

# ***Rebecca Harding Davis Society Newsletter***



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**Robin L. Cadwallader**

**Vice President, Publications:**

**Sharon M. Harris**

**Conference Activities Coordinators:**

**Aaron Rovan, Sarah Gray**

**Vol. 10, no. 1, August 2018**

## **PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

Greetings Fellow Society Members,

The Davis Society is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year with the publication of Sherry Harris's new biography of Davis and a wonderful tenth-anniversary panel at the upcoming SSAWW. Please consider joining us for the panel and dinner afterward, more information on that to come.

At this landmark in the society's development, we need your help to keep the society growing and by helping to build society membership and to support continued studies on Davis and her world. Our membership is only \$5 per year, and a complimentary copy of *Rebecca Harding Davis: Writing Cultural Autobiography* comes with every two-year membership. A lifetime membership is only \$75 and choosing that option now means you won't have to remember to pay your yearly dues, which come with the benefit of our current newsletter!

Finally, if you have any publications or presentations on Davis or her world that you would like to have recognized, please send them to me ([rcadwallader@francis.edu](mailto:rcadwallader@francis.edu)). We're always looking for material for the newsletter and would like to highlight the work of new (as well as seasoned) scholars in the field of Davis studies. Thank you for your continued support of the society, especially as we look forward to the next ten years.

Warm Regards,  
Robin

## **RHD: HER WORLD – Sharon M. Harris**

There was nothing Rebecca Harding Davis avoided more than having her photograph taken. In the process of writing the biography of Davis, however, I discovered a photograph of her from May 4, 1899. The photograph is in the biography, but I'm reprinting it here for two reasons: in case you haven't yet seen it and because there continues to be confusion about another supposed photograph of Davis.

Here's the photograph we all know, taken when Rebecca was thirty:



Here's the newly discovered photograph of Davis, taken when she was about sixty-five:



Taken from a newspaper clipping of the attendees at Richard Harding Davis's wedding, the photograph as cropped here includes, from left to right: L. Clarke Davis, seated in the wicker chair; Richard Harding Davis, the Davises' elder son; Rebecca Harding Davis; and leaning over her shoulder, Louise Clark, the mother of the bride, Cecil Clark.

In the hope that the following error will die a timely death, the following photograph is **NOT** Rebecca Harding Davis:



I believe this woman was part of the extended Harding family, but it is not Rebecca.

### **FROM THE PEN OF REBECCA HARDING DAVIS – Sharon M. Harris**

James T. Fields, Davis’s editor at the *Atlantic Monthly*, and his spouse, Annie Adams Fields, repeatedly asked for a photograph of Davis. They saw the standard photo of her when she was thirty, with curls and wearing a summery dress, but thereafter, she avoided being photographed. Below are excerpts of her humorous excuses:

To James T. Fields, January 1862, after he indicated in a letter that Annie wished to have a photograph of Rebecca:

Certainly I will send my photograph as soon as I have them taken to Mrs. Fields. Whenever I leave home—here I am too tender of my beauty to consign its fame to our unfortunate artists! Many thanks to her for the wish—”

To James and Annie Fields, August 1862, after she had visited them in Boston:

“I want you to write me long gossipy letters, let me feel that I have not left Boston altogether. I meant ‘honour bright’ Annie, to send you the photograph from Baltimore and had three taken – different ones – which every one pronounced to be me without a trace of any expression – so I destroyed them. I am sorry. But, sincerely – I did my best. I console myself by the fact that a ‘thorough beauty never is photographed’ vide London paper.”

When it became popular in publishing circles to produce collections that contained famous authors’ biographies and their photographs, Davis always refused to supply a photograph (and often refused to grant an interview). The same was true with the popular authors-in-their-homes articles, usually accompanied by numerous

photographs of the author's home and the author in her study where she wrote, etc. This was true even when Davis's own son, Charles Belmont Davis, wrote such an article about famous authors in Philadelphia.

