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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE THOMAS FISHER RARE BOOK LIBRARY

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## THE BESLER FLORILEGIUM COMES TO TORONTO

Anne Dondertman

Associate Librarian for Special Collections and Director  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**T**HE FISHER LIBRARY has recently acquired an iconic work in the history of horticulture and botanical illustration, the *Hortus Eystettensis*, published in Nuremberg in 1613. This magnificent oversize flower book documents the plants that were in the personal collection of Johann Conrad von Gemmingen (ca. 1561–1612), the Prince Bishop of Eichstätt near Nuremberg, Germany. The book includes 367 engraved

plates documenting over one thousand different plants comprising 667 species, with accompanying explanatory text for each plate.

The elaborate title page states that the book is a ‘diligent and accurate delineation and representation to the life of all the plants, flowers and shoots, collected from the various parts of the world with singular care, which are now to be seen in the gardens surrounding the episcopal citadel’. It shows an archway

with double pillars supporting a pediment containing the coat of arms of the Bishop in the centre and the reclining figures of Flora (with a basket of flowers) and Ceres (the Roman goddess of agriculture embracing a beehive) to either side. In front of the pillars are shown King Solomon and King Cyrus the Great, each pointing inwards to the Garden of Eden. The prickly pear in an urn beside King Solomon and the agave beside King

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**OPENING PAGE:** Title page of *Hortus Eystettensis*, Nuremberg, 1613. **BELOW:** Portrait of Basil Besler, from *Hortus Eystettensis*, 1613, showing him holding a sprig of basil, punning on his name.



Cyrus are both newly introduced ‘exotic’ plants. The Bishop thus places himself within a venerable sacred and secular tradition and makes an allusion to his own garden as paradise recreated.

The early seventeenth century saw the influx of a great many ‘exotics’, meaning plants new to Europe, especially those from the Ottoman empire and the Americas. Plants began to be valued not only for their culinary and medicinal uses, as had been the case through the sixteenth century, but increasingly for their beauty. Plantsmen all over Europe outdid each other to secure new specimens, especially of bulbs such as tulips. The gardens at Eichstätt were begun in the 1590s first with the assistance of the botanist Joachim Camerarius the Younger (1534–1598), and later by Basil Besler (1561–1628), a Nuremberg apothecary with a deep knowledge of plants. Both these men had important contacts in the broader botanical and horticultural community who helped them acquire plants for the Bishop’s garden. It was Besler who convinced the Bishop to underwrite the costs of an ambitious illustrated

catalogue which would describe and illustrate all the plants in the Eichstätt collection.

Most of the plates include more than one plant, and Besler is credited with the dynamic and creative composition which conveys a true sense of the living plant. The naturalistic plant depictions are a marked departure from the stylized illustrations used in the earlier herbals which relied on woodcuts. Engraving on copper plates allowed the realization of subtler and finer detail than was possible with woodcuts. The engravings were done from sketches of live specimens drawn and coloured by accomplished artists on-site at Eichstätt, or from fresh flowers shipped to the artists in nearby Nuremberg. Most of the original drawings are preserved, having been discovered and made known in the eighteenth century by Christoph Jakob Trew (1695–1769). The drawings were engraved on copper plates and printed on the largest size paper then available. Over seventy of the plates are signed by the engravers, which include such distinguished names as Wolfgang Kilian who was responsible for the title page as well as many of the flower plates, Georg Gärtner, and Johann Leypolt. The copper plates survived for a considerable time until they were melted down in the nineteenth century.

The publication of this book was a laborious and expensive proposition, which required substantial financial support from both Johann Conrad and his successor. Two distinct issues were planned from the start and printed simultaneously: approximately twenty-five copies intended for hand-colouring, with the plates printed on high quality paper on one side only for the Bishop and other dignitaries, and a trade edition of about three hundred copies on cheaper paper with the plates printed on one side of the sheet and explanatory text on the other. There was a second edition in 1640, and a third in the centenary year, 1713.

Our copy is one of the uncoloured copies with text, but is printed on a mixture of papers—some on the lighter stock and some on the heavier, better quality paper. There is also considerable variation in the inking of

the plates. The other unusual feature of our copy is that it is disbound, housed in archival boxes of quarter pigskin and cloth, with the original very worn eighteenth-century bindings retained separately to preserve the provenance. This makes it a perfect copy for study and display, enabling multiple plates to be displayed at once (about ten are currently framed and on display in the Maclean Hunter room and behind the reference desk), or studied side by side.

The book is organized into four sections by season, with summer and winter grouped together in one volume, and spring and autumn in the other. Each season has its own engraved sectional title page. By far the largest number of plants is in the section for *aestiva* or summer (183 plates), which is divided into fourteen numbered classes preceded by an unnumbered class. Spring has 134 plates, autumn has forty-two plates and winter has seven plates, chiefly hellebores. Within each section we follow the familiar seasonal progression of plant bloom. For example, Class one in the spring section begins with ranunculus, auriculas and primulas, followed in turn by the other eight sections moving from small bulbs such as scilla and crocuses, to hyacinths, narcissus, tulips, crown imperials, lilies, peonies, and irises. The accompanying text gives references to plant descriptions in other printed sources. The long descriptive Latin names (for example, *Iris latifolia violaceo colore maior*) were customary at this time, almost a century and a half before Linnaeus standardized the nomenclature in 1753. Each section ends with a Latin and a German index of plant names.

