Prof. Steedman had finished working on one of the strangest texts she has ever encountered, *Low-Life. Or, One Half of the World Know Not How the Other Half Live*, with all the doubts it raises about representation, writing, and history as both of those things, when she found Michel Foucault on the topic of writing itself. Writing, he said, is “a silent, cautious, deposition of the world upon the whiteness of a piece of paper … has nothing to say but itself, nothing to do but shine in the brightness of its being.”

When was *Low-Life* written? It tells itself as having been first printed in 1750, though that was in 1757, and the original, if there ever was one, has not been found. All its internal references are to the decade ending in 1749. This paper will explore *Low-Life* in the context of the writing revolution of the 1740s and attempt to understand why, a century and more on, Charles Dickens and many of his colleagues knew that this text signaled the birth of their own modernity.

A reception will follow the seminar.

This program is free and open to the public, but space is limited and registration in advance is required. Register online by 10 am October 17:

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Organized by Timothy Campbell, University of Chicago; Lisa A. Freeman, University of Illinois at Chicago; John Shanahan, DePaul University; and Helen Thompson, Northwestern University.