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CLOSED DOORS / OPEN BOOK

Loryl MacDonald

Director, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

THESE ARE UNCERTAIN and complex times. More than one hundred years ago, we faced a similar public health crisis, the 1918–1919 influenza pandemic. In the fall of 1918, the University of Toronto reported an outbreak at Queen's Hall, Burwash Hall, and St. Michael's College, probably originating in the COTC camps set up on back campus as part of the war effort. University president, Sir Robert Falconer (1867–1943),

was even rumoured to have come down with the virus. The University of Toronto closed buildings and cancelled classes from 1:00 pm on 18 October to 5 November 1918. During this time, all student activities, including publication of the student newspaper, *The Varsity*, ceased. Despite these precautions, the Library remained accessible. According to its 17 October 1918 minutes, the Senate's Library Committee resolved: 'to close the

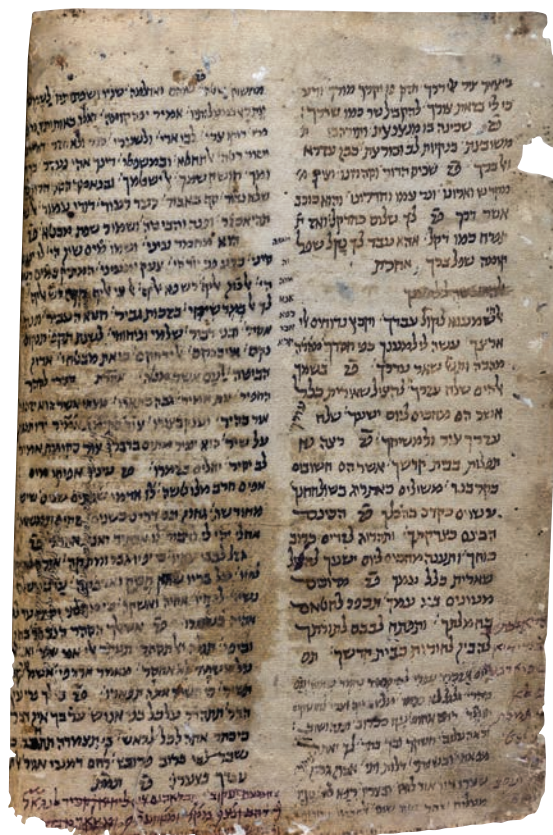
Reading Room from October 18 to November 4 inclusive, but to keep the building open from 10 a.m. to noon daily for giving out books to students. The south door into the Professors' reading-room remaining open as usual during library office-hours.'

Today, the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library is doing what it can to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to keep our community safe during the global pandemic. As a result, our doors have been closed to the public and staff have been working from home since March 16. We do not know how long our federal, provincial, and municipal officials will keep a state of emergency in effect, or how long physical distancing will be required to help curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We do know, however, that as the pandemic changes our world, we need books more than ever to inform, enlighten, entertain, and uplift us. The doors to the Fisher may be closed, but you can still access our extensive online collections and exhibitions. In addition, Fisher staff have been working on new ways to explore our special collections. These include 'Through the Revolving Door: The Fisher Library Blog', a series of posts on various timely topics such as the Black Death, historic recipes, medical romances, and the Passover Seder; P. J. Carefoote's engaging video lectures on censorship, the printing press, and building the Fisher's medieval collections; and 'Pastimes', a web page of puzzles and colouring books based on our unique materials. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

In the meantime, we hope that you will enjoy this special edition of *The Halcyon*. The June issue is traditionally an overview of purchases of the previous fiscal year. In keeping with these unusual times, however, this edition is different. Since they are working from home, contributors have been asked to write about some of their favourite items in the Fisher collections. The subjects run the gamut, from plagues, cooking, military history, political propaganda, and hidden manuscripts, to the Spanish Silver Age and the Fisher's missal casket. We trust that our eclectic offerings provide you with a sense of the remarkable breadth and depth of our special collections, as we do what we need to do to stay safe and get through this crisis together.

We hope that you and your family stay healthy and well until our doors are open again.





Two 'Hidden' Manuscripts in the Friedberg and Price Collections

Nadav Sharon

Judaica Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

TWO PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT collections among the Thomas Fisher Library's vast Hebraica and Judaica holdings are the Friedberg and the Price collections. The Friedberg collection, donated by Albert and Nancy Friedberg, makes up the bulk of the Fisher Library's Jewish manuscript holdings. It includes unique medieval manuscripts such as one of the earliest near-complete copies of the Zohar, with a marginal note attesting to its having been owned by the famous seventeenth-century false messiah Shabbethai Tzevi, as well as a tenth-century Pentateuch and a tenth-century halakhic codex, the *Halakhot Pesukot*. The latter two manuscripts are, in fact, the oldest codices in the Fisher's collections. The Friedberg collection also includes a number of Hebrew incunables and other very early and rare Hebrew books. The Price collection of Rabbis was donated to the library by the

estate of the late Toronto Rabbi and bibliophile Abraham Price (1900–1994), and consists of over three thousand volumes of rabbinic works, including very early and unique prints. These two collections were donated well over two decades ago, in the late 1990s (though the Friedberg collection arrived in a number of installments, the latest accession being in 2012), and are quite well known and publicized, including in previous issues of *The Halcyon*.¹ The Friedberg collection stood at the heart of the very successful Judaica exhibition put together by the previous Judaica librarian, Dr Barry Walfish, at the Fisher Library in 2015,² and some of its manuscripts will be highlighted in the Fisher Library's upcoming exhibition *Certain Worthy Manuscripts: Medieval Books in the Fisher Library* (co-curated by P. J. Carefoote, Timothy Perry, and Nadav Sharon).

Nevertheless, there are still some fascinating finds and aspects yet to be explored in these

important collections, and this article will highlight two manuscripts that I encountered in these collections, one from each, both 'hidden' in a way.

Manuscript of Hebrew Songs

First, is a full-page manuscript found at the very end of David Kimḥi's *Sefer ha-Shorashim* (Naples: [Yehoshu'a Shelomoh Shontsino], 5251 [1491]). David Kimḥi (ca. 1160–1235), known by the acronym Radak, was a medieval French rabbi and Hebrew grammarian. He is well known for his commentary on many of the books of the Hebrew Bible, but he also wrote important works on Hebrew language, and *Sefer ha-Shorashim* is his lexicon of the Hebrew language. The Fisher Library is fortunate to have a thirteenth-century manuscript of this work in the Friedberg collection (Friedberg MSS 5-010), as well as two copies of the incunable edition printed in Naples in 1491, one in the

OPENING PAGE: Manuscript page at end of David Kimḥi's *Sefer ha-Shorashim* (Naples, 1491). **BELOW:** First page of the manuscript of Rabbi Akiva Eger's novellae on *Gittin*. **FACING PAGE:** Final page, including colophon, of the manuscript of Rabbi Akiva Eger's novellae on *Gittin*

Price collection (price f 00120) and one in the Friedberg collection (friedberg 00001). A most surprising manuscript appears on the last (originally blank) page of the Friedberg incunabula. Unlike the usual types of owners' annotations found in printed books, such as marginal notes, ownership inscriptions, and autographs, this manuscript page looks like a page from a manuscript codex, with the text set in two columns and written in a nice square script. There is also handwriting in the margins, between the columns, and even vertically within the left-hand column.

Deciphering the text of this manuscript and investigating it proved to be a challenge and led to a surprising discovery. The text of this manuscript, which seems to be in an early modern script, is of four rather unfamiliar songs. The second, beginning with the words 'אלהי שמענא לקול עבדך' ['My God, hearken to Your servant's voice...'] in line ten of the right-side column, is attributed in scholarship to Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (1092–1167), a renowned medieval Spanish-Jewish biblical exegete, grammarian, and poet.³ While Ibn Ezra is well-known, this song of yearning for redemption does not appear to be, nor do the presumed sources of the other three songs. The first song begins with the words 'ביצאך ציר אלי דרך' ['When you go out as an emissary on the way...']; the third begins eight

lines from the bottom of the first column with 'יום אזכרה עפרי' ['Day I shall remember my dust...'], presumably referring to the creation of man from the dust (Gen 2:7) and/or to death, when humans are to return to dust (Gen 3:19); and the fourth song, begins in the middle of line fourteen of the second column with 'סהרי לסהר החפיר' ['(The light of) My love {lit. 'moon,' symbolizing the lover} abashed (the light of) the moon...'] (cf. Isaiah 24:23)]. Quite surprisingly, my investigation revealed that these three songs are identified in compilations as Jewish songs of Yemenite origin. The third is attributed to a Yemenite-Jewish poet named Yeshuah,⁴ whose dates are unknown, but thought to be anywhere between the twelfth and the fifteenth centuries,⁵ while the authors of the other two poems (1 and 4) are unknown.⁶ And, whereas the song by Ibn Ezra is entirely religious in character, the three Yemenite songs are not as much. The first song is of the type known as *Zafat*, an Arabic term for a type of song that was sung at wedding processions⁷, and the third and fourth are basically love songs, even including erotic elements, but also with some religious elements.

Now why and when did these four songs, three of which are of Yemenite origin, come to be copied together on the final empty page of an incunabula published in Naples? That is perhaps an unanswerable question without more knowledge of this book's provenance, but it is nevertheless a question worth asking. Regardless of that question, this manuscript page should be of value to researchers of Yemenite-Jewish culture and poetry. As one important example, the manuscript's versions of these songs differ at times from their known versions, most significantly in the third song, which omits the two lines that precede the last line in the version published by Idelzon.

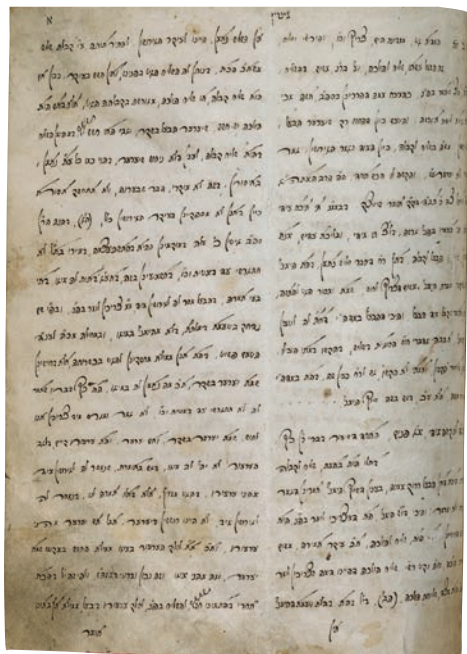
Manuscript of Talmudic Novellae

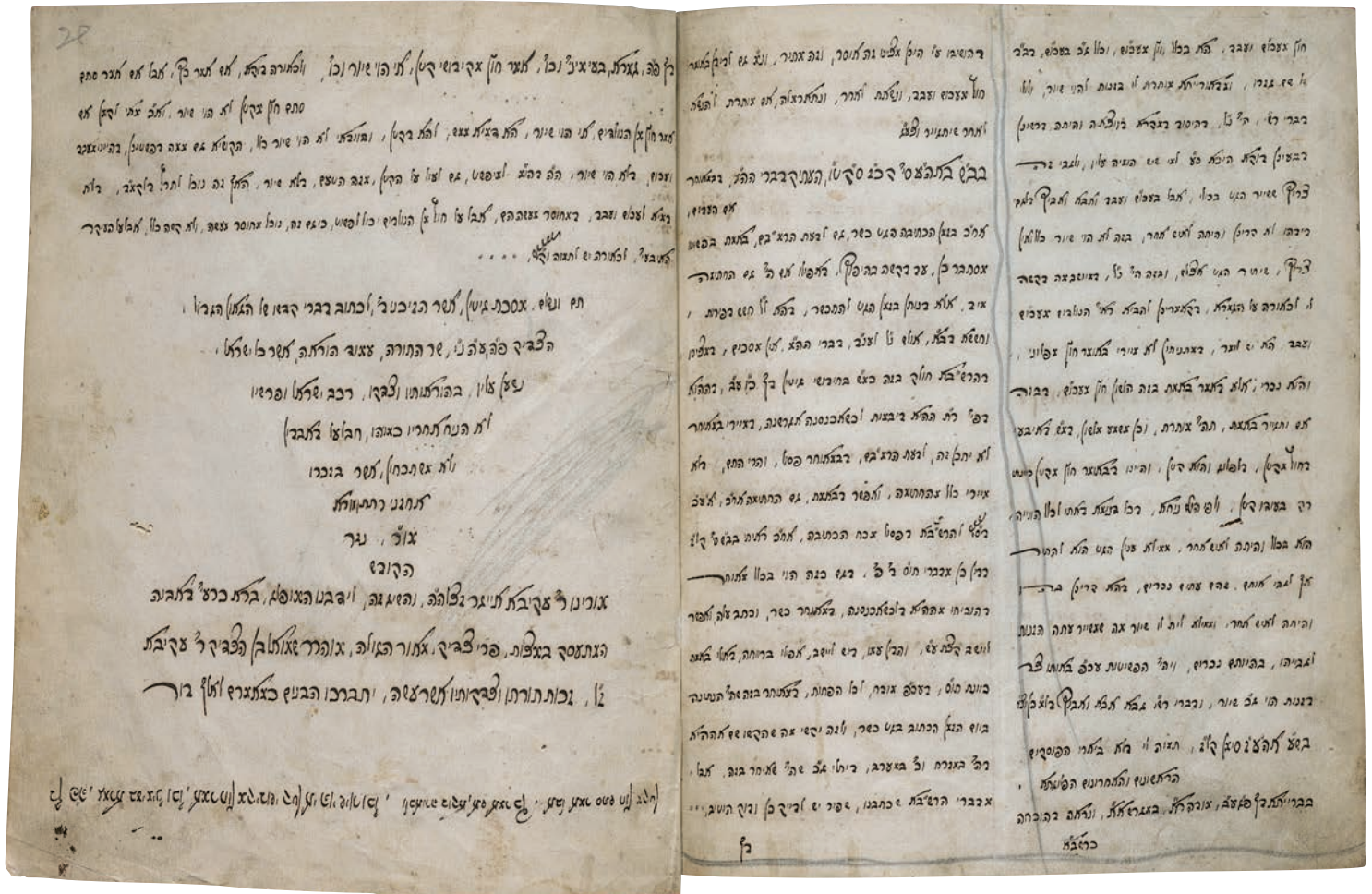
Another interesting manuscript, this time full-scale, is 'hidden' in one of the printed books of the Price collection. Price 00423 is one bound volume which includes three distinct works. The first two are printed editions of two works by Rabbi Isaiah Pick Berlin (1725–1799). Berlin was born in Eisenstadt, in the Kingdom of Hungary (modern Austria) and died in Breslau, Poland. The two books are *Sefer Kashot*