The Bishop did not live to see the monumental task of producing this book accomplished. Nevertheless the *Hortus Eystettensis* remains a testament to one early plant lover’s obsession. As the first to describe the flowers growing in a single garden, it began a tradition of magnificent florilegia, and remains an inspiration to all gardeners to this day. Ours is the only copy of the book in a Canadian institution.





## MEDIEVAL BESTSELLER: A COMPLETE BIBLE MANUSCRIPT ADDED TO THE FISHER COLLECTION

P. J. Carefoote  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

THE COLLECTION OF medieval manuscripts here at the Fisher Library continues to grow annually, providing more and more resources on which our paleography and codicology students can hone their skills. As the librarian responsible for these wonderful, unique items, one of my tasks is to identify lacunae in our holdings—a genre or script, location or time period not yet well-represented among the books on our shelves. In May of this year, we were able to make a significant addition with the purchase of a Latin Vulgate Bible, most likely produced in England about the year 1230. It might seem rather odd that, at this point in the Library's history (especially after having mounted two major exhibitions in its forty-year history celebrating our Biblical holdings) that this new acquisition should be considered so significant, but indeed it is. The Fisher rightly boasts possession of the *Codex Torontonensis*, an eleventh-century Evangeliary from Constantinople, as well as a curious thirteenth-century copy of the Gospels from Avignon. We have parts of Psalters and breviaries that contain fragments of the Scriptures, as well as copies of the Torah and Esther scrolls from the Hebrew Scriptures; but nowhere on our shelves,

until now, did we have our own manuscript copy of the complete Bible, held between two boards. Given that (with the exception of coins) no other artefact survives in greater numbers from the thirteenth century than Bibles, this was a rather surprising omission. It is one, however, that has now been corrected and another item from my medieval “bucket list” can be crossed off the list.

Among the features that add to the book's interest are the two, large decorated initials. As is the case with all Vulgates, the book opens with Saint Jerome's Prologue, the first letter of which is a rather remarkable capital “P”. In the letter's bowl sits the Saint himself, dressed in a plain monk's habit (unlike the traditional Cardinal's robes in which he will generally be depicted during the Renaissance). A rather charming grotesque finishes off the down stroke of the letter, consisting of a lion's body with a man's head crowned with a peaked cap. It is this small feature which suggests that the programme for the manuscript's decoration may be associated in some way with the school of William of Devon, who had a particular fondness for this kind of drollery. The capital “I” which begins the book of Genesis (*In principio*) three leaves later is certainly more

religious (and French) in character. A series of six roundels depicting the six days of creation populate the ribbon of the shaft, anchored at the bottom by a Crucifixion scene, in which the faces of Christ, the Virgin, and Saint John appear to be unfinished. In both letters, the predominant colour scheme is blue and reddish pink, with a hint of gold.

At least three different scribal hands can be detected in the production of our manuscript. By comparison with other Bibles of the period, the gothic bookhand displayed here is slightly more rounded, less cramped, and quite legible. It should be remembered that it is at the beginning of the thirteenth century, with the rise of the mendicant orders (as well as the universities) that the Bible first begins to appear between two covers on a regular basis, and not as a multi-volume set as had previously been the case. This development no doubt contributed to the tightness of the script, as well as the abundance of abbreviations that we generally find in these portable volumes, as scribes struggled to include every word of the sacred text in the space allotted. Many Bibles from the thirteenth century, especially those originating in the *scriptoria* of England and France, routinely omitted the Psalms.

**OPENING PAGE:** Decorated initials from the Latin Vulgate Bible, England, ca. 1230.

This was not so much a concession to space, though it had that added benefit; rather clerics often preferred to retain the Book of Psalms in a separate volume since it was prayed from regularly during the course of the Canonical Hours celebrated throughout the day. One of the reasons our new acquisition was so desirable (at least to me) was because the whole Book of Psalms is actually included in it. It seems likely that the listing of the Old Testament Canticles at the end of that Book may also indicate that our volume was used for liturgical celebrations as well as for scholarly purposes.

The marginal notes are interesting since they record numerous corrections in a variety of hands, indicating that the book may have been copied for a community in which several people had been charged with the task of reading and amending the text. The glosses that can be found throughout Genesis (some of which are beginning to fade, but might be enhanced with the assistance of a black light) are in a contemporary cursive hand. Although they are not particularly extensive, they certainly still deserve further investigation.

One final feature of this book is worthy of comment and helps to explain why its inclusion in our collections is so significant. Until the thirteenth century, the division of the Bible into chapters was not standardized. Different locations followed different numbering systems, rendering the use of the Bible in the university classroom problematic to say the least. It was almost certainly the English cleric, Stephen Langton (ca. 1150–1228), who as a teacher at Paris, faced with international students descending on his lecture hall, introduced the numbering system that we continue to use down to the present day. Our new manuscript Bible is now the earliest one in our collections to display this innovative technological advance and is a near contemporary to the inventor of the system itself.

