yale Nota Bene** book 2002. In 1989, the play was in its sixty-first printing.

To review, I was hesitant about reading a play. But it didn't take me long before I was lost in the journey of that day which began in the living room of the Tyrones' summer home in 1912. In one afternoon I quickly advanced through the four acts and came to midnight. A fluid and natural read, albeit a dramatic one, of a family in turmoil. Addition, illness, frugality, and irresponsibility are all presented with brutal honesty and brilliant dialogue in this autobiographical play. The reader becomes a voyeur to a family in crisis and can't step away.

Dialogue was **O'Neill's** strong suit and his affection and ability for writing dialogue is self described in a letter dated January 20, 1935 penned while at his home: Casa Genotta, Sea Island, Georgia. **O'Neill** had written a tribute to **Professor George Pierce Baker** that appeared in the *New York Times* seven days after **Baker's** death. **Baker's** wife must have written a note of appreciation to which **O'Neill** responded:

*"Dear Mrs. Baker: Your kind letter took a great load off my mind. Ever since I sent that to the Times', I've been laboring under a guilty feeling that it was unforgivably inadequate. I did try hard to make it a message of my very deep feeling of gratitude and sadness, and emphasize the greatest gift one human being can give another — the courage to believe in his work and go on — a gift which Mr. Baker gave to me, as he did to so many others. What I will always remember first about him is not the teacher but the man, the charm of his personality, his ability*

*just by being himself to convey faith to you, and understanding sympathy, and friendship. Many men can teach but only a fine, rare few can be in themselves an education in faith for others! But I am a clumsy writer indeed when it comes to anything but dialogue, and I was afraid my word had bungled expressing any of this. However, now that I know you found worth in what I wrote, that's all I care about.*

*Again, my deepest sympathy — and, always, all good wishes to you. Cordially yours, Eugene O'Neill"*

For 1936, there are eleven letters included in the chapter entitled "Laureate, 1931-1936" for the reader's enjoyment. Six of them reference the **Nobel Prize**. There are references to hectic days, "dodging the radio and newsreel baloney," delight in hearing from old friends, and enjoying congratulatory notes. One letter is to **James E. Brown, Jr.**, the third secretary of the American embassy in Stockholm, Sweden that includes the speech he prepared: "Enclosed you will find the speech you suggested. I have never been a guest of honor, or made a speech in my life, and I've only written about two of them before this, but I hope this one is adequate." **O'Neill** did not attend the award ceremony.

*Long Day's Journey into Night* premiered in Sweden in February 1956, opened on Broadway in November 1956, and won a **Tony Award** for best play. The script was a gift: "For Carlotta, on our 12th Wedding Anniversary. Dearest: I give you the original script of this play of old sorrow, written in tears and blood. A sadly inappropriate gift, it would seem, for a day celebrating happiness. But you will understand. I mean it as a tribute to your love and tenderness which gave me the faith in love that enabled me to face my dead at last and write this play — write it with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones. These twelve years, Beloved One, have been a Journey into Light — into love. You know my gratitude. And my love! Gene. Tao House. July 22, 1941." 🌸

## Collecting to the Core — Commodity and Alcohol Studies in World History

by **David M. Fahey** (Professor Emeritus of History, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio; World and Comparative History Editor, *Resources for College Libraries*) <faheydm@gmail.com>

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**Column Editor's Note:** The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the *Resources for College Libraries* bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD

What did you eat for breakfast? Coffee, milk, tea, orange juice, bread, butter, eggs? These grown products are commonly considered soft commodities, while mined resources like gold and petroleum are labeled hard commodities. Commodity histories provide a convenient way to explore world history, as studies into the production, exchange, and consumption of goods can help illustrate the complex economic, social, cultural, ecological, political, and transnational

transformations of people and places.<sup>1</sup> For those interested in the genre of commodity histories, an accessible introduction is that by the prolific journalist **Mark Kurlansky**, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World*.<sup>2</sup> Unlike most of those who write about commodities for a popular audience, **Kurlansky** is interested in producers as well as consumers, in this instance, fishers and buyers of fish. Commodity histories seldom offer theory; the few that do often use a **Marxist** framework. Here are some examples. In 1985 cultural anthropologist **Sidney W. Mintz** wrote what may be the most influential commodity history, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*.<sup>3</sup> Mexican anthropologist **Arturo Warman** published a thoughtful history of maize in 1988 that **Nancy L. Westrate** later translated into English as *Corn and Capitalism: How a Botanical Bastard Grew to Global Dominance*.<sup>4</sup> More recently, the economic historian **Sven Beckert** published *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, which was a finalist for the **Pulitzer Prize** and was awarded the **Bancroft Prize**.<sup>5</sup> Commodity histories often claim to be

world histories and may flaunt an over-the-top subtitle such as the otherwise admirable book by **Markman Ellis**, **Richard Coulton**, and **Matthew Mauger**, *Empire of Tea: The Asian Leaf That Conquered the World*.<sup>6</sup> In *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World*, **David T. Courtwright** provides a broad look at the global history — geographically and temporally — of the "big three" drugs (alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine), which today are mass produced and largely legal, as well as the illegal "little three" (opiates, cannabis, and cocaine).<sup>7</sup>

Alcoholic drinks are at the edge of the standard definition of commodities, since they do not have a standard price that prevails internationally. They vary much more drastically in price than, say, kinds of crude oil. Despite this distinction, historians definitely study alcoholic beverages within the history of commodities. **Reaktion Books'** "Edible" series publishes an array of short commodity histories, from bread to water, all with the subtitle "a global history." The "Edible" series includes volumes about virtually every alcoholic beverage consumed



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