meyushav with *Omer ha-shikhehah* appended to it and *Sefer Hidashe ha-Shas*. All three are important works on the Talmud, and both books were published in the Prussian city Königsberg in 1860. These two books seem to have often been bound together in a single volume, but surprisingly we find an entire composition in manuscript bound at the end of these two printed books.

This manuscript consists of twenty-eight leaves, fifty-five pages in all, with the writing in cursive Hebrew script in two columns, with catchwords at the bottom of every column. The composition, as identified in the colophon, is of the novellae (*hidushim*) of Rabbi Akiva Eger (1761–1837) on the Talmudic tractate *Gittin*. Eger was born in Eisenstadt, the same town as Rabbi Berlin. He studied in his uncle's yeshiva (Jewish religious academy) in Breslau, partially overlapping with Berlin's studies at the same yeshiva, and there is evidence of a connection and cooperation between them (e.g., *Omer ha-shikhehah* 10). Considered among the greatest Talmudic and halakhic scholars of his generation, Eger was the rabbi of the small town of Märkisch-Friedland in Prussia (modern Poland) between 1791 and 1815, at which time he became the rabbi of Posen, Prussia (modern Poland) until his death.⁸

Known for his modesty, Eger's writings are on virtually all aspects of Talmud and halakhah (Jewish law), including glosses and notes on the Mishnah, Babylonian Talmud and the *Shulḥan Arukh* (one of the fundamental codifications of Jewish law), and Halakhic responsa, in addition to his novellae on various tractates of the Talmud. Some of his writings were published in his lifetime, but some, including his novellae, were published only after his death. It is important to note that his novellae on the Talmud, including on tractate *Gittin*, were first published in Berlin in 1858, just two years prior to the publication of the two Isaiah Berlin books bound in this volume. In this first and subsequent publications, the novellae were printed in two columns, yet the Price manuscript is not a handwritten copy of the published text, as one might suspect. Rather, the manuscript differs significantly from the published text, and even includes marginal notes presumably added by a later hand, indicating sections not found in the published edition.





At the end of the manuscript is a colophon, in which the anonymous scribe is thankful for the opportunity he had to inscribe Rabbi Eger's 'holy words,' and which extolls the greatness of Rabbi Eger, but also refers to him as having passed away. The colophon also mentions one of Rabbi Eger's sons, Shemuel (Samuel), but it is unclear what Shemuel's role is; perhaps the scribe received a copy of the novellae from him, or, more plausibly, the statement means

to say that Rabbi Eger taught it to Shemuel, thus indicating that the scribe learned of Rabbi Eger's teachings from Shemuel. The mention of Shemuel is significant, since it appears that little is known about him other than that he was one of Rabbi Eger's children from his second wife, Brendel, a niece of his first wife. Shemuel was born in Posen in 1818 and he lived and died in Minsk (Belarus). This manuscript could, thus, contribute significantly to knowledge

of this very influential rabbinic family as well as to the textual history of an important rabbinic work.

These two 'hidden' manuscripts in the Friedberg and Price collections, which have long gone unnoticed, could contribute interesting information to various aspects of Jewish studies. Perhaps other such 'hidden' gems from these two important collections remain to be discovered and examined.

Endnotes

- E.g., Barry D. Walfish, 'The Friedberg Collection of Rare Hebraica at the University of Toronto Library,' *The Halcyon* 18 (1996), pp. 1–3; idem, 'Shabbetai Zevi, Abraham Miguel Cardoso, and the Friedberg Zohar,' *The Halcyon* 24 (1999), pp. 3–5.
- Barry D. Walfish, *As it is Written: Judaic Treasures from the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library* (Toronto: Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, 2015).
- Yisrael Levin, *Shire-ha-kodesh shel Avraham ibn 'Ezra* [The Religious Poems of Abraham Ibn Ezra: Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary] (2 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1975), 1:518–519, song 260.
- A.Ts. Idelzon, *Shire Teman* [=A. Z. Idelsohn, *Diwan of the Hebrew and Arabic Poetry of the Yemenite Jews*] (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1930), pp. 17–19; Wilhelm Bacher, *Die hebräische und arabische poesie der Juden Jemens* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1910), p. 25 (Hebrew section).
- Thus I was informed by Prof. Yosef Yuval Tobi, an expert on Yemenite Judaism and its poetry, in an email correspondence (August 19, 2019).
- For the text of these two songs see Idelzon, pp. 277 and 331, and for the fourth song's author being unknown see also Bacher, p. 32.
- Bat-Tsiyon 'Eraḳi Klorman, *Yehude Teman: historyah, hevrach, tarbut* (Ra'anana: ha-Universitah ha-petuḥah, 2004), 2:28.
- On Eger see Akiva Posner, 'Eger (Eiger), Akiva (The Younger)' ben Moses Guens, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, (ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed.) vol. 6, Macmillan Reference USA, 2007, pp. 217–218. Gale eBooks, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587505576/GVRL?u=imcpl1111&sid=GVRL&xid=37dac7d1>. Accessed 30 April 2020.

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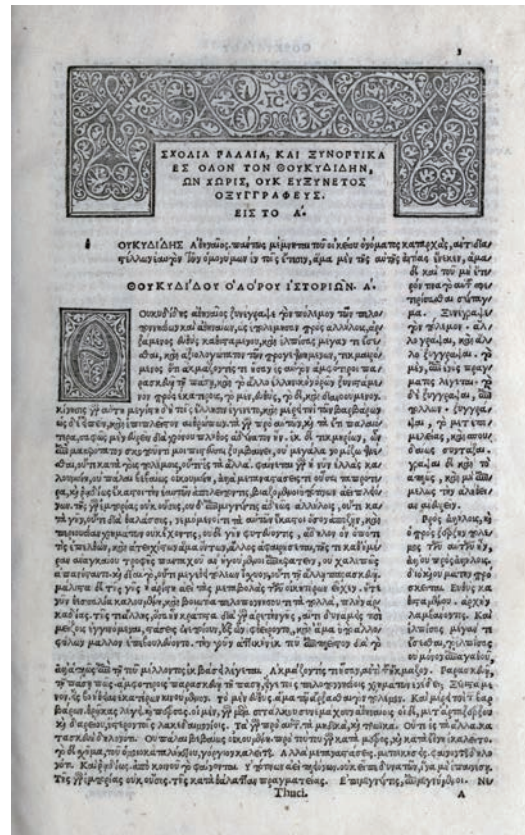
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We thank all members who wish to remain anonymous.*



‘A POSSESSION FOR ALL TIMES’ THUCYDIDES’ *HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR* AT THE FISHER LIBRARY

Timothy Perry

Medieval Manuscript and Early Book Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

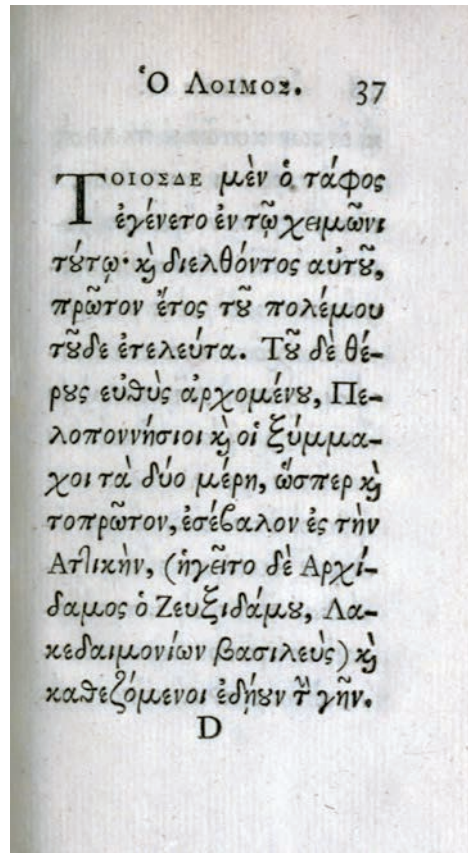
GREEK LITERATURE IS full of plagues; in fact, it begins with a plague, with Homer’s *Iliad* taking as its starting point the ‘evil disease’ that the god Apollo unleashes on the Greek army at Troy. Similarly, Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex* opens with a ‘hateful plague’, again sent by Apollo, ravaging Thebes; and in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, Pandora opens the fateful jar given to her by Zeus and releases into the world ‘diseases that come upon humankind by day and night, bringing evil in silence’. All these plagues and sicknesses are, however, mythical. The most famous plague in Greek literature, on the other hand, was all too real: it was the plague that struck Athens in 430 BCE and that is described in detail in Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Thucydides’ account could not be more

different from those of Homer, Sophocles, and Hesiod. As elsewhere in his history, Thucydides is determined to describe events in purely human terms—Apollo and Zeus are nowhere to be found. In fact, Thucydides’ concerns in describing the plague closely parallel many of our own concerns with respect to the current COVID-19 pandemic: he is interested in the plague’s geographic origins; he gives a detailed list of symptoms, physical and mental; and he notes the particular dangers it presents to members of the medical profession, especially in the absence of an effective treatment. And to all this Thucydides adds his usual acute ethical analysis, with particular emphasis on morally questionable responses to the crisis.

The Fisher’s collections include a range of editions of Thucydides’ *History*, some hiding

in unexpected places. The *editio princeps* of Thucydides’ *History*—that is, its first appearance in print in the original Greek—was published in 1502 by the famous Venetian printer Aldus Manutius (1449–1515). Following his usual practice, Manutius presented a plain text of Thucydides, stripped of all scholarly accoutrements such as translations and notes. The earliest edition held by the Fisher, however, was published in Florence in 1526 by Bernardo Giunta (d. 1551). Unlike the Aldine edition, Giunta’s Thucydides includes the scholia (or ancient commentaries), arranged in the margins around the main text. Whereas the Aldine is entirely lacking in printed ornamentation, Giunta’s edition features, on the page on which Thucydides’ *History* begins, a three-sided headpiece and decorated initial,

OPENING PAGE: The first page of Thucydides' *History* in the 1526 Giunta edition. **BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** The first page of Thucydides' *History* in the 1588 Stephanus edition. The first page of Thucydides' description of the plague at Athens, in the 1755 Foulis edition.



both of which draw on Byzantine book design. Giunta did not include in his edition the Latin translation of Thucydides made by Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457) in the 1450s, an important aid to generations of humanist scholars owing to the difficulty of Thucydides' Greek, but an early owner of the Fisher copy has seen fit to make good this omission by having Giunta's edition of the Greek text bound together with a 1543 edition of Valla's translation.

Another early edition held by the Fisher is that published in 1588 by Henricus Stephanus (1528–1598). In this edition, a full scholarly apparatus is made available to the reader: Thucydides' original Greek and Valla's Latin translation are printed in parallel columns; the Greek is accompanied (in the outer margin) by variant readings, and the Latin (in the inner margin) by Latin notes; and the Greek scholia are included at the bottom of the page.