The first priority listed in the University of Toronto Libraries' Strategic Plan (2013–2018) is "to strengthen our worldwide reputation for building collections renowned for their scope, depth, and scholarly impact". By continuing to bolster our holdings in the area of medieval manuscripts, the Fisher demonstrates that it takes this commitment seriously, and certainly the addition of this volume bears rich witness to that pledge. I look forward to checking off more and more items from my proverbial "bucket list". Perhaps a medieval Missal next?



## VESALIUS AT 500

Philip Oldfield  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**T**HIS YEAR WE are commemorating the five-hundredth anniversary of the birth of one of the great figures in the history of medicine. The fame and significance of Andreas Vesalius rest almost entirely on one book: his monumental *De humani corporis fabrica*, first published in 1543. The *Fabrica* is chiefly celebrated for its splendid woodcut illustrations that introduced art to anatomy, and set the standard for all future anatomical illustration.

The text of the *Fabrica* is also of great significance, and is universally regarded as the cornerstone for the study and teaching of human anatomy. Vesalius presented anatomical knowledge from the standpoint of direct and accurate observa-

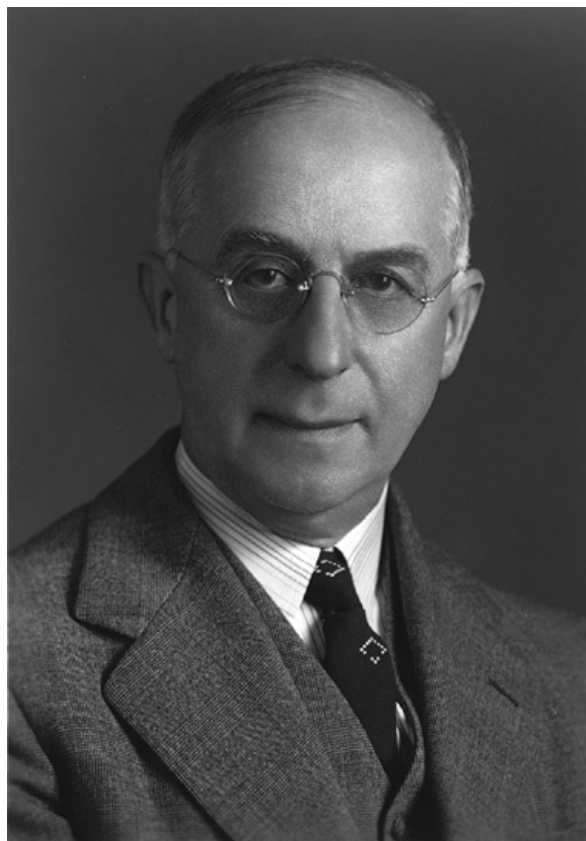
tion. He also introduced a new approach and methodology for the teaching of anatomy, and provided a manual on dissection. The beautifully rendered woodcuts blend elegantly with the printed text, resulting in a masterpiece of the printer's art.

The exhibition displays more than forty books that chart the life and works of Vesalius, as well as the development of anatomical investigation from the third to the sixteenth centuries.

Exhibition curator, Philip Oldfield, will be conducting free guided tours the first Thursday of every month at 6 pm. The tour dates are: June 3, July 3 and August 7. No registration is necessary; just drop in. A catalogue of the exhibition is available.



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## “BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES”:

### THE MILTON A. BUCHANAN COLLECTION OF SPANISH AND ITALIAN LITERATURE

David Fernandez  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

ON MAY 24, 1908, *The Times* reported the auction at Sotheby's of a “very scarce early edition of the *Amadis de Gaula* and other medieval romances”. The winning bidder of the 1533 edition of one of the most valuable tomes of romances of chivalry in Spanish was Milton Alexander Buchanan (1878–1952), at the time Lecturer in the University of Toronto's Department of Italian and Spanish. For almost thirty years, Buchanan was Professor and Head of this important and growing branch of the University of Toronto's Faculty of Arts. Buchanan was a pioneer of Modern Language Studies in Canada and a scholar of Golden Age drama and poetry. But to his colleagues and friends he was also remembered as an avid reader, passionate book collector, and skillful bibliographer.