### **RHD COMPLETE WORKS DIGITALIZED - Sharon M. Harris**

The digitalization of Davis's complete works (<http://rebeccahardingdaviscompleteworks.com>) is continuing with several works added in the last year. Of particular importance is the **comparative text of "A Story of Today" and its book form, *Margret Howth***. Davis revised the serial in significant ways before publishing the book, and **Mischa Renfroe** has prepared this important document that reveals every change Davis made.

A number of **letters** have also been added to the site, in addition to a range of published writings.

We welcome contact from anyone who wishes to input a text (in Word; the site administrator will code and upload the texts) or write a Cultural Context Essay. Just send an email to Sharon M. Harris ([sharon.harris@uconn.edu](mailto:sharon.harris@uconn.edu)).

### **UPCOMING EVENTS SPONSORED BY THE DAVIS SOCIETY – Aaron J. Rován**

We're hosting one panel at the **SSAWW conference**. The panel will be on Saturday, **November 10 from 3:45-5:00 PM:**

STRUGGLE, POLITICS, AND POLICIES IN REBECCA HARDING DAVIS'S WORK

Room: Boardroom

Chair: Sarah Gray, Langston University; Co-Chair: Aaron J. Rován, West Virginia University

Panelists:

Carol DeGrasse, Southern Methodist University, "Struggle as Catalyst in the Fiction of Rebecca Harding Davis"

Jackson Truschel, University of Delaware, "Ambivalence: Border Theory and Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict*"

Janie Gill, University of South Florida, "Women's Wants Versus Women's Needs in Rebecca Harding Davis's Nonfiction"

### **RECENTLY PUBLISHED – Jack Weidner**

Burrough, Xtine, and Sabrina Starnaman. "A Digital Korl Woman: Students and Workers Recover the Spirit of

Life in the Iron Mills from the Digital Factory to the Classroom." *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2017, pp. 121–41. *JSTOR*,

[www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/trajin schped.27.2.0121](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/trajin schped.27.2.0121).

Davis, Rebecca Harding. *Stories for Boys*, edited by Robin L. Cadwallader, RMTK Books, 2018. (All proceeds from the sale of this book go to the Rebecca Harding Davis Society)

Harris, Sharon M. *Rebecca Harding Davis: A Life Among Writers*. West Virginia UP, 2018.

West, Micahel D. "Romantic Irony in the Short Fiction of Rebecca Harding Davis." *American Literary Realism*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2015, pp. 235–49. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/amerlitereal.47.3.0235](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/amerlitereal.47.3.0235).

Zibrak, Arielle. "Seeing Both Sides of the Shield: On Rebecca Harding Davis," *LA Review of Books*, 21 July 2018, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/seeing-both-sides-of-the-shield-on-rebecca-harding-davis/#>

### **About the Newsletter**

The Society is no longer maintaining the website at <http://scotus.francis.edu/rebeccahardingdavis/>. Some past issues of the newsletter are available on that website; new issues of the newsletter will be available when we have a new up-and-running website. We desperately need someone who is web savvy to run the website. If you would like to volunteer, please contact me at [RCadwallader@francis.edu](mailto:RCadwallader@francis.edu).

With this issue of the newsletter, our long-time editor is stepping down. We thank Sherry Harris for her support and guidance in the founding of the society and her continued scholarship on Davis; her wisdom and mentorship has been invaluable to all of us. Mischa Renfroe will be our editor for the next newsletter. If you wish to contribute items to the newsletter, please contact her at [mischa.renfroe@mtsu.edu](mailto:mischa.renfroe@mtsu.edu).

**Membership**

For membership, please complete the membership form below and mail it along with your membership dues to:

Robin L. Cadwallader  
Dept. of Literature & Languages  
Saint Francis University  
Loretto, PA 15940

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**Membership Form**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Email:**

**Telephone:**

**This information may \_\_\_ / may not \_\_\_ be included in the Society’s secure online Members’ Directory.**

**Membership dues are \$5.00 annually. With a two-year membership or a gift of \$10 or more to the Society, you will receive a free copy of *Writing Cultural Autobiography*, a reprint of *Davis’s Bits of Gossip* with additional material, edited by Janice Milner Lasseter and Sharon M. Harris.**