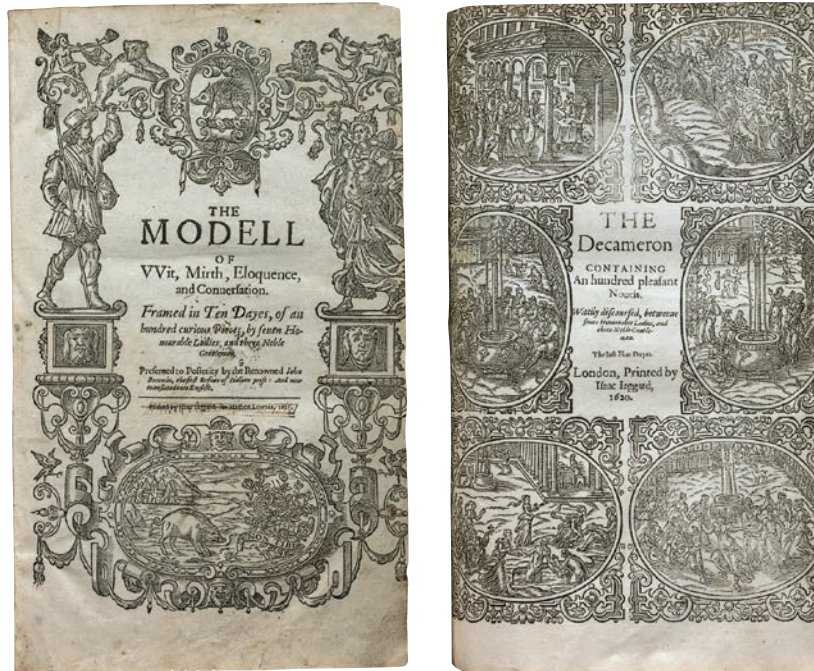
Certain passages in Thucydides' *History*, including his account of the plague at Athens,

are among the most famous in ancient Greek literature. It is not surprising, therefore, that they have frequently been excerpted from the work as a whole and published separately. The Fisher's collections include a number of examples. In a 1755 edition published in Glasgow by the brothers Robert (1707–1776) and Andrew (1712–1775) Foulis, the leading printers of the Scottish Enlightenment, the plague at Athens is paired with the famous funeral oration delivered by Pericles (as reported by Thucydides) in honour of the Athenian soldiers who had died in the first year of the Peloponnesian War. The Foulis brothers were renowned for the quality of their presswork, and this beautiful little book is no exception. As in Stephanus's edition, the original Greek is accompanied by a Latin translation, though in this case in a separate section at the end of the book. In some instances, Thucydides' detailed

description of the plague and its effects leads to his being treated more as a medical writer than as a historian. Francis Clifton (d. 1736), for example, when he published his translation of several medical treatises attributed to Hippocrates, a copy of which can be found in the Fisher, included a translation of Thucydides' account of the plague. Thucydides' account well complements the Hippocratic approach to medicine, since the latter too eschews divine explanations for medical phenomena.

One collection at the Fisher that includes a perhaps surprising number of copies of Thucydides' *History* is the Hobbes collection. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) is best known, of course, as a political philosopher and the author of *Leviathan*. The first work by Hobbes that made it into print, however, was his introduction to and translation of Thucydides. This appeared in 1629, though it seems to have been completed in the early 1620s. It was the first English translation of Thucydides directly from the Greek and, if judged purely in literary terms, remains easily the best. The Fisher has copies of all of the editions and issues published during Hobbes' lifetime including the 1629 edition, the reissues of this edition in 1634 and 1648, the revised second edition of 1676, as well as of many of the editions that have been published since. Moreover, we once again find the plague as particular focus of attention in the early eighteenth century: in 1709, Thomas Sprat (1635–1713), the Bishop of Rochester, wrote a poetical account of the plague at Athens and had it printed together with Hobbes' translation of the Thucydidean account.

Thucydides' account of a plague is just one of many in Greek literature, but its fame is well deserved. It is, moreover, almost certainly the one that most resonates with modern readers, thus justifying Thucydides' claim that he was writing a history that was not aimed simply at the tastes of his own day, but would be 'a possession for all times'.



PICTURES OF HEALTH: THE ILLUSTRATED *DECAMERON*

P.J. Carefoote

Head of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections

IN TIMES OF pandemic, it is not unusual for those in self-isolation to turn to stories in order to pass their time more pleasantly, rather than simply wondering when they will be free to go about their normal business once again. During the first month of the current COVID-19 crisis, for example, Netflix recorded an increased viewership of 15.8 million global subscribers. Compare that to the previous year, when the streaming giant added only a paltry 9.6 million new patrons in the entire first quarter, and one gets some sense of how important storytelling is during difficult times. Although it is still too early to predict the effect that the pandemic will have on book sales, early evidence indicates that demand for books about outdoor skills are up seventy-four percent over last year while medical history has jumped a startling seventy-one percent. This may be partially explained by readers' needs to be better informed during challenging times but, to quote C.S. Lewis, it is also true that 'we read to know we are not alone.'

Perhaps the first recorded example of passing quarantine in this way dates to the autumn of 1347 when the Black Death arrived in Western Europe. Over the course of the next five years approximately one third of the population there

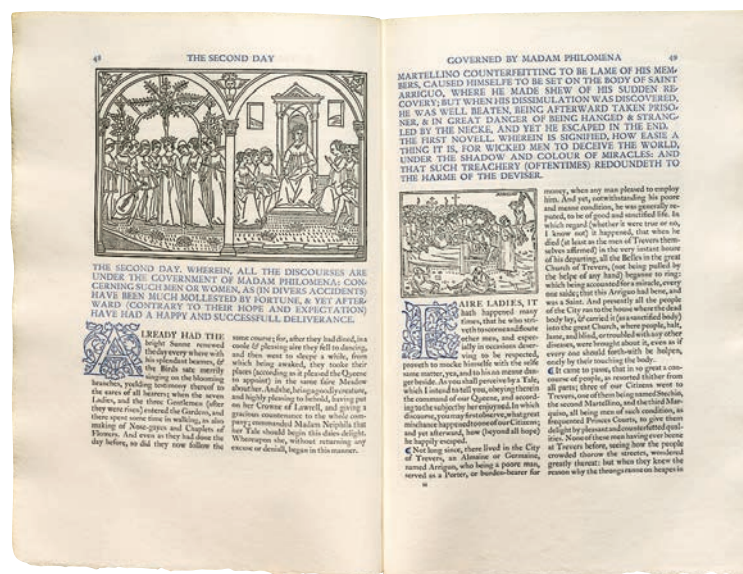
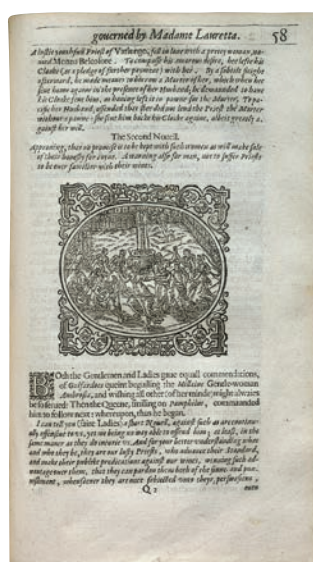
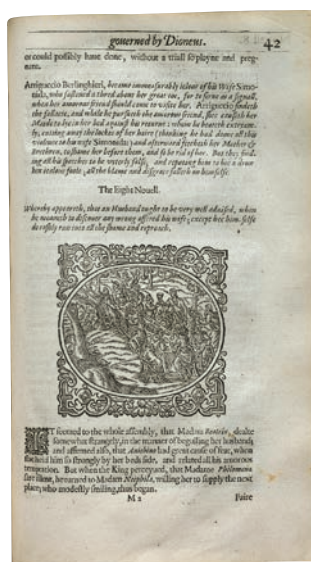
died. The plague was particularly devastating in urban areas, so those who could abandon the cities for the relative safety of the countryside did so in large numbers. One of the most graphic descriptions of the effects of the pestilence was left to us by the Italian author, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) who wrote that 'in men and women alike, at the beginning of the malady, certain swellings, either on the groin or under the armpits grew to the size of a common apple, others to the size of an egg, some more and some less, and these the vulgar call plague-boils.' This interesting and disturbing eye-witness account introduces us to the context within which Boccaccio sets his *Decameron*, the greatest of his literary works, which scholars believe he completed in 1353.

The *Decameron* is a collection of one hundred frequently bawdy stories told over ten days by ten young plague refugees from the city of Florence (seven women and three men). The tales touch on all aspects of human vice and virtue, reserving particular ridicule for the stupid, self-righteous, and superstitious. It is one of the few great classics of literature that has managed to offend the feelings of the clergy, the parliament of France, the magistrates of England, the United States Post Office, the

American Treasury Department, and the National Organization of Decent Literature. In the course of these narratives Boccaccio mocks the clergy, ridicules the veneration of relics, satirizes sexual seduction in most graphic terms, and even derides the Florentine government of his day. Both manuscript and print versions of this work were cast by Savonarola into the 'bonfire of the vanities' in 1497, while its 'low humour' saw the book placed on the Roman Index in 1559 and censored by the Florentine *deputati* in 1573. Even in its expurgated form, however, it still enjoyed great international success, and was a source of embarrassment for Catholic officials throughout the Reformation. As late as the nineteenth century, American authorities, who were still concerned with the work's alleged immorality, invoked the Comstock Law of 1873, preventing the book being delivered by the federal postal system. In Britain it narrowly escaped destruction on several occasions throughout the 1880s at the hands of wary magistrates and the National Vigilance Association.

A title that engenders such controversy is bound to be popular, and countless editions of the *Decameron* have appeared in numerous languages over the centuries. While the city of

OPENING PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Title pages from the first and second parts of the 1625 edition of Isaac Jaggard's *Decameron*. **BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Woodcuts depicting *al fresco* dining and youths performing ring dances from the 1625 Jaggard *Decameron*. The 1934 Shakespeare Head Press edition of the *Decameron* showing wood engravings by R. J. Beedham and E. Joyce Francis.



Naples may have the distinction of being the place where the book was first printed about the year 1470,² the earliest of some forty different editions in the Fisher Library is a Venetian imprint, issued some seventy years later by Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari (d. 1578), one of the greatest printer-publishers of Italian vernacular literature of the era. Almost from the beginning, the *Decameron* was a favourite with artists, and Boccaccio himself left a schema for 'a visualized or at least visualizable book' in which text and image complemented each other.³ The first English translation of the *Decameron*, for example, printed in 1620 by Isaac Jaggard (d. 1623), is an illustrated edition.⁴ The Fisher copy (the second edition of 1625) is divided into two parts, with the first part containing the tales told during the first five days followed by the second part, which has its own special title page dated 1620, containing the stories related from days six to ten. Indeed, it is believed that the second part of the 1625 second edition was in fact published using sheets left over from the first.⁵ The Jaggard *Decameron* is an excellent example of seventeenth-century British internationalism, combining, as it does, the first English translation of the classic Italian text with woodcuts recarved for his new folio format from a French edition of 1558 that had been printed in Lyons by Guillaume Rouillé (1518–1589).⁶ The woodcuts are animated, communicating something of the exotic character of the book (at least for English readers), with depictions of dinners *al fresco*

and youths performing ring dances around a fountain in lush gardens. Jaggard has not always placed the illustrations with the same care as Rouillé did, but they remain effective as indicators of the narrative's general exuberance. So popular were these illustrations that they were reused in later English editions until the fourth, which appeared in 1657.⁷ It is perhaps not surprising that Boccaccio's escapist tales, and their delightful images, should have found popularity in London in the 1620s, since the city had been revisited by the plague in 1563, 1593, and 1603, and would be devastated by it again in 1625 itself. It is also not surprising, given their salacious content, that the Archbishop of Canterbury almost immediately revoked the licence to print the book after the initial permission had been granted by the Bishop of London!⁸

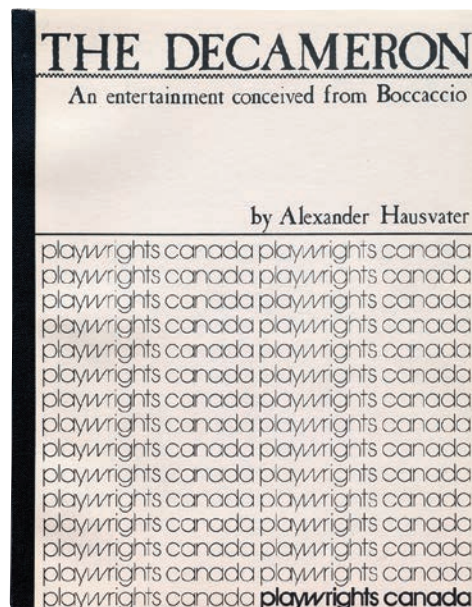
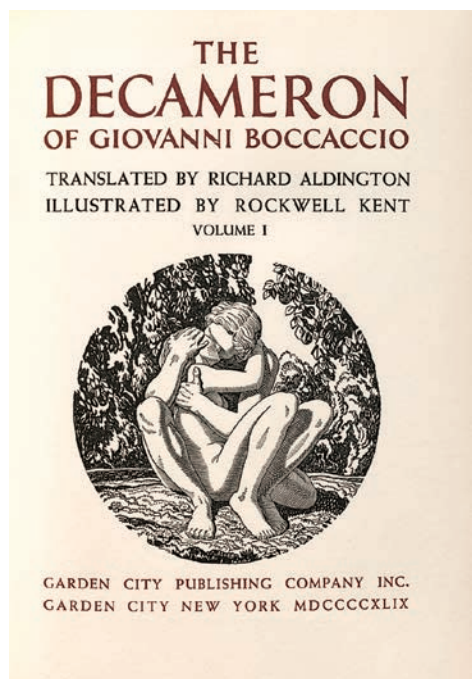
A fine-press reprinting of Jaggard's text was issued on hand-made paper by the Shakespeare Head Press of Oxford in 1934. This limited edition of 328 copies features wood engravings carved by the renowned R. J. Beedham (1879–1975) and E. Joyce Francis (1904–1985), copied from a Venetian edition printed in 1492 by Giovanni and Gregorio de Gregori. This was an appropriately inspired choice, given that the Gregori imprint has the distinction of being the first illustrated edition of the *Decameron* to have appeared in Italy. At the head of the 'prima giornata', the company of exiles is depicted sitting, waiting for the tales to begin. The same image is then repeated as a

header at the beginning of each new day, with unique woodcuts introducing the individual stories themselves. The general appearance is arguably more formal and rigid than the more fluid imagery found in other editions, but for a fine press like the Shakespeare Head, this would be exactly the early Renaissance style they would consider worthy of imitation. An heir to the Arts and Crafts movement established by William Morris (1834–1896) and his peers, Shakespeare Head even printed on one of the presses originally at Kelmscott.