The contribution made by Buchanan in the field of bibliography was especially outstanding. In the 1930s, he introduced a course in the School of Graduate Studies on Methods of Research & Bibliography, which became

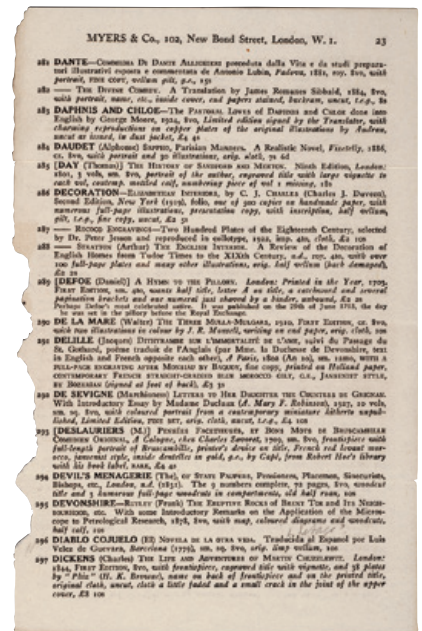
very popular among students. Between 1934 and 1937, he was a regular contributor to the *Hispanic Review* with his “Bibliographical Notes”, in which he reviewed new publications and identified his concerns about the state of bibliographical and textual studies in Spanish. As Head of the Department of Italian and Spanish, Professor Buchanan was tireless in his efforts to build up the library's collections in the languages and literatures he studied. As many book collectors, he enjoyed reflecting on the purchase of old books, and found booksellers' catalogues to be the “most delightful and satisfactory way to buy books”. On one occasion, after receiving the catalogue of Myers & Co., Buchanan quickly sent an encoded message via cablegram to the bookseller in London to secure the book. Buchanan successfully acquired the “most coveted treasure” in his personal collection with this peculiar note: “Myerlibri, Diablo”.

The first edition of *El diablo cojuelo*, published in Madrid in 1641, is the masterwork of Luis Velez de Guevara (1579–1644) and a

true bibliographical jewel. Only eight copies are recorded in public institutions, the Fisher copy being the only one in North America. *El diablo cojuelo* is a picaresque novel of intertwined realities translated from the “other world” into the present time of the characters. But beyond the literary prestige of Guevara's book, what appealed to the collector's bibliographic sensibility was the textual history of the publication. *El diablo cojuelo* has over fifty editions, twenty-two of which have been published since 1900. The authorship of the novel is often attributed to Alain-René Lesage (1668–1747) as a result of his popular adaptation under the title *Le diable boiteux*, published in Paris in 1707. Thus it comes as no surprise to know that Buchanan collected multiple editions of this book, including the first edition of Lesage's adaptation into French.

Buchanan conceived book collecting as an integral part of his scholarly endeavours. While preparing his critical edition of *La vida es sueño* (1909), he sought and purchased five