Among the most beautiful modern editions of the *Decameron* in the Fisher is the 1949 limited edition featuring the pen, brush, and ink drawn illustrations by the American painter and printmaker Rockwell Kent (1882–1971). The plates capture the sensual character of many of the stories with just a touch of ironic humour as well. An ardent socialist, Kent had unsuccessfully run for Congress on the Labor ticket in the 1948 general election. His political sympathies made him a target during the McCarthy era, and his passport was withdrawn the year after this book was published. When he died, the *New York Times* eulogized him saying that he was 'a thoughtful, troublesome, profoundly independent, odd and kind man who made an imperishable contribution to the art of bookmaking in the United States.' In many ways, he could have been a character in some of the stories he herein illustrated.

In 1982, the Romanian-Canadian playwright Alexander Hausvater (1946–) adapted

BELOW, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Illustrations by Rockwell Kent for Garden City Publishing's 1949 *Decameron*. Cover and photograph from Alexander Hausvater's 1982 version of the *Decameron*, adapted for the stage.



transmitted by four-legged rats. As Hausvater notes, 'the need for comedy to preserve life presents the acting company with a dilemma. They will have to entertain and to cause laughter not for the sake of their reputation, their ambitions, their careers, money... but in order to go on living.'⁹ Survival, after all, is the backdrop for both Boccaccio's original narrative and Hausvater's re-envisioning of it. The published script survives in small numbers, and includes one very striking image that manages to communicate the raucous merriment generally associated with Boccaccio's tales, while introducing the sense of foreboding that hangs over the scene, both in terms of the story but also the context within which Hausvater presents it.

These are but a very few of the many and varied illustrations found in the Fisher Library's collection of the *Decameron*, and they remind us that the incorporation of imagery in books is rarely a neutral activity.¹⁰ The scenes that authors, artists, and editors choose to depict or omit, and the finer details these illustrations include or exclude, are intended to influence the way in which readers interpret a given work's text and subtext. Collections of tales like the *Decameron*, or *Canterbury Tales*, or *Arabian Nights*, have especially lent themselves to artistic depiction over the centuries precisely because of the layered character of their narratives. In the case of the *Decameron*, with plague always lurking in the background, such illustrations remind readers that life goes on and can be fruitful and at times funny, even in quarantine. Seven hundred years from now, who knows what great works of art might have been added to the literary canon from this very strange year? That will, of course, require the use of their 2020 hindsight.

the *Decameron* for the stage. In this iteration, the setting is not a country villa but a Second World War German concentration camp, and the storytellers (members of an Italian theatre troupe arrested as communist sympathizers) are now forced to perform before the camp commandant. The juxtaposition of humour and survival is the subtext to this political drama, suggesting that not all pestilence is

Endnotes

- 1 Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio* (New York: Black, undated), p. 1.
- 2 Rhiannon Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book: Production and Reading in Italy, 1340–1520* (Oxford: Legenda, 2009), p. 101.
- 3 See Cursi, Marco. *La scrittura e i libri di Giovanni Boccaccio*, Rome: Viella, 2013.
- 4 Jaggard would, of course, gain greater fame for issuing Shakespeare's first folio in 1623).
- 5 Herbert G. Wright, *The First English Translation of the Decameron* (Upsala: Lundequistska bokhandeln, [1953]), p. 274.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 273.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- 8 Mary Augusta Scott, 'Elizabethan Translations from the Italian: The Titles of Such Works Now First Collected and Arranged, with Annotations', *PMLA*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1895), p. 288.
- 9 Robin Healey, *Italian Literature before 1900 in English Translation: An Annotated Bibliography, 1929–2008* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 538.
- 10 To explore this topic more deeply, consult this excellent website sponsored by Brown University: https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/arts/cassoni/sa_visualiz_ov.php

MADE TO HOLD ‘INFINITE TREASURE’

Holly Forsythe Paul

Hilary Nicholls Fellow, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

EVERY YEAR, THE Fisher Library actively acquires important material related to medieval history and culture, much of which will be displayed in an upcoming exhibition, ‘Certaine Worthy Manvscrip̄ts: Medieval Books in the Fisher Library’, planned for the summer of 2021. This year, the library had the good fortune of acquiring a rare medieval casket designed to serve as a strongbox for books. Objects that are not books, manuscripts, or archival papers do not ordinarily come within the Fisher’s collection mandate; however, this coffer is an exception since it provides insight into late medieval attitudes toward books and indications of the ways in which people cared for them.

The Fisher’s newly acquired coffer is of a type often called a ‘Bible casket’ or ‘missal casket’ because it was designed to hold devotional books. Our missal casket was likely made between 1480 and 1500 in France, or possibly Spain. The many hours of painstaking labour required to produce a manuscript in this period made all codices valuable, particularly if they had treasure bindings or had been illuminated with costly pigments and gold leaf. Since they were often objects of devotion in their own right, special efforts were specifically made to protect religious manuscripts from damage. Such ornate boxes protected sacred texts while simultaneously announcing their importance (a practice dating back to early Christian Rome), but only about one hundred examples of medieval missal caskets still survive.

Although it is similar in size and construction to the Talbot casket at the British Museum or the coffer at the Bodleian’s Weston Library, the Fisher Library’s medieval casket differs from these specimens in that it is not finished in leather. Rather, it is a top-opening, rectangular wooden box, covered in wrought iron filigree plaques attached with small finishing nails. A few of the pins are missing, and very minor

lifting to two sections of metal on one side allow a glimpse of the structure beneath the plaques. There are several minor dents, cracks, scratches, and signs of wear, but the casket opens smoothly and is in very good condition. Some similar boxes, such as those featured in a recent exhibition ‘Mystérieux Coffrets’ at the Musée de Cluny, bear woodcut illustrations pasted to the inside of the lid, but the Fisher’s has been lined, at some point, with red velvet.

Unlike the large medieval chests used to hold many books and other valuables, boxes like this were made to hold individual codices or a select few small books. The casket’s size (12.8 x

transportable objects of value throughout Europe in the period. The pairs of large metal rings fastened on each side of the casket were probably designed to assist with travel. Small book caskets such as these are generally believed to have been used for transporting books, rather than securing or storing them, in the manner of chain bindings or large book chests.

The rectangular box shape of the Fisher Library’s missal casket is typical for coffers of books in regular use. The position of the lid, hinged on one of the short ends, makes it easy to open and would provide ready access to its contents. As Michelle P. Brown, one

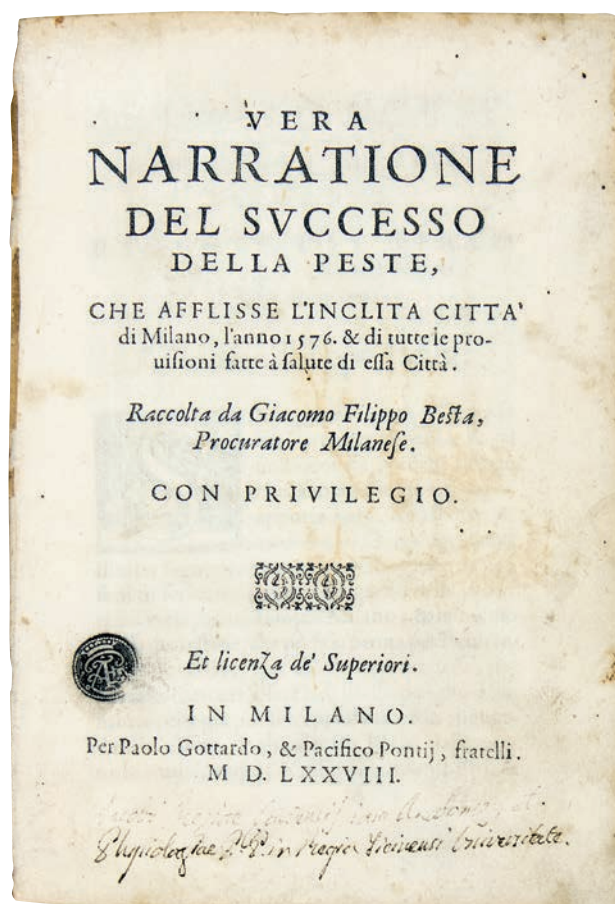
of the world’s leading experts on medieval manuscripts, has noted, book shrines, such as the eight extant Irish *Cumdachs* (dating from the early ninth century to 1536), held books valued for their material status as sacred objects and did not necessarily open easily, or at all. Although the Fisher’s missal casket bears some structural resemblances to the case for the Stiftsbibliothek’s St. Gall Processional (twelfth century), the Swiss coffer is hinged along the long side, allowing its contents to be shown while still in the container. Large (29.5 cm x 11.5 cm) and yet composed of lightweight wood and ivory, the St. Gall casket is made for processional display, an unlikely use for the much

heavier wood and iron coffer now in our collection. The form of the Fisher Library’s book casket, the position of its opening, and its fittings suggest that it was designed for the easy removal of its contents.

The book casket is an excellent complement to our collection of medieval manuscripts, and it will be on display next year. So few of these coffers survive that there has been very little scholarship devoted to their use and their relation to the ways that books were transported and protected in the medieval period. We are delighted to add this missal casket to the Fisher’s collections, where it will undoubtedly fascinate students and scholars.



26 x 18 cm) bears a relation to the manuscript(s) that it once protected. The contents would lie horizontally, in keeping with medieval storage conventions. Missal caskets tend to have an oblong orientation, with the closure and lock on the short side. A long metal piece in the hasp area of the Fisher’s medieval casket appears to comprise the external wards of a fixed padlock, with barbs that would be compressed when a spring shackle (no longer extant) was applied. A hole discreetly positioned next to this protruding arch would seem to accommodate a key. Believed to have been introduced to Europe from the Near or Middle East, barbed-spring padlocks were a widely-used mechanism on



IL PROGRESSO DELLE PESTE: PLAGUE TRACTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES IN EARLY MODERN ITALY

Alexandra K. Carter

Science & Medicine Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

IN THE WORLD of rare books and manuscripts, plague literature is considered a genre in its own right, with bibliographies and catalogues dedicated to the extensive writing that has been produced concerning the plague in its various forms. While religious figures focussed on pestilence as a punishment from God and authors like Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) described the social ill-effects of the plague, it was left to medical doctors to record the symptoms and potential remedies for the illness. Another important witness from across the centuries to these times of crisis comes from the writings of public officials, who began recording their experiences with the plague in Italy in the mid-sixteenth century. Tracts prepared by public officials included specific pieces of information absent from previous

records that would prove critical to a broader understanding of the behaviour and spread of epidemics: timelines, tallies of infections and deaths, and notes tracking the spread of illness from one household to another. Unlike literary, religious, or medical authors, public officials described in detail the measures taken by local governments to control the spread of the plague, and in doing so, they recorded the early development of a public-health-based approach to controlling disease. Indeed, many of today's public health measures, including city-wide quarantines, can be traced back to measures first employed in medieval and early modern Italian cities.