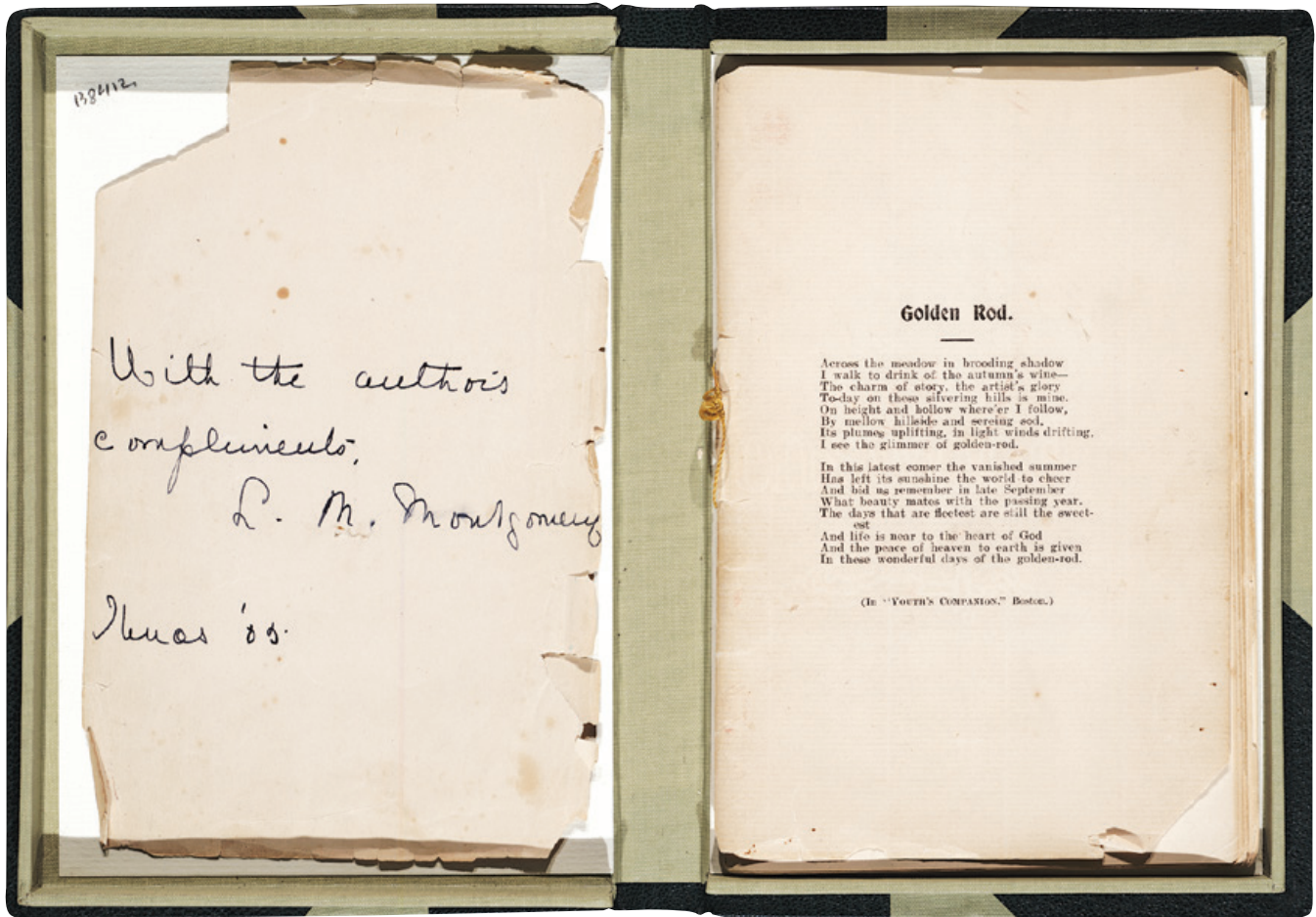


As a new librarian at the Fisher, I am delighted to encounter new and exciting treasures in the collections of the library. While perusing the library of Professor Buchanan, I am pleased to gain a sense of familiarity with the man behind the collection as a result of traces of evidence in the form of newspaper clippings, letters, notes, and marginal annotations. At times I interpret these findings as messages from the collector who was once surrounded by these books. Earlier this year, I came across a copy of an important book of the Spanish Golden Age, and I immediately thought of its value for the Buchanan's collection. I approached Anne Dondertman, Director of the Fisher Library, and she kindly agreed with my suggestion. The 1659 edition of the *Primera y segunda parte de las novelas amorosas y ejemplares* of María Zayas y Sotomayor (1590–1661) is a wonderful

love. The last recorded auction sale of this particular edition of Sotomayor's *Novelas* took place almost thirty years ago. This piece of information reminds me of one of Buchanan's nuggets of advice on book collecting: "In books all things come to him who waits, if he knows what he is waiting for".

**O**N MAY 1ST the Fisher Library launched a new initiative of rotating mini exhibits, making use of a stand-alone archival quality display case manufactured to our specifications by Concetti, a design firm based in Quebec. The freestanding case allows us to display multiple items in a single unit, making use of four large drawers which pull out, as well as the top of the case. This will allow us to feature highlights from our collections not related to the main exhibition, including recent acquisitions or small curated exhibitions around a theme. Material will be rotated every month so there will always be something new to see. Four plates and the title page of the Besler volume were on display in May. Upcoming highlights to look forward to are items curated by Fisher librarian David Fernandez, honouring

A black display cabinet with five drawers open, showing various historical documents and photographs. A wooden table with a glass top and a sign is visible in the background.



## “COME, REST AWHILE, AND LET US IDLY STRAY IN GLIMMERING VALLEYS, COOL AND FAR AWAY”

AN UNCOMMON ITEM FROM AN ESTEEMED CANADIAN AUTHOR

Liz Ridolfo

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**T**HERE ARE FEW Canadian female authors more beloved than Lucy Maud Montgomery. The Prince Edward Island native and schoolteacher introduced P.E.I. and Canada to an international audience with the *Anne of Green Gables* series, the *Emily* trilogy, and the *Chronicles of Avonlea*. These popular series about strong, young female characters and island life had a mass appeal that has continued to the present day, as stage productions of her writings continue to be mounted, merchandise produced, and her works reprinted.

An exceptional item by this author has been added to the Fisher Library's already extensive collection of Montgomery's work. This item

is a delicate sixty-two page pamphlet of her poems. The pamphlet is without printed publication information, but it is believed to have been published between 1903 and 1905, three to five years before her *Anne of Green Gables* was first published by the Page Company of Boston when she achieved her greatest success. This book comes from a period in which she began to see a steady income from the publication of her work in various magazines, earning close to \$600 in 1904 and more in the next few years for poetry and short stories sold to North American publications. The small book contains a total of thirty-two single page poems, and at the end of each is listed the journal or magazine in which the poem was

originally published. This information as well as the author's inscription helps to establish the approximate date of the item.

Only two other copies of this item have surfaced: one in private hands and the other at the National Library of Canada. One of these is missing several of the poems present in the Fisher's copy. One of the other two copies has the name of Marion Webb (a neighbour of Montgomery's in Cavendish and later in Norval) written on the first page, and the Fisher copy is inscribed with a Christmas date, making it likely that this item was privately printed for distribution to the author's family and friends as a gift. Another possibility is that the author had the pamphlet printed to



**OPENING PAGE:** Author inscription and poem from *Poems by L.M. Montgomery*. **BELOW:** Cover of *Poems by L.M. Montgomery*, n.d.

establish Canadian copyright for these poems, many of which had been issued in American publications.

Montgomery's delightful poetry speaks in controlled metre of hills and meadows and rain, and also of nautical and religious themes. She invites us to join her on her long walks down Lover's Lane. Many, but not all of these poems were included in her 1916 collection *The Watchman and Other Poems* and the later collection *The Poetry of Lucy Maud Montgomery* (1987). We know that Montgomery was attached to her poetry because her desire and her publisher Page's unwillingness to publish *The Watchman* were part of the reason she found another publisher in the Canadian firm McClelland and Stewart.