By the mid-sixteenth century, significant progress had been made in medicine towards understanding the spread of contagious

disease. Italian physician Girolamo Fracastoro (1478–1555), best known for his treatise on syphilis, studied the mechanisms of infection. In *De contagione et contagiosis morbis* published in 1546, Fracastoro theorized that contagious diseases can spread not only by direct contact, but also by a carrier such as a soiled piece of clothing or through the air. This theory was clearly critical to understanding the way the plague could spread, yet Italian cities still struggled to control outbreaks well into the sixteenth century. With the re-emergence of the plague in Italy in 1576, the number of plague tracts written by public officials increased dramatically, so much so that historians have named a separate genre of Italian plague tract, the *Successo*, or *Progresso, delle peste*. These tracts traced the 'success' or 'progress' of the

OPENING PAGE: Title page from Giacomo Filippo Besta's *Vera narrazione del successo della peste che afflisse l'inclita città di Milano, l'anno 1576 & di tutte le provisioni fatte a salute di essa città*. Milan: Paolo Gottardo e Pacifico Gottardo, 1578. **BELOW:** The Fisher Library's recently acquired copy of Besta's *Successo della peste*. Milan, 1578.



plague chronologically as it spread through cities and larger regions, using statistics from

local health boards and governments. This new kind of plague tract recorded not only an author's personal observations of the plague, but also the broader sequence of events related to a particular outbreak.

The Fisher Library's medical collections include some two hundred works on the plague, including a recently acquired and rare title from the *Successo* genre by Italian Giacomo Filippo Besta (active 1576–1606?). *Vera narrazione del successo della peste che afflisse l'inclita città di Milano* (1576), published in Milan, is Besta's account of the Milanese plague of 1576–1578, also known as the Plague of Saint Charles. Besta, a notary by trade, was employed as a gate guard during the outbreak. His tract describes the measures taken by Milanese government officials to control the spread of the plague by employing more doctors and surgeons, imposing city-wide quarantines, purging infected households, and importing food and other goods from uninfected cities. It details the construction of a system of temporary plague huts, where infected patients were housed and which were later cleaned or burned to prevent contagion. Besta, tasked with inspecting one of the poorest parishes in Milan, San Lorenzo, also notes the direct relationship between poverty, famine, and the spread of the plague.

The statistics cited by Besta, including the total number of deaths (17,329) were likely taken

from Milan's public health records, which were maintained with remarkable consistency. Beginning with the plague outbreak of 1449–1452, the Milanese Board of Health registered confirmed cases of the plague and plague-related deaths in a series of records that continued with few gaps until 1755. In other locales, the task of confirming plague cases after death often fell to local parish priests or even gravediggers. Milan, however, ensured that cases were confirmed and recorded by trained physicians, resulting in more accurate statistics that could be used to track the real spread of disease.

The Fisher Library acquired a copy of Giacomo Besta's *Successo della peste* at the most recent Toronto Antiquarian Book Fair in November 2019¹, several weeks before the global coronavirus epidemic took hold. At the time, concerns about containing a deadly pandemic seemed remote. Revisiting plague tracts from the sixteenth century as we face our own public health crisis reminds us of the ways observing, writing, and recording allowed public officials to grasp the scale and scope of pandemic outbreaks, and eventually, to control them.

¹ Special thanks to Paul M. Dowling of Liber Antiquus for providing images for this article.

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Thank you!



RULING THE WAVES: BRITAIN'S ROYAL NAVY IN THE AGE OF SAIL

Graham Bradshaw
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

THROUGHOUT THE EIGHTEENTH and early part of the nineteenth centuries, Britain, France, and Spain engaged in a series of global wars both on land and at sea, which finally culminated in the defeat of the Napoleon-led French army in 1815 at the Battle of Waterloo. Ten years earlier, the Royal Navy's victory over a combined French and Spanish fleet at Trafalgar had confirmed Britain's place as the world's pre-eminent naval

power, a position she would maintain for the next century. As the island nation's first line of defence and protector of her empire and overseas trade routes, the navy held a special place in the hearts and minds of Britons. The Royal Navy, however, was far more than an instrument of war and the most visible symbol of British imperial might. Under the command of highly trained professional officers and crewed by experienced sailors, its wooden sail-

ing ships charted unexplored areas of the world and sought, in the Arctic region of Canada, the fabled Northwest Passage to the Orient. These voyages of discovery and scientific investigation in the great age of sail dramatically expanded Europeans' knowledge and understanding of the world in which they lived.

Although the Fisher Library cannot claim to specialize in naval matters, the number of books and images relating to the Royal Navy

OPENING PAGE: Lieutenant Owen Stanley's drawing of his ship *H. M. S. Terror* icebound in the Arctic, February 1837. **FACING PAGE:** *H. M. S. Terror* sailing through Arctic ice floes, 1836. Drawn by Lieutenant Owen Stanley

held by the Fisher is nevertheless impressive. The brief survey that follows highlights some of the more interesting items in this area. Taking as our starting point the year 1739, when the colourfully named War of Jenkins' Ear (1739–1748) broke out between Britain and Spain, we find several contemporary accounts describing particular aspects of the war. One of the more noteworthy episodes in this long drawn out conflict, fought essentially over access to markets in Spanish America and the Caribbean, involved the circumnavigation of the globe between 1740 and 1744 of a small fleet under the command of Commodore George Anson (1697–1762). Ordered to attack Spanish possessions along the coast of South America, the capture of one of the famed Manila treasure ships that sailed between Mexico and the Philippines made Anson famous and a very rich man. The voyage itself was beset by much hardship, including shipwreck, mutiny, sickness, and death. Only a single vessel completed the circumnavigation, and of the approximately nineteen-hundred crew members who set sail with Anson, fewer than five hundred returned home, the vast majority of the men dying of diseases such as typhus, dysentery, and the scourge of all sailors at that time, scurvy. The official version of the expedition, *A Voyage Round the World, in the Years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV*, appeared in 1748, compiled by Richard Walter (1716?–1785), a chaplain on the flagship, using Anson's papers and documents gathered from other pertinent sources. An immediate success, the book went through four editions in its first year of publication and remained a bestseller for years afterwards. Several journals kept by other members of the expedition were also published, including two accounts describing the loss of *H. M. S. Wager*, a small naval vessel of twenty-eight guns wrecked on the coast of Chile in 1741, and the subsequent mutiny of its crew. The first account, *A Voyage to the South-Seas, in the Years 1740–1* (1743), was written by the ship's gunner, John Bulkeley. The second, by John Byron (1723–1786), appeared more than twenty-five years after the shipwreck when the author had gained greater fame as the commander of a squadron of ships that defeated a French force trying to relieve New France during the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). The work was entitled *The Narrative of the Honourable John Byron... Containing an*

Account of the Great Distresses Suffered by Himself and his Companions on the Coast of Patagonia, from the Year 1740, till their Arrival Home in England, 1746. A midshipman at the time of Anson's voyage, Byron later achieved flag rank, retiring as a vice-admiral, but he may perhaps be most noteworthy as the grandfather of the poet, Lord Byron. An important footnote to Anson's four-year odyssey around the world was that as a consequence of his seizure of many navigational charts from captured Spanish ships, valuable scientific information on those parts of the world controlled by the Spanish and hitherto unknown to the British, was acquired.

Within twelve years of Anson's return home, tensions between the European great powers reached a boiling point and led to open warfare. The Seven Years' War was a truly global conflict, with the opposing forces (Britain and Prussia on one side, and France, Spain, and the Holy Roman Empire on the other, with several states supporting the different combatants) fighting in the Americas, Europe, and elsewhere around the world. The Royal Navy's high standards and the expectation of success when facing the enemy were tested when Admiral John Byng (1704–1757), in charge of a fleet of vessels, fought an inconclusive engagement in May 1756 with a French naval force, and failed to relieve the besieged British garrison on the Mediterranean island of Minorca. Amidst strong public condemnation over his actions, Byng was tried by court-martial and found guilty (he 'failed to do his utmost' in the words of the court). Despite Byng's eloquent refutation of the charges in *Admiral Byng's Defence, as Presented by him, and Read in the Court January 18, 1757 on Board His Majesty's Ship St. George, in Portsmouth Harbour*, the officers of the court passed a sentence of death, duly carried out by firing squad on the quarterdeck of an anchored warship, *pour encourager les autres*.

North America was the scene of many encounters between the opposing forces during the Seven Years' War, none more momentous than the British attacks on French possessions in Canada. In January 1759, Admiral Sir Charles Saunders (1715?–1775) was appointed to command a fleet responsible for providing assistance to the ground attack on the city of Quebec by troops under General James Wolfe

(1727–1759). The logistical support given the army by Saunders's ships was critical to the success of the operation. Although at war, routine matters continued to be performed in the fleet, such as promotions, transfers, and in the case of Robert Herdman, an appointment as a surgeon's assistant on *H. M. S. Neptune*. The printed appointment form (*Appointment of Robert Herdman as Royal Navy surgeon's first mate on board the "Neptune", August 21st, 1759*) was signed by the admiral and dated three weeks before the decisive battle on the Plains of Abraham. Among the sailors in Saunders's fleet was the greatest explorer of the age, whose voyages and scientific discoveries in the next two decades would greatly expand our knowledge of the far reaches of the earth. His name was James Cook (1728–1779), then serving as master aboard *H. M. S. Mercury*. Cook, along with other warrant officers, was given the difficult and dangerous assignment of charting the channel of the St. Lawrence River right up to the French defences, to enable the British fleet to assist in the attack on Quebec.

Cook's association with Canada continued after the conclusion of the war, when he was ordered to undertake a detailed hydrographical survey of the Newfoundland coast, a task carried out between 1763 and 1767. Cook then embarked on the three expeditions that made him justly famous, travelling thousands of miles through uncharted waters, mapping and surveying in precise detail many hitherto unknown coastlines and islands in the Pacific Ocean. The first voyage (1768–1771), under the auspices of the navy and the Royal Society, sailed to the South Pacific with the primary objective of observing the transit of Venus across the sun from the recently discovered island of Tahiti. Several scientists accompanied Cook, including the astronomer Charles Green (1734–1771) and the botanist Joseph Banks (1743–1820), who published his own account in 1771 of the expedition, *A Journal of a Voyage Round the World, in His Majesty's Ship Endeavour, in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, and 1771, Undertaken in Pursuit of Natural Knowledge*. Banks later served forty-one years as president of the Royal Society and was responsible for introducing thousands of exotic plant specimens to the botanical gardens at Kew. From Tahiti, Cook spent six months charting the entire New Zealand coastline, and



that being completed, proceeded to survey the then unknown east coast of Australia. On the ship's return to England, John Hawkesworth (ca. 1715–1773) was commissioned by the Admiralty to edit Cook's journals and papers for publication, and the resulting work, *An Account of the Voyages... for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere*, appeared in 1773. By the time the book went to press Cook had already departed on another expedition (1772–1775), this time with the goal of travelling as far south as possible in search of a southern landmass, the fabled Terra Australis, not the continent of Australia, but rather what is now known as Antarctica. Although Cook narrowly missed sighting Antarctica, they were the first Europeans to sail south of the Antarctic Circle (*A Voyage towards the South Pole, and Round the world*. 1777). Cook's third and final voyage, from 1776 to 1780, took the two ships under his command to the top of

the world, in the hope of finding a northern route through the Arctic by sailing from the Pacific to the Atlantic. After spending several months mapping the west coast of North America up to the Bering Strait, the attempt to sail eastward was blocked by ice. Returning south, his ships anchored off the Hawaiian Islands, and in an altercation with the local inhabitants, Cook was killed. The public's fascination with Cook's exploits was reflected in the anticipation with which the long-delayed publication of the account of the third voyage was awaited. Within three days of the work appearing, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean: Undertaken, by the Command of His Majesty, for Making Discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere* (1784) had sold out. Five subsequent editions were issued that same year, and a further fourteen editions printed by 1800.

Many of the better-known battles waged between Britain, France, and Spain between

1793 and 1815 during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were fought at sea. No figure dominated the naval scene so completely as did that of Horatio Nelson (1758–1805), a physically unprepossessing man, who visibly bore the terrible wounds suffered in the service of his country, and whose strategic and tactical genius led to several pivotal and much publicized naval successes. Beloved by the men under his command and by the nation, Nelson was killed during the Battle of Trafalgar at the very moment of achieving his greatest and most decisive victory, thus ensuring his place in the pantheon of Britain's heroes. One person who was an intimate witness to Nelson's death was William Beatty (1773–1842), the surgeon on board the flagship *Victory*, who treated the admiral's mortal wound. Beatty's published account, *Authentic Narrative of the Death of Lord Nelson*, written two years after the battle, was so detailed in its recording of

Nelson's final hours that almost all subsequent biographers have relied heavily on his observations. Mourned by a grieving nation, publishers, no doubt sensing a lucrative commercial opportunity, quickly issued short biographies of the nation's dead hero, such as *Orme's Graphic History of the Life, Exploits, and Death of Horatio Nelson* (1806) by Francis William Blagdon (1778–1819) and T. O. Churchill's *The life of Lord Viscount Nelson, Duke of Bronte, &c* (1808). These slight books reflect the haste with which they were written and are of marginal value. *The Life of Admiral Lord Nelson* by James Stanier Clarke (1766–1834) and John McArthur (1755–1840) was altogether a different matter. The authors based their *Life*, described as an 'official' biography, on Nelson's papers, and on letters and documents they actively sought out from his family, friends, and fellow officers, to produce a more complete portrait of their subject. The result was a massive two-volume edition, published by subscription in 1809 for the princely sum of six guineas. A cheaper, abridged edition, not in Fisher, came out the following year to meet the public demand for a more accessible version of the *Life*.