Although she is best known for her novels and short stories, Montgomery began writing poetry and keeping a diary when she was nine years old, learning Scottish hymns and psalms as a child, and eventually authoring more than five hundred poems.

This book's existence is mentioned, with excitement, in the introduction to Lechowick's *A Collector's Guide to L.M. Montgomery Firsts*, although it does not appear in the list, nor in Russell's *A Preliminary Bibliography*. This is an excellent addition to the more than 211 different volumes of works by the author already held at the Fisher Library, and will no doubt be of great interest to Montgomery researchers.



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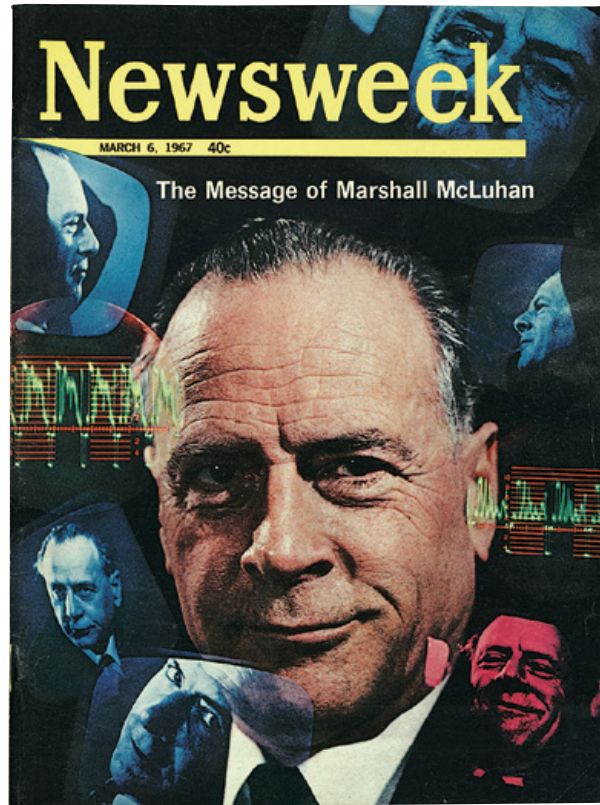
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*We thank all members  
who wish to remain anonymous.*





## TO READ AS MCLUHAN READ: THE MARSHALL MCLUHAN LIBRARY COLLECTION

Jason Brown  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

SOMETIME IN LATE September of 1979 Marshall McLuhan made a note on the rear endpapers, as was his practice, of Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend's *Hamlet's Mill*. Printing in a firm and legible hand, he reminds himself to compare a passage of text he had found on page 27 with a blurb on the book's dust jacket. This was to be the last annotation he made and the last book he read before a stroke on 26 September left the great founding figure of modern communications studies incapable of reading or writing.

Over a lifetime of scholarship McLuhan sought out and absorbed publications from all fields, academic or otherwise, with interdisciplinary zeal. He found passages to bolster or argue with his own theories in everything from the works of T.S. Eliot, to engineering trade journals, to compilations of regional jokes. When he died, a little more than a year after his stroke, on 31 December 1980, McLuhan left behind a library well in excess of six thousand items. From *Hamlet's Mill* to

high school readers dating from McLuhan's childhood in Winnipeg, most of the items in McLuhan's library are rich with annotations and material—notes, manuscripts, correspondence—inserted by McLuhan into the pages of his books. Following his death, the books were removed from McLuhan's offices at the Centre for Culture and Technology at St. Michael's College and kept in the custody of McLuhan's eldest son and sometime collaborator, Eric, until late last year when they were acquired by the Fisher Library. The addition of the McLuhan library, along with a significant collection of archival materials pertaining to the writing of McLuhan's final work, *Laws of Media*, provides a multifaceted resource for scholarship on both McLuhan himself and on the history of communications study.

As the project librarian hired to process McLuhan's library, I have found it a great privilege to handle and consider, piece by piece, each of the books that McLuhan worked with so closely. McLuhan lived in his books, arguing and agreeing with their

authors in the margins and endpapers, using their pages as *ad hoc* filing systems for notes, clippings and correspondence on a theme. It was a pleasure to follow him through the genesis and development of his ideas and interests, both academic and personal, and to see the evidence of his changing tastes as he progressed from a young graduate student in Manitoba into one of the most recognizable individuals on the planet.

At the height of his popularity in the mid to late 1960s, McLuhan's reputation was as a thinker of historic significance on a par with figures like Darwin, Freud, and Marx. Today, his sensibilities continue to permeate public discourse. References to McLuhan can be found almost everywhere you look, in newspaper columns, as epigraphs, on t-shirts and, of course, in books. It certainly helps that McLuhan was a fountain of quotable words. Edwin Diamond, who profiled McLuhan for *Newsweek* in 1967, wrote, "Most interviewers have to work to get quotes and comments. With McLuhan it is a case of trying to turn

**FACING PAGE:** Cover of March 6, 1967 issue of *Newseek*, featuring Marshall McLuhan **BELOW:** Note written by McLuhan about a 1973 dinner with William Empson, Northrop Frye and James I. Wimsatt.

off a Niagara of words.” Source material for many of McLuhan’s ideas and famous sayings, including the “medium is the message” and “the global village” can be found sketched in the margins of his books.

Books, of course, lead to other books. For a thinker who drew from such a large and diverse body of knowledge the value to the researcher of having access to the actual library McLuhan worked with cannot be overstated. McLuhan’s notes and marginalia are shot through with reminders to himself to “get...” and to “read...” this or that other work, which is then added to his library. Those curious to follow the tentacle of McLuhan’s branching interests can follow his notes and hop from source to source.

The library contains many singular treasures as well. Volumes by Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and especially James Joyce occupy many feet of shelf space. *Finnegan’s Wake*, an inspirational text for much of McLuhan’s thinking, is present in five different editions (including a rare first edition), each heavy with ink from McLuhan’s many inter-linear and marginal annotations. Important antecedents to McLuhan’s own work on communication and technology, including Lewis Mumford’s, *Technics and Civilization*, Harold Innis’s, *Empire and Communication*, and Sigfried Giedion’s, *Mechanization Takes Command*, are present and heavily annotated. McLuhan’s copy of Elizabeth Eisenstein’s *The Printing Press as an Agent of Social Change* (which McLuhan reviewed for *Renaissance*

and *Reformation*) has McLuhan arguing with Eisenstein in his notes and in the margins of those pages in which she criticizes his non-

H.M. McLuhan

After visiting U of T in the spring of 1973 Empson and Frye and Wimsatt and myself had dinner. It was then that Empson told of the days when he had been supervisor under Richards. He said that he was in the habit of regaling his undergraduate friends after each supervision with a detailed account of what he and they regarded as Richards' utter absurdity. They would sit on the grass, heading with meanness as the crazy psychological and linguistic ideas were reviewed. Empson said it was more than a year before he began to detect some sense in I.A.R.

Empson spent the year 1973 as visiting professor at York but was completely overruled by U of T. I had him to dinner with Claude Bessil and then came and metation on lecture at U of T. He gave an unforgettable lecture on "The sacred marriage of Andrew Marvell, Hollandia, and political double agent for England, Hollandia, and a note of women. His secret marriage was directed to part by his problems, partly by his getting married to his landlady. His political complications seemed all variations of a language. Empson is very noticeably deaf and has a bit white mustache and the florid face of a Col. Blimp. Typically, Wimsatt and Frye played away at dinner and after, having nothing to say on any subject. They were saved by Empson-like puns. Wimsatt has attacked Frye in print, as I have a bit. They were unalike only in social grace. Empson spoke at his leisure as occasional raid on English.

linear presentation of historical events in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. “SI-SC!” [shorthand for: Sensory impact / Structural closure] writes

McLuhan: it’s all an aid to helping the reader to come to an understanding of the visual function of the print medium.

Though its value to the history of communications theory is its most obvious facet, the collection also holds materials that pertain to the lesser-known aspects of McLuhan’s life, notably his religious beliefs. For me, coming to know this side of McLuhan was one of the more surprising and pleasurable rewards of working with his library. McLuhan converted to Catholicism at age twenty-five and thereafter his faith, according to McLuhan biographer Douglas Coupland, fixed his perspective on the world as completely as a lens on a camera. McLuhan did not publically discuss his views on religion and it rarely surfaces in his work, but he read widely on the subject and held strong, faith-based, opinions on matters like the Second Vatican Council, abortion, and sex-education in the classroom. He carried on lifelong correspondences and sharing of materials with fellow Catholic academics such as Walter Ong and Bernard J. Muller-Thym. On the last page of Josef Jungmann’s *Early Liturgy* McLuhan makes a note that reflects his interest in both the effect of a medium and religious faith. “Christ is God’s word,” he writes, “his personality towards men, the face of God and his image. The lyric word which makes the drama of liturgy possible. The news.”

To browse the complete listing for the McLuhan Library Collection visit <http://go.utlib.ca/cat/9127639> and select one of the finding aids in “holdings.”

Thanks to special project funding granted by the Chief Librarian’s office, processing work on the McLuhan Library Collection is now complete and all items are accessible. The entirety of the collection can be browsed through finding aids for both the books in the library itself and of the laid-in items removed for preservation. These finding aids are available through the University of Toronto Library catalogue: <http://go.utlib.ca/cat/9127639>.





## AN ARTIST MAKES PEACE WITH AN ESTRANGED FRIEND

Barry Dov Walfish

Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

**D**AVID MOSS, RENOWNED Jewish artist and calligrapher, had a dispute with a friend over a business matter. Unable to resolve the matter amicably, the two decided to take their disagreement to a Rabbinical Court for adjudication. One element of the decision involved Moss giving the friend a work of his art. So impressed was Moss by the ability of the court to resolve conflicting viewpoints and discordant opinions into peace and harmony that he decided that the work he produced should somehow reflect his experience.