The quest to find a navigable route through the Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean and the riches of the Far East had begun in the sixteenth century and continued intermittently over the following two hundred years. We have seen that as recently as 1778 James Cook had failed in his attempt to discover a passage from a westerly direction via the Pacific through the Arctic ice. With the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, however, the intensity of exploration increased under the energetic direction of John Barrow (1764–1848), the Second Secretary to the Admiralty. During the next three decades, Barrow authorized and dispatched a series of expeditions charged with finding a way through the Northwest Passage. In addition, efforts to explore the surrounding land, to make contact with the local peoples, and to take scientific and meteorological measurements were also to be made. The captains and officers who attempted this demanding and difficult endeavour became legendary figures, men like John (1777–1856) and James

Ross (1800–1862), William Edward Parry (1790–1855), John Richardson (1787–1865), George Back (1796–1878), Owen Stanley (1811–1850), and John Franklin (1786–1847). The journals they kept of their day-to-day experiences and observations, and published upon their return home, fed an insatiable demand for news of the polar region, its inhabitants, and the trials and privations endured by the officers and crews of the ships. Many of these books, which became instant best sellers and sold in their thousands, are held by the Fisher, narratives such as John Ross's *Voyage of Discovery: Made under the Orders of the Admiralty* (1819), and Parry's *Journal of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-west Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific* (1821). Among the most historically significant items on polar exploration in the collection are the manuscript journal kept by Lieutenant Owen Stanley ('Journal of a Voyage for the Discovery of the N. W. Passage in H. M. S. Terror'), and his sketchbook, containing beautifully rendered drawings ('The drawings made by Captain Owen Stanley when on the Arctic expedition commanded by Sir George Back in H. M. S. "Terror" 1836 and 1837'). Shortly after its arrival in the waters east of the aptly named Frozen Strait in August 1836, his ship was caught in heavy pack ice and remained icebound for the next ten months. On several occasions during this long ordeal, serious consideration was given to abandoning the ship, but in the end the crew remained on board. Although heavily damaged by the ice, the *Terror* was able to sail for home in July 1837.

Arguably the most familiar name in polar exploration to most people is that of Sir John Franklin, not by virtue of his accomplishments, but because of the mystery surrounding his disappearance in 1845 into the vastness of the Arctic, and the extensive search to ascertain the fate of his ships and their crews. The discovery of the wreck of *H. M. S. Erebus* in 2014, followed shortly afterwards by that of *H. M. S. Terror* (the same ship on which Owen Stanley was an officer in 1836–1837) in the shallow, frigid waters of northern Canada near King William Island, brought to an end a quest that had lasted 170

years. Franklin's previous Arctic travels had been plagued by mismanagement, bad luck, and sheer incompetence. His first overland expedition (1819–1822) was disastrous, with stories of desertion, starvation, violent death, and cannibalism (*Narrative of a journey to the shores of the Polar Sea, in the years 1819, 20, 21, and 22*). The orders for his final expedition were once again to find the elusive route through the Northwest Passage. Trapped by ice for over a year and with no possibility of breaking free, the officers made the difficult decision to abandon the ships and attempt to reach safety by an overland route. More than one hundred men began the trek south. None survived.

Limitations of space preclude a more thorough review of other items in the collection relevant to the activities of the Royal Navy. Mention has been made of the importance the health and well-being of the ships' crews was to the efficiency of the navy, a subject to which much attention was devoted by the Admiralty and the medical authorities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Fisher has important medical texts on the causes and treatment of diseases afflicting sailors on long voyages, such as scurvy, by Nathaniel Hulme (1732–1807), James Lind (1716–1794), and Gilbert Blane (1749–1834). Another interesting aspect of naval life may be found in the popular literature of the day, in the songs, ballads, poems and works of fiction by writers like Tobias Smollett (1721–1771) and Frederick Marryat (1792–1848). And no account of the Royal Navy can ignore the profound consequences of Charles Darwin's (1809–1882) voyage on *H. M. S. Beagle* in the years from 1831 to 1836 and his investigations leading to the theory of evolution of species by natural selection. These and the other works mentioned illustrate the tremendous impact the Royal Navy and its courageous officers and men had, not only on the outcome of wars and the creation of empires, but much more importantly, on expanding our knowledge and understanding of the world, its people, its geography, and of all the living things that share this planet with us.



THE CREATIVE LIFE OF BENJAMIN AYLETT BRANFILL

Danielle Van Wagner

Dewan Librarian, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

THE PAPERS OF Colonel Benjamin Aylett Branfill (1828–1899) will always have a place in my heart. In 2015 I was a student intern, working at the Fisher while simultaneously pursuing my Master of Information degree, when this collection was given to me for processing. It was the first historical collection on which I had worked, and at first glance it didn't look like much: diaries covered in marbled paper and commercial sketchbooks, some bulging with inserts and extra pages, their spines crumbling because of the added pressure. Each volume, however, still had the potential to inspire wonder when opened. The collection has immense historical and research value, but above all it is beautiful, showcasing the life of a creative and complex individual.

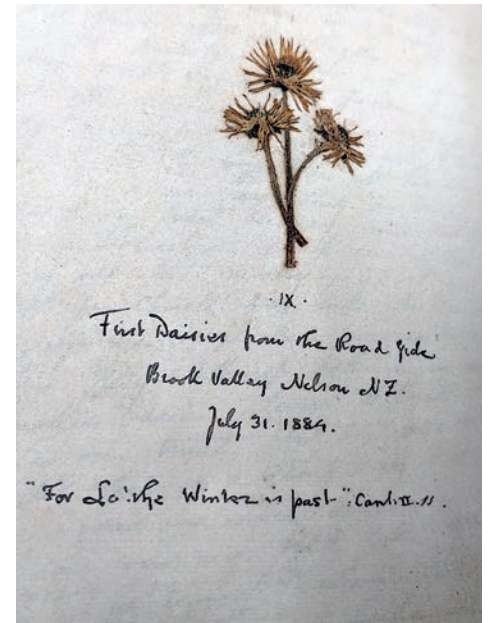
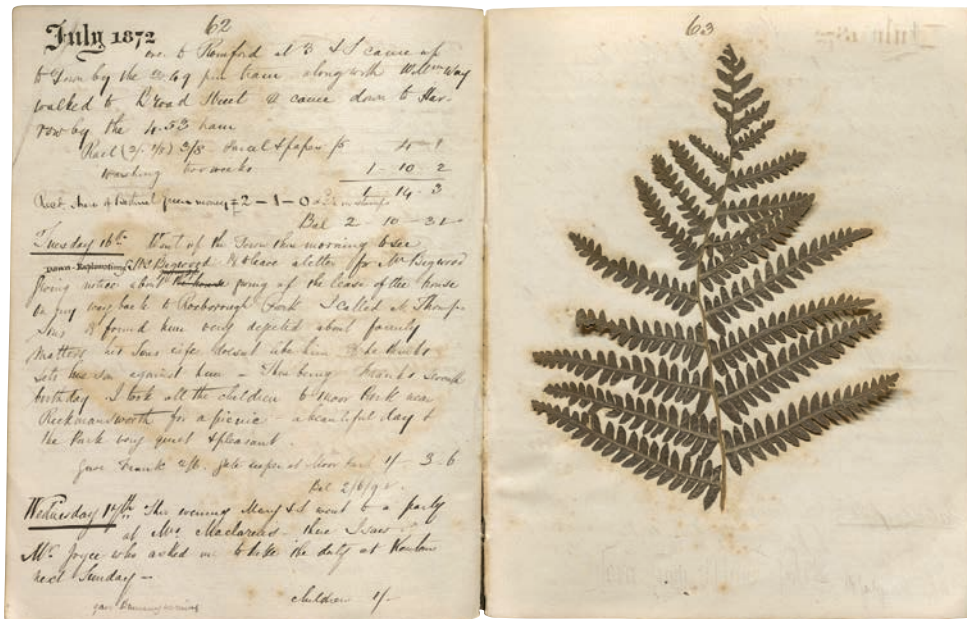
Benjamin Aylett Branfill was born in 1828 in Upminster, England to an aristocratic family. The Branfills had resided at their estate, Upminster Hall, since 1685. Branfill was educated at private schools, and upon his graduation he joined the military, as his father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers had done before him. His military career, which began

at age eighteen, was marked by world travel, starting with a trip to India in 1846 (which he revisited in 1851), followed by service in the Crimea in 1855. Having taken an interest in art as a young boy, Benjamin enjoyed capturing the new sights around him. When his regiment was en route to the Crimean War in October 1855, his ship docked at Gibraltar, and he wrote in his diary that he 'did not go on shore as most of the others did but stayed on board + made a couple of sketches of one of the old Moorish towers.' These sketches are not included in the Fisher collection, but there are similar examples from other points in his career. Before retiring in 1877, he held extended postings in Ireland (1859–1864) and Bermuda (1873–1874), and made trips to Gibraltar, Cape Town, Mauritius, and India (1875–1876). This last trip's sketchbook survives, with seventeen incredibly detailed watercolours capturing the sights of the subcontinent. One such example, *Tomb on Road to Station*, conveys his desire to capture the scene just as he saw it, complete with handwritten notes and architectural details made on the opposite page.

Branfill's collection, which was purchased in 2015, consists of diaries, sketchbooks, and assorted papers including correspondence and photographs. The bulk of the material is in the form of nineteen diaries, spanning a period of forty years (1851–1892), beginning with the entry of a twenty-three year old army officer travelling to India and ending with an entry written in an uncharacteristically messy hand on the day of his death at the age of seventy. The journals are filled not only with detailed descriptions of his everyday life, but also with the physical ephemera collected during that period. There are musical programmes, tickets, shopping lists, and telegrams that one might expect, but there are also more unusual items such as 'scrap of trousers worn by me at my wedding' tucked into the entry on the day of his marriage in 1857, and a handmade envelope glued into the spine from 1872, containing 'Little Benny's hair.'

Branfill's early journals are filled with the daily monotony of military life: his activities, the weather, and the accounting of his daily household expenses. While Branfill had been born a member of the gentry, his aristocratic

OPENING PAGE: Benjamin Aylett Branfill. *Tomb on Road to Station*. Watercolour on paper. 14 December 1875. **BELOW, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Pages from B.A. Branfill's diary. July 1872. Daisies arrangement pressed into B.A. Branfill's diary. July 1884. Flowers pressed between the pages of B.A. Branfill's diary. November 1892.



family, like many in the late nineteenth century, struggled with the fall in the price of grain and the complete depression of British agriculture. The resultant loss of rents from their estates made it difficult to maintain the lifestyle to which they had been accustomed for centuries, and in July 1872, he laments, 'it seems time to go to India again' since his income was 'too small to live and keep the boys at school.' In the same entry he remarks at his jealousy over the death of an acquaintance: 'how I envy him, he is where there are no debts + no troubles.' Branfill's seemingly suicidal tendencies were not isolated to this one entry. In May 1877, between remarking over the gloomy weather and choir practice, he writes out in detailed calligraphy, 'let me die', and later on the same page he passionately scrawls, 'you died on the cross for this sin, let me die too.' It was perhaps this decade-long struggle with debt and depression that led Branfill to make a drastic change in his life. In 1881, Branfill rented out his family estate and immigrated to New Zealand, without his wife or seven children, the youngest of whom was ten years old at the time. Branfill's diary for the period leading up to and including his move to New Zealand is absent, leaving his reasons and intentions lost to history. Only a small note dated May 1881, tucked into his 1882 journal, survives, on which he scrawled 'a memento of the east bedroom Upminster Hall on the last night before leaving.'