He settled on the prayer of peace of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, a famous Hasidic rabbi of the late eighteenth / early nineteenth centuries (1772–1811), which seemed appropriate because of its themes of conflict and reconciliation.

The text reads as follows, in Moss's translation:

*Lord of Peace!*

*King, to whom all Peace belongs!*

*Maker of Peace, Creator of All!*

*Help us and save us all that we may ever be worthy to hold firmly to the attribute of peace.*

*Let there be a great and truthful peace between each and every person, between every husband and every wife.*

*May there be no strife, not even inner strife, among all humanity.*

*For You are the maker of peace in the heavens Where You bring together two opposites—fire and water—and unite them.*

*Draw forth a vast peace upon us and upon the entire world,*

*For You alone can unite opposites, bring them together, as one,*

*In peace, and in great love.*

*May You encompass us together with one mind and one heart*

*To draw near to You and to Your teachings in truth.*

*And may all humanity be joined into one fellowship to do Your will*

*With a complete and perfect heart.*

*Lord of Peace!*

*Bless us with peace, and through peace, may all*

*Blessing, all salvation*

*and all holiness flow down to us.*

The prayer expresses the sentiment that peace is a miraculous state, contradicting the laws of nature, the bringing together of opposites and unifying natural opponents.

Moss set for himself the task of translating the essence of Rav Nahman's prayer into physical form. He focussed on the theme of unification of opposites. He decided that this

could be done through the separation of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet into horizontal and vertical strokes. The horizontal strokes define the flow and the essence of Hebrew writing, while the vertical strokes play a contrasting role. Combining these disparate elements creates the letters and allows them to express themselves fully and completely. The technique he devised for writing the letters is called *Grammatomes*™.

Moss decided that the best medium to convey his message of peace and reconciliation was glass. He had the horizontal strokes serigraphed and then baked onto one plate of glass and the vertical on another. Only when the two plates are superimposed can the text be properly read.

Wishing to make this work more widely available, Moss has issued it in a limited edition, of which the Fisher Library obtained a copy earlier this year.

The symbolism is powerful. The use of glass alludes to the fragility of human relationships. The uniting of the strokes of the letters suggests the potential for unity in even seemingly unrelated and opposing elements. Moss has found that his work has been used by rabbis, counsellors, lawyers, and therapists involved in mediation work. It expresses the power of peace in a unique and beautiful way.

**ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Glass plate with vertical strokes of the Hebrew alphabet, glass plates superimposed, allowing prayer to be read, glass plate with horizontal strokes of the Hebrew alphabet.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR UPCOMING EVENTS...

### EXHIBITIONS 2014–2015

#### Exhibition Hours

9–5, Monday to Friday, year round  
9–8, Thursdays only, 18 September–30 April  
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library  
120 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario

#### 23 May to 29 August 2014

*Vesalius at 500*

#### 22 September to 19 December 2014

*Fierce imaginings: text and image in First World War literature*

#### January to April 2015

*Witnesses to History: Highlights of the Judaica Collection at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library*

### PLANNED EVENTS 2014–2015

All lectures begin at 8:00 p.m. (unless otherwise noted)

#### Wednesday 1 October 2014

*The John Seltzer and Mark Seltzer Memorial Lecture*  
*Private Preses*

Sophie Schneideman, international rare book and print dealer and proprietor of Sophie Schneideman Rare Books specializing in the Art of the Book, particularly of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

#### Wednesday 29 October 2014

*The Alexander C. Pathy Lecture in the Book Arts*  
*Rescuing the Irish Parliamentary Bindings*  
Philip Maddock, collector and binding historian

#### Monday 9 March 2015

*The Leon Katz Memorial Lecture*  
*Major Contours in the History of the Book in Canada*  
Eli Maclaren, Assistant Professor, McGill University English department, whose research interests include publishing, copyright and piracy

#### Monday 30 March 2015

*The George Kiddell Lecture on the History of the Book*  
*Books as History*  
David Pearson, Director of Culture, Heritage & Libraries, City of London

**TO LEARN MORE** about how to support the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library through gifts of materials, donations or a provision through your will please contact the library advancement office to confirm the nature of your gift. We will be in touch with you regarding recognition, should you wish to join our list of distinguished Heritage Society donors or remain anonymous.

For more information please contact Megan Campbell at 416-978-7644 or visit <http://donate.library.utoronto.ca>.

**Thank you!**

## Editor's Note

This issue was edited by Philip Oldfield, Anne Dondertman, Karen Turko, and Maureen Morin, and designed by Maureen Morin. Comments and/or suggestions should be sent to:

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*The Halcyon: The Newsletter of the Friends of The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library* is published twice a year in June and December. *The Halcyon* includes short articles on recent noteworthy gifts to and acquisitions of the Library, recent or current exhibitions in the Library, activities of the Friends, and other short articles about the Library's collections.

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For more information about the Fisher Library, please visit the web site at [www.library.utoronto.ca/fisher/](http://www.library.utoronto.ca/fisher/).

*The*

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