Once in New Zealand, Branfill settled permanently in Nelson, spending his retirement indulging in his hobbies of painting, calligraphy, horticulture, photography, and bible study. The diaries from the last two decades of his life can easily be described as works of art. While his English diaries had been peppered with small drawings, calligraphy, or pressed leaves, these details became more ornate and decorative once in New Zealand. For Branfill, any day was an occasion for celebrating the beauty of nature and the spiritual life. He focused on making pages of decorative pressed flowers, elaborated with calligraphy incorporating favourite bible verses. 'First Daisies from the Road Gide, Brook Valley Nelson NZ ... for Lo, the Winter is Past' he writes on 31 July 1884. On the first day of 1889, he decorated the header of his journal with a watercolour scene to usher in the new year and remarked 'spent a quiet and very happy day by myself—myself + I get on better than myself and anyone else—anything for a quiet life.' Despite this statement, Branfill was not a recluse, and did not spend all of his days tucked away

working on solitary pursuits in his study. He was a founding member of Bishopdale Sketching Club and painted commissioned oil portraits, later teaching at Nelson College. His oldest daughter, Helen Hammond de Caux (1863–1939), affectionately referred to as 'Nelly' by Branfill, joined him in New Zealand in 1886. She married and raised her four children in New Zealand before returning to England in 1912. Her photograph albums, also part of the collection, begin in 1895 and include hand-coloured landscape photographs taken by Branfill. It was Helen who preserved Branfill's diaries and sketchbooks, and it is likely that she added the final entry in Branfill's last diary, dated January 1899, 'B.A. Branfill. "He fell asleep with Jesus." See his tomb in Nelson, NZ.'



cheese. Having mixed the omelette, stir in the cheese with a quick turn of the whisk. If you beat long, the cheese will separate the eggs from the milk. Cook ten minutes in a well buttered fry-pan. Serve hot.

TORONTO OMELETTE.

Boil a dozen apples, as for sauce; stir in one-fourth pound of butter, one-fourth pound sugar, when cold, add four well-beaten eggs and a few spoonfuls of cream; put it into a baking dish, well buttered, and thickly strewn with currants on top, and bread crumbs on the bottom and sides. Bake three-quarters of an hour; turn on a platter, and sift sugar over it. Serve with boiled custard.

THE TORONTO OMELETTE

Liz Ridolfo

Special Collections Projects Librarian, Thomas Fisher Library

AS PEOPLE FIND themselves cooking at home more often, with a limited selection of ingredients, they naturally become interested in connecting with the traditions and recipes of the past, and the COVID-19 pandemic has also encouraged them to connect with each other to share their explorations. People are simultaneously embracing tradition and learning new skills, and this is most visible to me in mainstream food culture, which is now unabashedly celebrating group cooking and sharing domestic skills, with tens of thousands of people across the world creating sourdough starters, sewing masks, and growing food from kitchen scraps. Parents and grandparents are tapped for their treasured recipes and tips, and the *New York Times* recently described the rebirth of the community cookbook, the beloved and once ubiquitous genre of (usually local) cookbook in which individuals contribute their own recipes to a shared volume for community building or fundraising purposes.

Working from home as a result of physical distancing felt like an invitation for me to engage with the material in our culinary collection in a different way, by finally making something I've had 'bookmarked' for several years: a nineteenth-century recipe for 'Toronto Omelette' from *Dora's Cook Book*. *Dora's Cook Book* was compiled by Dora Stevenson (1862–1941), née Fairfield, who was born in Stratford, Ontario, raised in Bath (near Kingston), and finally moved to the United States. Published by Hunter Rose of Toronto in 1888, the title page of the nondescript brown volume advertises 'over one thousand tested and tried recipes furnished by the leading ladies of Canada and the United States.' Community cookbooks often record the source of their recipes, and Liz Driver observed in her Canadian cookbook bibliography *Culinary Landmarks* that the Fairfield family's Loyalist heritage was evident in the names present in *Dora's Cook Book*. With only three libraries worldwide listing it in their holdings, and a

small number of copies in private collections and other institutions, *Dora's Cook Book* appears to be fairly scarce. A facsimile edition was put together in 2018 to benefit the Fairfield-Gutzeit historic house in Bath by volunteer Jean Hudacin, with text transcribed from the original edition.

The Fisher Library received this compiled cookbook in 2017 as part of a large donation of culinary material from Mary Williamson, and I was fascinated by the number of eponymous recipes it contained. Dishes, especially sweets and cakes, were often named for princes, princesses, and geographical locations, or to commemorate special occasions, but Dora's cookbook seemed to have more than usual, including Bath cake, Sir John A. MacDonald pie, Ontario cake, and the Toronto omelette.

My first questions were: why was this dish named after Toronto, and why was it called an omelette? Unlike other recipes in *Dora's Cook Book*, the Toronto omelette does not have a contributor's name attached to it, so its direct

OPENING PAGE: Recipe for the Toronto Omelette from *Dora's Cook Book*. **BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Transcription of the recipe for the Toronto Omelette from *Dora's Cook Book*, page 66. Friar's Omelette recipe from a nineteenth-century English cookbook.

TORONTO OMELETTE.

Boil a dozen apples, as for sauce; stir in one-fourth pound of butter, one-fourth pound sugar, when cold, add four well-beaten eggs and a few spoonfuls of cream; put it into a baking dish, well-buttered, and thickly strewn with currants on top, and bread crumbs on the bottom and sides. Bake three-quarters of an hour; turn on a platter, and sift sugar over it. Serve with boiled custard.

A Friar's Omelette
Boil 1 dozen apples as for sauce, stir in two ounces of Butter, $\frac{1}{4}$ lb white sugar, when cold add 4 eggs well beaten. Put all into a dish thickly strewn with crumbs (butter the baking dish first) then put in your mixture & strew the crumbs of bread thickly on.

origins are not easily determined. When a Fisher Library staff member sent me the recipe for 'Friar's Omelette' she had transcribed from a nineteenth-century manuscript in our collection as part of her remote work, I immediately saw the resemblance. The method and ingredients are almost identical, with the exception of the direction to top it with sugar at the end, and the suggestion of adding cloves or lemon peel if desired. It appears that the friar's omelette dates back to at least 1859 with the publication of the *English Cookery Book* edited by John Henry Walsh (1810–1888). The Toronto connection would have to remain a mystery for the moment, but I was determined to try to make it at home.

I approached the recipe armed with some historical baking experience. In preparation for the Fisher Library's 2018 exhibition on culinary culture in Canada I made 'Toronto pie' (which is actually a cake) from an extremely brief recipe contributed to *The Home Cook Book*, Rose Publishing Co. [1877] by a 'Mrs. D'. Still, some important questions related to procedure came to mind when I first considered the Toronto omelette recipe. Eliza Acton (1799–1859) popularized the practice of listing ingredients and instructions separately in recipes in her *Modern Cookery*

several decades before *Dora's Cook Book* was published; however, many cookbook and culinary manuscript contributors who came after her still preferred to present instructions as a dialogue, often listed out of sequence. The direction to butter and crumb the pan is placed after the direction to pour the mixture into the baking dish, and even if you read this recipe through several times before beginning, you might forget this important step. There is also the question of which is the top and which is the bottom of this dessert for the purpose of currant application, since it is meant to be inverted onto a plate. Fortunately, the question of where the currants should go could be avoided, as I was not able to find them in my local grocery store.

The most intimidating part of this recipe was the lack of baking temperature: there was not even the indication of a slow, moderate, or quick oven, or any other terms commonly used to describe baking temperature before the era of the oven thermometer, to guide me. The book's original readers would likely have been familiar with puddings and other egg desserts, with their own home ovens, and how to work with both, and so the recipe author could assume that this information was not necessary to include.

The recreation of this recipe, like the creation of a community cookbook, needed to be a collaborative effort. I sought assistance from friends, and from the experienced members of the Culinary Historians of Canada Facebook group before attempting to make the Toronto omelette, receiving advice on apple sizes and types, on boiling versus simmering, and found general agreement on the fact that it sounded much more like a custard or pudding than what we think of today as an omelette.

After I had finally secured sufficient extra butter and eggs to be willing to risk this being a complete disaster, I made a halved recipe of the Toronto omelette. I stewed my peeled apples into a sauce, then added sugar and butter (I highly recommend trying warm, buttered applesauce!). I assembled the rest of the ingredients and poured them into a buttered baking dish coated with bread crumbs. After forty-five minutes at 350 degrees in a 4 x 6 inch pan, a strange but delicious, slightly curdled pudding came out of the oven. Of course, it did not release from the pan, but it had a simple taste that gave me a feeling of connection to a cookbook that I hope I will be able to see again in person very soon.



LA FARSA AND THE ILLUSTRATORS OF *LA EDAD DE PLATA*

Natalia Mykhaylychenko
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

WHILE SPAIN WAS justly famous for its Golden Age playwrights of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such as Lope de Vega (1562–1635), Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681), and Tirso de Molina (1579–1648), theatre continued to evolve there in later eras, building on its past and inventing new traditions. Three hundred years later, along with new theatre genres, the artistic community expressed its voice through print culture, with many painters and caricaturists now turning theatre publications into works of art.

After its defeat in the Spanish-American war of 1898, Spain threw all of its efforts into national economic development. Along with the resulting industrialization and dynamic urbanization, a new and rich intellectual culture emerged, represented by prominent thinkers and writers of the period including Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936), José

Martínez Ruiz (Azorín) (1873–1967), Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866–1936), as well as Antonio (1875–1939) and Manuel Machado (1874–1947), collectively known as the ‘Generation of ’98’. A new period in Spanish culture dawned, known as ‘The Silver Age’ (*La Edad de Plata*), which was interrupted by the dictatorship of General Franco after the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

The Spanish Silver Age was characterized by a publishing boom, the modernization of printing machinery, and the widespread use of chromolithography and photogravure techniques that simplified the complex work of publishing and made print material more affordable. Mass production of books and increased literacy in society expanded the demand for this new type of literature. At the same time, cinematography was in the initial stages of its development, and movie theatres were quickly becoming major forces in this

new world of public entertainment. Consumers began reading the many periodicals that published theatre plays, such as *La Farsa*, *El Teatro Moderno*, *La Novela Cómica*, *La Novela Teatral*, and *Comedias*.

La Farsa was one of the most influential, voluminous, and successful theatre series from the period. This weekly magazine of Spanish plays, published from 1927 to 1936, reflected the vivid atmosphere of contemporary theatre, its character, and its tone. Many famous playwrights published their works in *La Farsa*, including prolific authors Pedro Muñoz Seca (1881–1936), Antonio Paso (1870–1958), brothers Serafín (1871–1938) and Joaquín (1873–1944) Álvarez Quintero, Carlos Arniches (1866–1943), and the 1922 Nobel Prize winner Jacinto Benavente (1866–1954). *La Farsa* published *Mariana Pineda*, a famous play by Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) shortly after its premiere in 1927. Occasionally, adapted works

OPENING PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT: *La noche iluminada* (The Illuminated Night) by Jacinto Benavente. Magical comedy. *La Farsa*, no. 26 (1928). Cover illustration by Antonio Barbero. • *El último romántico* (The Last Romantic) by José Tellaeché. Zarzuela, *La Farsa*, no. 30 (1928). Cover illustration by Carlos Masberger. • *La casa de los pingos* (The house of the Pingos) by Antonio Paso and Antonio Estremera. Comic retaliation. *La Farsa*, no. 32 (1928). Cover illustration by Antonio Barbero. **THIS PAGE AND FACING PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT:** *El demonio fué antes ángel* (The Devil Was an Angel First) by Jacinto Benavente (1922 Nobel Prize winner). Comedy. *La Farsa*, no. 37 (1928). Illustrated by Félix Alonso. The front cover contains the playwright's caricature. • *El señor de Pigmalión* (Mr Pigmalion) by Jacinto Grau. Tragicomic farce. *La Farsa*, no. 40 (1928). Cover illustration by Félix Alonso. • *Mariana Pineda* by Federico García Lorca. Popular romance. *La Farsa*, no. 52 (1928). Cover illustration by Roberto Gómez. • *La niña de plata* (The Silver Girl) by Lope de Vega, adapted by Manuel and Antonio Machado. Comedy. *La Farsa*, no. 97 (1929). Cover illustration by Félix Alonso, depicting Dorotea, the main heroine of the play. • *La sirena varada* (The Stranded Siren) by Alejandro Casona. Dramatic comedy. *La Farsa*, no. 357 (1934). On the cover: actors Margarita Xirgu and Pedro López Lagar during the play's premiere on 17 March 1934 in *Teatro Español* in Madrid.



of classical Spanish and modern European playwrights also appeared in the series.

La Farsa primarily offered plays for entertainment that reflected the taste of the general public, with comedy its most popular genre. It also published *zarzuela*, *juguete cómico*, and *sainete*, short plays with dialogues, music, songs and, in some cases, dance. These plays were fine examples of *género chico*, a theatre genre very popular in Madrid at the time.

The Fisher Library holds an almost complete set of the series, which consisted of 463 issues. The collection was purchased in 1972 from Montley Books of London, England, which had previously acquired it from *La Sociedad General de Autores y Editores* (The Spanish Society of Authors and Publishers) in Madrid. Created in 1899, this organization helped regulate the commercial relationships between playwrights and theatres, resulting in an increase in the number of plays appearing on Spanish stages in subsequent years.

While *La Farsa* is primarily appreciated today for its literary content, the artistic aspect of the series is also worthy of special notice. The magazine's cover illustrations were excellent examples of the poster print culture of the

time, featuring many of the innovations that emerged from the Art Deco movement as well as the avant-garde elements of Cubism. Like posters, colourful covers drew attention to the magazine and suggested an interpretation of the plays that theatre-goers had already seen. *La Farsa* was effectively an invitation to relive the dramatic experience by reading the work in the privacy of their own homes.

Throughout its history, *La Farsa* had several styles of covers. They began with colourful illustrations by various painters, including Roberto Gómez (1897–1965), Carlos Masberger (1902–1969), Félix Alonso (dates unknown), and Antonio Barbero (1889–1962). The first covers did not necessarily reflect the play's narrative and were sometimes repeated in other issues. Several of them included depictions of Pierrot and other 'masked' characters of *commedia dell'arte*. Starting with number 138 in 1930, the magazine began to include photographs of scenes from the plays on its covers, using the mezzotint engraving technique. Throughout the series, the text of the plays was accompanied by caricatures and drawings of the authors, characters, actors, scenes, and decorations. Though not as well-known as the playwrights



highlighted in *La Farsa*, cover illustrators from the magazine's early years made a remarkable contribution to the success of the series.

Roberto Gómez, who signed his paintings simply as 'Roberto', was one of the illustrators who worked with *La Farsa* from the beginning. He was acclaimed for his works published in the weekly journal *Gutiérrez* in Madrid, until he immigrated to Latin America in 1932 where he made a career as a political caricaturist for the daily newspaper *Crítica* in Buenos Aires. When the Civil War in Spain broke out in 1936, Gómez realized that he needed to reflect on this critical moment in the history of his native Spain and wrote a chronicle entitled *Charlas de café* (Chats over coffee) published in *Crítica*. Along with caricatures, he provided his satirical reflections as a writer, later made into a popular book that was published in two editions.

Little is known about Félix Alonso, an artist who painted more than sixty covers for *La Farsa*. Educated in Madrid at *La Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando* and then in Paris, he became a poster designer and illustrator for theatre and children's magazines, winning many competitions in the course of

his career. Alonso worked at the newspaper *ABC* and for the magazine *Gente Menuda* as a children's illustrator. His covers for *La Farsa*, depicting famous characters from the Spanish theatre are clearly recognizable to regular readers of the series.

Carlos Masberger was a painter, poster designer, and illustrator from Madrid who became famous for his depictions of the vivacious streets of Spanish towns and the melancholic world of the circus. After an education in fine arts at the same institution in Madrid as Alonso, Masberger collaborated on *ABC*, *Gente Menuda*, and other publications such as the magazine *Blanco y Negro*. He illustrated works by Shakespeare, Zola, and other important writers, and was a President of the Spanish *Asociación de Dibujantes Españoles* (Association of Cartoonists). In 1970, a cultural organization *Círculo de Bellas Artes* (Fine Arts Circle) in Madrid dedicated an exhibition in tribute to his memory.

Born in Guadalajara in central Spain into a family of musicians, Antonio Barbero Núñez became a prominent artist and film critic. He started his career as an illustrator in Madrid and worked for many periodicals,

including *ABC*, *Madrid Cómic*, *Buen Humor*, *Gutiérrez*, *Macaco*, and *Blanco y Negro*. In 2019 the *Museo Francisco Sobrino de Guadalajara* honoured Barbero with an exhibition of his works, especially those pieces influenced by avant-garde Futurism and Cubism published in *ABC*, *Blanco y Negro*, and *Gente Menuda* between 1929 and 1936. Barbero co-founded and managed several periodicals, including the children's magazine *Chiquilín* and cinematography magazines *La pantalla* (1927–1929) and *Cámara*. Beginning in the 1930s, he dedicated himself to publishing film chronicles, literary and critical work, and in 1945 he was one of the founders of *El Círculo de Escritores Cinematográficos* (Cinema Writers Circle).

The Fisher's collection of *La Farsa* is an important scholarly resource for Spanish studies, graphic design, and book history, but one can still turn to it for leisurely enjoyment, as its contemporary readers once did; and even if those who do not speak Spanish are not inspired to learn the language after paging through these issues, the universal language of art will still allow them to appreciate its fascinating illustrations.



ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA IN CZECH BOOK DESIGN 1946–1962

Ksenya Kiebuszinski

Head, Petro Jacyk Central & East European Resource Centre

THE STORY OF Soviet control of the Eastern Bloc, particularly over Czechoslovakia, and communist ideological opposition to the United States and its allies, is reflected in a newly acquired collection of anti-American propaganda published in Prague during the Cold War. The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library purchased the material from Daniel Morgan Books in 2019. The majority of the sixty publications were issued between 1948, when Soviet operatives executed a coup d'état in Czechoslovakia, and 1953, the year Stalin died. The volumes have been incorporated into the Robert S. Kenny collection on Communism and Radicalism (kenny 04146–04197).

Three years ago, I described for readers of *The Halcyon* the history of translations of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* into eastern European languages (no. 59, June 2017). Orwell used the allegory of the animal farm to criticize American and British concessions which granted the Soviet Union a significant sphere of influence over Eastern Europe at the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences. Orwell also set out to shatter the myth that the Soviet Union was a true socialist society. Soon after the

novel's publication in 1945, the United States enacted the Marshall Plan to halt the spread of communism in Europe. Aside from aid for reconstruction, funds were directed towards a huge information campaign that flooded Europe with books (including translations of *Animal Farm*), magazines, popular music, and film that reflected the best elements of American life.

To counter U.S. ascendancy in Europe, the Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc allies attacked 'Yankee imperialism' and Wall Street capitalism with the dissemination of propaganda that denigrated their enemy. They characterized the United States as a plundering nation that uses freedom as a cover to hide its rapacity. Howard Zinn writes in *A People's History of the United States* that during the Cold War both countries, the Soviet Union and the United States, went to work, 'under the cover of "socialism" on one side, and "democracy" on the other, to carve out their own empires of influence.'

The collection of anti-American propaganda features original Czech works of fiction and commentary, and translations from Russian, French, and blacklisted American writers, such

as Albert E. Kahn (1912–1979), Albert Maltz (1908–1985), and Howard Fast (1914–2003). The texts, covers, and illustrations target several aspects of American foreign and domestic policy. Several titles equate American military aggression with Nazi Germany, specifically the American occupation of west Bohemia. Other works criticize American militarization and NATO, viewing these developments as a sign of imminent attack on Eastern Europe. Another category of books depicts American society as morally corrupt in its treatment of the working class, minorities (especially African-Americans), and leftist intellectuals (such as the Hollywood Ten). Other areas of American policy denounced by the authors are imperial aggression in the Far East, for example, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, as well as American financial interference in the economic and political affairs of Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia.

The most compelling aspect of this propaganda is the use of graphic design on the dust jackets and covers to condemn or mock American policies and society.

Among the more captivating designs are the covers to the mass weekly *Dikobraz* (Porcupine), a satirical magazine published in Prague from

1945 to 1989. The issue for 18 November 1954, for example, features a political cartoon by Bohumil Štěpán (1913–1985) dedicated to Soviet press month. His collage bears the subtitle 'Truth wins' and depicts a clipping of the Soviet Communist Party newspaper *Pravda* (Truth), in the shape of a boot, crushing a duck festooned in an American flag. The reference is to the *canard* (i.e. false story) of the featured article in *Pravda* on Soviet-American nuclear arms discussions, in which the Soviets accuse the United States of developing an atomic Marshall Plan.

The caricature by the Soviet political cartoonist Boris Efimov (1900–2008) drives this point home in *Za trvalý mír* (For enduring peace, 1951). He represents Harry S. Truman and Winston Churchill astride a cannon aimed at destroying the peace-loving proletariat walled up behind an impenetrable Iron Curtain.

A similar message of distrust comes across in Adolf Hoffmeister's cover design for his and Miroslav Galuška's report on their three months as delegates to the United Nations in New York City from October to December 1950 (*Tři měsíce v New Yorku*, 1951). Hoffmeister (1922–2007) and Galuška (1922–2007) encounter a hostile world that reacts fearfully to communism. To capture the feeling of diplomatic alienation, the artist depicts a

white dove, a symbol of peace, atop a caged eagle, against a blue and white backdrop, the colours evocative of the United Nations, and the eagle in the red birdcage suggestive of an enslaved United States.

Much more sinister is the cover by Josef Prchal (1921–1970) for Jiří Hronek's *Spoutaná Francie* (Shackled France, 1951), a work about American activities in France following the Second World War. Prchal designed an American octopus that is set to devour the map of France. The illustration, essentially a reworking of a poster printed by the Communist Party of France, with financing from Renault factory workers, conveys a sense of American imperialism. The eyes of the octopus are represented by dollar signs, signifying alleged American obsession with money and materialism. The octopus has long been used in persuasive cartography as a surrogate for rapacious imperialism or the threat to neighbours, with its tentacles grasping for land and power.

Other designs in the collection rely on caricature or comic art to make their point. The cover by Leo Haas (1901–1983) to Antonio Cordon's *Viděl jsem Titovu zradu* (I saw Tito's betrayal, 1951) depicts the Yugoslav revolutionary and statesman surreptitiously accepting American dollars, a veiled reference to aid funnelled to Yugoslavia via the Marshall Plan

after that country's estrangement from the Soviet Union. Tito's acceptance of loans was portrayed in propaganda as clear bribery and an attempt to force a wedge in the communist alliance through the Balkans.

On the reverse side of American largesse was the decline in living standards for the average American and the effects of warmongering on children, including the fear of nuclear attack and the implementation of mass air-raid drills. For the cover of the Czech translation of Albert E. Kahn's *Game of Death* (*Hra smrti*, 1955), the artist Ladislav Krám (1925–) chose to reflect the violence of American society with a collage depicting a soldier set against a background of comic book characters and photographs of children, brutally striking or aiming guns at each other.

Not long after the steady stream of anti-American propaganda emanating from Czechoslovakia and the rest of the Soviet bloc, President Truman called for the United States to mount a 'Campaign of Truth' to expose communist lies. The United States Information Agency was formed in 1953 during Dwight Eisenhower's term in office to promote its own 'public diplomacy.' The war of information, espousing the merits of democracy and capitalism on the one hand, with the virtues of communism on the other, continued through the end of the Cold War.



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EXHIBITIONS 2020–2021

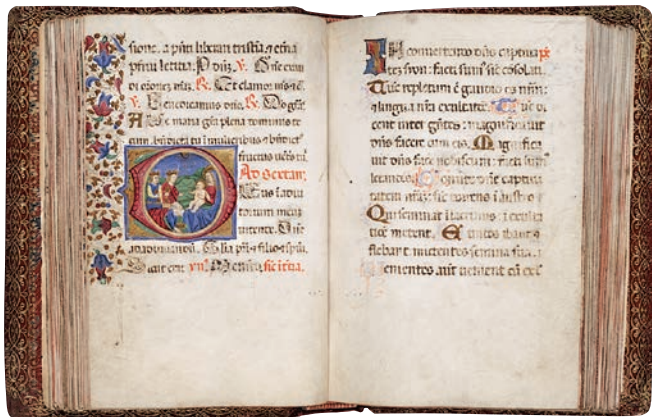
Under current circumstances, it is uncertain when exhibitions at the Fisher will be able to reopen to the public. It is our hope, however, that we will be able to mount the following exhibitions in the coming academic year. Please consult the Fisher website at <https://fisher.library.utoronto.ca/exhibition/current> for exhibition updates.

25 January to 7 May 2021

Trophies, Troves, and Treasures: Victorian Interventions on the Book

Summer 2021

Certain Worthy Manuscripts: Medieval Books in the Fisher Library



PLANNED EVENTS 2020

Start times for lectures **to be determined**

Since we do not know when public gatherings will be permitted again on University premises, the following lectures will, at the very least, be presented live and online this fall with the possibility for audience participation at the end of each presentation as usual.

Thursday 24 September 2020

The Alexander C. Pathy Lecture on the Book Arts

Authorship, Print, and Sedition in Eighteenth-Century England.

Dr Thomas Keymer, University Professor, Chancellor Jackman Professor, University of Toronto

Thursday 5 November 2020

John Seltzer and Mark Seltzer Memorial Lecture

For Merchants and Mariners—The Business of Nautical Manuals

Dr Margaret Schotte, Associate Professor of Early Modern History, York University

LEFT: Visitation of the Magi from *Offitium beate uirginis marie : secundum consuetudinem fratrum ordinis p[rae]dicator[um]*, ca. 1423

EDITORS' NOTE

This issue was edited by Liz Ridolfo, Loryl MacDonald, and Maureen Morin, and designed by Maureen Morin. Comments and/or suggestions should be sent to:

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For more information about the Fisher Library, please visit the web site at fisher.library.utoronto.ca.

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